

## Barbara Webb

I was born in Wagga Wagga in 1937 and I'm a daughter of a banker. My father was in the Bank of New South Wales in Wagga Wagga and we moved around a lot because of his position in the bank.

He never said, "No I won't go there," because he was ambitious, he wanted to get on, so I went to many towns and many schools in my life. We were always on the move. I went to two primary schools, one in Bega and one in Ardlethan, and then high schools in Goulburn and Cootamundra.



When I was five years old my father joined the army.

He enlisted from Ardlethan and served in New Guinea. My mother and I moved to Sydney to stay with relatives. We fled Sydney when the Japanese submarines came into the harbour, and we took the train to Brisbane. I remember it as being the longest journey of my life, taking a day and a night. When we arrived in Brisbane my mother was horrified to find the hotel where we were staying was full of Americans. My uncle and aunt came and picked us up the next morning and drove us to their farm in Jimbour, near Dalby, where we stayed for the next three years. They had a big farm and grew peanuts and cotton, as well as grazing cattle. I rode a horse to school and can still smell the aroma of devon sandwiches mixed with horse sweat. Years later my mother told me of a letter I had written to my father saying, "I hope you are having a lovely time in the army and killing lots of Japs." His letters would come to us with lots of bits cut out due to the censorship. My mother joined the Red Cross to occupy her time and contributed to the war effort baking biscuits and knitting socks. Upon his return my father rejoined the bank. He had to resign when he enlisted, and was told he could choose where he would like to be posted, so we went to Bega where his parents lived.



I felt for my mother. All she did was pack up and unpack, but she always left the place beautiful because she was a keen gardener.

It became obvious to my parents that I had to settle down somewhere so eventually they booked me into PLC Goulburn, where my mother went, and that's where I did my Leaving Certificate.

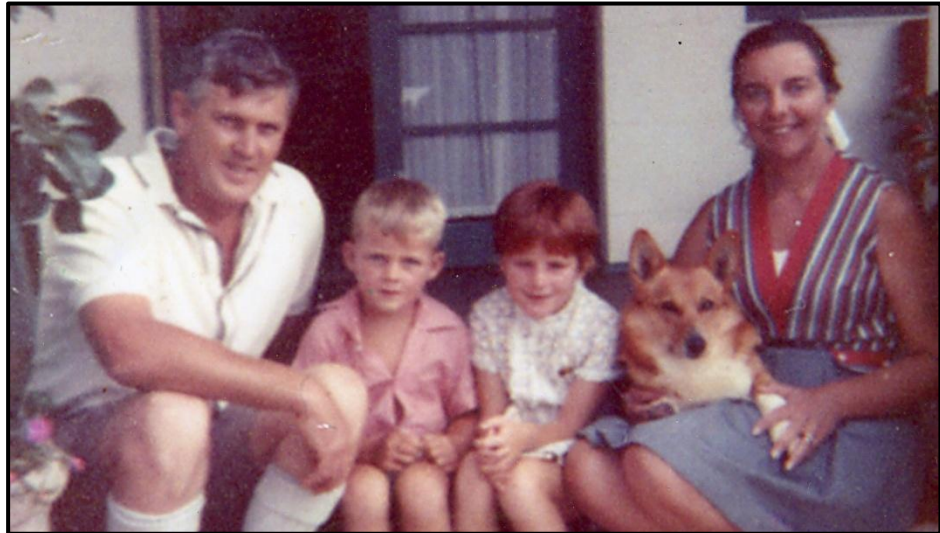
After school I joined the Bank of New South Wales with my father in Alice Springs. I had a wonderful life there. I saw lots of historical things, like the opening of the Flynn Memorial Church in 1956. I was there with my parents when the Duke of Edinburgh opened the church. That was a highlight of my life there in Alice Springs because I watched the church being built every day as I walked to work. I used to go past it and I thought how beautiful it was, and all the symbols in the church are just unique. It was very, very special for the whole of Alice Springs. I've been back since and it's in very good condition.

I knew Albert Namatjira very well. We were good friends. And I had a wonderful time in Alice Springs with Billy Ricketts, the beautiful Aboriginal potter, who did Aboriginal people. I found it hard to leave there when Dad got a move to Oberon which was a bit of a shock to the system. Dad was the manager in Oberon and I moved into Bathurst and worked in the Bank of New South Wales.

I really enjoyed my time in Bathurst before I was married. It was such a different lifestyle. It was just lovely to do something different and there was more on offer culturally than the Northern Territory.

I met my husband, Bob Webb, at a New Year's Eve party in Bathurst and we were married the following August. Then I settled down to life in the country in the beautiful Tarana valley, where we were very happy for many years.

Our property was Kareela on Lowes Mount Road. We had two children, Rachel and Samuel, and that was lovely for us. We were very happy there and loved the little one teacher school where Bill Knight was the school teacher. Bill was a very successful



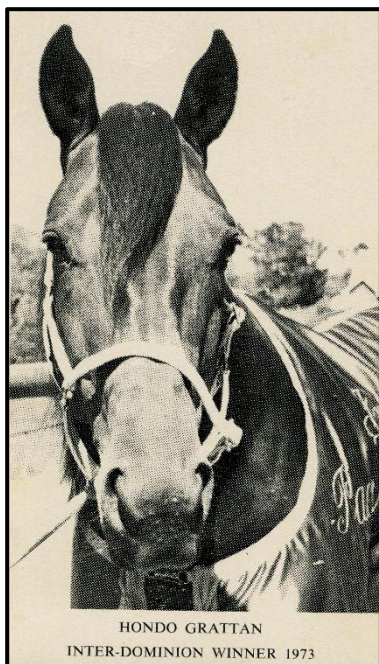
teacher, I thought. Then after primary school they went on the bus to Oberon High for a few years. Sam then went to Scots in Bathurst and Rachel became an exchange student in Ohio in America, so they had really interesting lives as children.

