

A Gentleman and a Rascal



Autobiography
by
Brian Buzzard

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CHAPTER 4

My brothers and sister

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 4

My brothers and sister

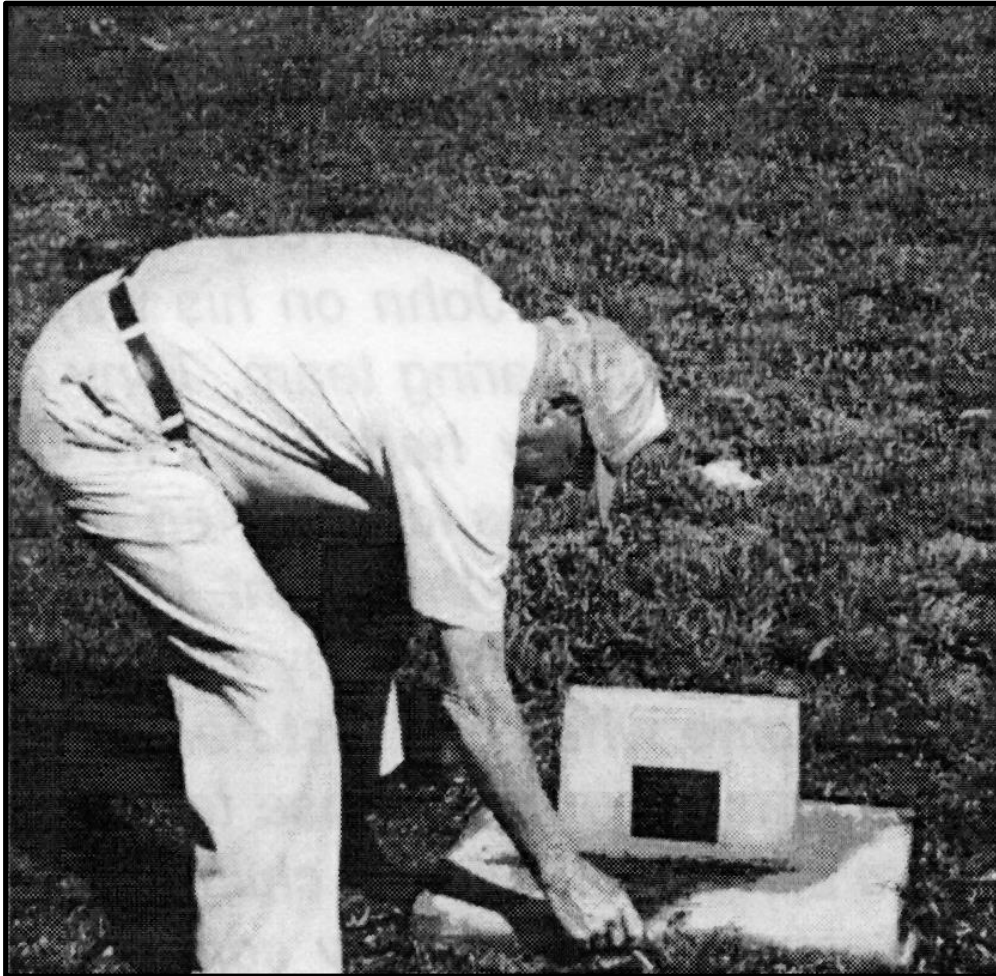
My eldest brother John, who had left school in 1931 at the height of the depression, decided to go to Tasmania to try his luck. He found a job there, working on the bridge which was being built across the Burnie River. He stayed a few years then returned to WA to take up a job with bulk handling wheat during the season, and any odd jobs he could find when he was not working. In 1939 he married Jean Glover who was the Ladies State Tennis Champion for WA. My mother helped them financially to purchase a corner store in the Highgate district, I forget where, and being away in the country, I doubt if I ever saw it. John and Jean went along quite nicely for a while, particularly after having two children, Peter and Pauline, but John was not cut out to be a storekeeper, although Jean did an excellent job. At that time the bigger stores like Charlie Carters and Woolworths went into groceries, fruit and vegetables, and all small businesses felt the pressure.

They decided to get out of the business before they went broke. Not long after that John joined the airforce as a transport driver and served at Geraldton, Pearce and Darwin. While in the Northern Territory he drove airforce personnel to and from Darwin, to airfields as far south as Alice Springs. During that time he met another driver in the airforce who, before the war, had worked a wolfram mine in Tennant Creek. This chap persuaded John to go into partnership with him in the mine when the war was over. On discharge he told Jean about his plans and she agreed to let him go. When he got settled she would take the children to Tennant Creek. The mine was quite a way out of town and there were no houses available in Tennant Creek at that time, so John and his mate lived in a tent at the mine and went in to town once a week for their stores. One day while working in the mine, it was John's turn to go down in the bucket which was lowered by a hand winch. Unfortunately his partner lost control of the winch, which went out of control and he broke his arm trying to stop it. He

failed and John fell one hundred and forty four feet to the bottom of the mine. I understand that it was a hell of a job getting him up out of the mine, but he was still alive. The Flying Doctor took him to Darwin that evening, but he passed away during the night. Because there was no facility to keep bodies in Darwin in those days, he had to be buried immediately. The night before he was buried, the local priest in Darwin rang me at Toodyay, but unfortunately it was impossible for us to be there.

