

# A Gentleman and a Rascal



Autobiography  
by  
**Brian Buzzard**

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## **CHAPTER 16**

### **The move to Perth**

**Front Cover:** I wish to thank artist Laura Cole for her kind permission to use the second painting from the triptych **Kimberley Grasses**.

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## CHAPTER 16

### The move to Perth

Before we left Toodyay, Don spent quite a lot of time in the St John of God hospitals. During that time, the nuns at the Toodyay convent took all of the children in as boarders, even though Patrick and Philip were still babies and too young to go to school. We sold the business in 1955 and moved to Riverview Street, South Perth.



**Don**

It was a hell of a battle trying to look after the children while Don was unwell, but somehow we always managed, with the help of my mother

and sister in extreme emergencies, and at other times, with the help of a stream of housekeepers. Don was in and out of hospital and at times she seemed to improve, but eventually, she decided to go back to Sydney to be with her brothers and other relatives. Eighteen months later she wanted to return but did not want to live in the big, old house in South Perth so we sold it and moved into a smaller house in Kintail Road, Applecross. I did not like that house until later on in my life when I had it all to myself. I called it the submarine, because it was too small to comfortably accommodate my five children, the housekeeper, myself, and on most weekends, my mother. Those were hard times because it was difficult to find people who were reliable and who wanted the job of housekeeper and carer of five children. I never lost my love for Don even after she had gone from me completely.

There were times when I was in the depths of despair, but my work in the wool and livestock industry, which I loved, kept my mind off my personal worries. It was a terrible blow, to have my wife, whom I loved dearly, and with the help of the medical profession, I had done my utmost to help, leave home the first time temporarily and the last time for good. One thing that helped me to get through that time, was the fact that I knew that I had done all that I could to help her and my conscience was clear in all ways.

Naturally, it was a very unhappy time for the children, and it amazes me that all but Patrick, who died at the age of seventeen in a rifle accident, have been successful in marriage and in business. Children who have lived with a sole-parent, are sometimes more responsible and show a lot of initiative to do for themselves. It was also a great consolation to me when, after many years, Philip came to me and said that he wanted to apologise because he had always thought that I had been the cause of his mother leaving home. I have never spoken a word against her to the children or anyone else because I realised all along, that a nervous condition is a terrible thing to try and get over, especially the depression that can hit mothers after giving birth to children, they now call it post-natal-depression, and the problems associated with the change-of-life. I had no

desire to marry again, although at times there were temptations. I always remember my widowed mother telling me that she had several offers to marry again, but was always sceptical about how a stepfather would treat us children. The same feeling was always in my mind because, occasionally, I had trouble with my children refusing to do what the housekeeper told them to do and I remembered the awkward position I was often placed in. I distinctly remember Terese saying to one of the many housekeepers we had, "You are not my mother. I am not going to take orders from you". That took a lot of smoothing over, but later she and Terese became good friends.

I can recall an incident involving Patrick when we were living in South Perth, which amuses me now but made me uncomfortable at the time. We had just employed a new English housekeeper found for us by an organisation called Universal Aunts. I happened to be home at the time. Patrick was due to go to school and could not find his school sandals. The housekeeper produced a pair of Terese's shoes and insisted that he wore them because he could not go to school in bare feet Patrick objected strongly and the housekeeper appealed to me for help. It was tricky because if I made the wrong decision, I could lose the housekeeper, which were in short supply especially to a household of five children, or I could lose the love and respect Paddy had for me. Although it was hard to do, I forced him to wear Terese's shoes and told him that I would drive him to school. As soon as he got in the car I told him to take the bloody shoes off. I can still remember the look of thanks on his face and how we became mates again. We deviated to Victoria Park and purchased a new pair of sandals for him. "All's well that ends well". My children now assure me that there were many such incidents when I was not there. No wonder we went through so many housekeepers. Eventually, it became very difficult to find decent housekeepers so I sent Patrick and Philip to board at Bindoon Boys Town temporarily.

I had housekeepers coming and going all the time. There are very few people who want to look after six people, but at last Mrs Elsie Webber was introduced to us by Universal Aunts. She and her family had migrated

to Australia from Billericay, England. Her son-in-law became the Canning Shire librarian, her daughter a lecturer at Curtin University, her eldest son worked at Pinjarra with ALCOA and her youngest son has a job in the photographic section of UWA Mrs Webber stayed with us for ten years and I do not know how I could have managed without her. She was a loyal, conscientious, and trustworthy woman, and I always thank the good Lord for giving us such a dedicated housekeeper. She was a few years older than me and when I went to live, off and on, at Minilya, she went to Geraldton to be with her family who had moved to live on a small property just out of Geraldton. She passed away and was cremated there. I was able to attend her funeral. "It was a long way from Billericay."