On Kareela we ran sheep and cattle and sometimes we would sow peas or turnips. We had lots of fun on the property, lots of laughs. The Tarana Valley people were just lovely. In those days there were two grocery shops, a post office, and a school, but none of that is there anymore. We were fairly well catered for. If you wanted anything you just rang up someone in Bathurst and it would come out by train, so that was handy. There were lots of tennis groups, as most people had a tennis court. We really enjoyed playing on the one down by the railway. We had Rural Youth, I think it was, and Red Cross, and three churches, and now there's two, so we were well off, really, for a little village.

I helped Bob as much as I could and then I became involved with the P&C (Parents and Citizens). I was President of the P&C at school and then President of the Tarana Red Cross, which I enjoyed. That filled my life quite a lot. The Red Cross is one of the small groups still going, and I am still a member.

We used to have lots of bush dances in what was called the Catholic Hall. I can also remember going to a bush dance at Kamaringi. None of that happens anymore, sadly.

My husband and his brother Bill were always interested in trotting and they bred a horse called Hondo Gratton, who was born on our property. They were thrilled when they found out that he was an exceptional small horse. He came from the Hondo Hanover line in New Zealand. Tony Turnbull trained him. Tony's one of the better trainers in New South Wales. We were very fortunate to have Tony train him and Tony just loved Hondo. They were inseparable, really. When they went across to Perth to race, I was so worried about a horse in an aeroplane, but he's a very laid back horse, just very, very passive really. He put his head on Tony's shoulder and went to sleep on the plane. So Tony just adored him. They were a great couple together, a great



team. Some of his important wins were two Inter Dominions, in 1973 and 1974, in Sydney and in Perth. Then we took him to New Zealand where he was about third or fourth, I think. He was retired out at Tony's place. He was Tony's pet really, a beautiful pet, and he is buried at The Lagoon. There's a statue of him on the roof of one of the buildings.

That really was a highlight of our life for a few years. (Editor's note: If you do a search on You Tube under 'Hondo Grattan song' you can hear Johnny Tapp's song about Hondo Grattan)

Bob, of course, went to the trots a lot. He thought nothing of going up and down to Sydney in one night if he was racing in Sydney. I tended to stay home with the children.

When Bob retired we sold our property Kareela and moved to the other side of Oberon, near Edith, where we had a few acres. At Kareela we had looked out to Mount Tarana every day. It was just beautiful, and when we moved to Edith we had a similar sort of view. It was lovely, I loved Edith.

Then we got ourselves involved in the Oberon community. Bob took up bowls and he enjoyed that and I became involved in a lot of things in Oberon. The Art Show, which was a big concern, was held at the RSL each year and the proceeds of that went to the hospital. I was involved in the Open Gardens and, when I was President of the Oberon Garden Club that money also went to the hospital. For 25 years I worked in the Cobweb Craft Shop and I also got involved in the Combined Churches Choir, which was a really lovely choir run by Doug Hanlon. I was in that for 18 years.

Wild OATS (Oberon Amateur Theatrical Society) was a very successful amateur theatrical group in Oberon. We performed in Canberra and Gosford in one-act plays, and everywhere we went we won because we had the just best director, Diane Manson, who could bring the best out in anybody. It's surprising the talent that was around Oberon. Di was an extraordinary director.

I enjoy gardening and I love my garden. It was lovely to open it. That got you going, got you cracking to tidy up and get it ready for the Garden Festival.

When Bob died, I decided to sell that place at Edith and move to Bathurst. I thought I'd just settle in, but it took me quite a while to settle down. I wasn't used to close neighbours, it was weird. I just thought I should be coping with this better, but I didn't. For quite a while I kept thinking, "Oh, I want some open space."

I've now become involved in Bathurst, so it's wonderful. I belong to another choir here and I'm a church organist, here and in Tarana. I belong to the Bathurst Garden Club, and Probus, and I'm involved with the Uniting Church Bathurst. I also do Tai Chi, which I enjoy very much.



I would encourage the younger set to become community-minded. You've got to give back to the community. If you give back to a community, you strengthen that group of people.

Over the years Oberon has become more and more beautiful with the streetscaping, gardens and the planting of the trees. When I was first there years ago it was not a very attractive town at all. Now it has the prettiest entrance both ways into Oberon.

I'm thrilled that the Malachi Hall has been revamped as a Music and Arts Centre, because that was the original reason Malachi Gilmore gave that building to Oberon. It's put Oberon on the map, I feel, with the beautiful music concerts there.

The timber industry that's in Oberon now is huge, and that's helped the economy of Oberon.

I really like small places like Tarana and small towns because I think their communities are very close knit and they look after one another and work well together. It's lost in a big city. Bathurst is a great place to live but it hasn't got that small community feel about it. It certainly does some wonderful things on a bigger scale but smaller communities are just special. You have to adjust when you come to a bigger town, because you're a small fish in a big pond.

You can see I have lived in a lot of places in NSW, but the years I have spent in Oberon have been some of the most enjoyable.

(January, 2026)