Recently I visited the grave of my brother who was buried in Darwin in 1950. It was only a few years ago that I put a decent headstone on it and I was pleased to see that the local cemetery board kept it immaculate.

His wife Jean had to get a job. She was not trained for any occupation, so she became a barmaid at the Palace Hotel for many years. Her mother came to live with her in South Perth, to look after Peter and Pauline while she was at work. Jean met with a tragic death. After a few years of working behind the bar, she decided that she needed a holiday so she went to Melbourne. She was staying in a boarding house in St Kilda when the place caught fire and they found her charred body at her bedroom door. She had been trying to get out but was caught and overwhelmed by the fire. Her mother, Mrs Glover took over the care of the children with help from my mother, and between all the family we paid all their school fees, clothes and other expenses. Both children turned out to be excellent citizens and found good jobs.



Tending my brother John's grave in Darwin.

My sister Marjorie, who was educated at Loreto Convent, left school in 1933. She obtained a job in Aherns. She later married Jack Bailey, who was in the permanent RAAF. When Jack was flying his first mission in a Beaufort Bomber, he was shot down in an area near Rabaul, New Britain. He was picked up by natives and taken into Rabaul and was handed over to the Japanese. At that time, the Japanese had a ceremony which they used to keep up the morale of their troops. They would bring out an airforce POW whom they claimed they had shot down the night before, and behead him. Unfortunately, that was Jack's fate. They had three children: Jill, who now lives in America, and Jacquie, who married Winston Scotney and lives on a property near New Norcia. Marjorie and Jack's son Tony was born during the war. A few years after the war, Marjorie married again. Her second husband, Rusty Cuming was a very fine gentleman

and a "true blue" citizen who was farming at that time at Korbel. They had one other child, John. Unfortunately, both Tony and John were killed in motor smashes; John on his way home to Perth from work in a shearing team, Tony near their farm at Greenhills. Tony had been in Cunderdin playing basketball and was killed when he hit a tree while hurrying to get home that night. I felt very sorry for Marjorie and helped her in any way I could. She had a hell of a time when she lost her two sons and her two husbands. Four men close to her heart and she lost them all. Because of the children's education and while Rusty was alive, they sold the farm and bought twenty two acres of country named St Annes. It was on the Great Eastern Highway and fronted the Swan River not far from this side of Guildford. They agisted racehorses and trotters there, but I do not think that it was much of a success financially because very few of the owners used to pay. The trainers and owners would drop the horses in, two or more at a time and then they would take them away when Rusty was not there, so he lost track of their agistment fees. My mother lived with them while they were there but after a while they sold out for a good profit and moved to East Fremantle on the northern end overlooking the Swan River. Rusty died there so Marjorie moved into a unit in Palmyra where she was very happy. She had good neighbours and my mother, myself and Jacquie, her daughter, called there often to see her. She lived there happily until two years ago when she passed away with a crook ticker. She was always very helpful to me when I needed help to look after my children. We buried her at Karrakatta in the same grave as one of her sons.

Millar was born in October, 1920 about three months after my father's death. He left Aquinas College and joined the Bank of Australasia. He also joined the airforce in 1941, and like me, became a wireless- operator, air-gunner. Millar and I ran into each other several times during the war years, at different places such as Milne Bay, Darwin and Port Moresby. I was attached to Catalinas and he was with Hudsons and Liberator Bombers. While he was away at war, Millar met a lovely girl named Lola, whose parents lived at Mallacoota on

the east coast, close to the Victorian/New South Wales border. He met her while he was stationed at Baimsdale, the airbase near her home. At that time he was an instructor, having completed his tour in Hudson Bombers. He married Lola in October, 1945 at Bowral, Don Bradman's town. He had been transferred there while working with the bank. He spent the next few years working for the bank in various country towns in NSW until he joined Thomas National Transport (TNT). Mr Thomas who started TNT must have been impressed by Millar, because he offered him a job as Manager of TNT, Newcastle. The money offered plus a car appealed to Millar, because he took the job and moved to Toronto on Lake Macquarie, where I had been some years earlier in flying boats. He asked Mr Thomas to transfer him to Perth if there was ever a job there for him. He was very fortunate because that did happen and he came back to Perth as TNT Westralian Manager. They had three children; Christine born in June 1947, Robert in 1948 and Margaret in 1952.

Millar is a very good golfer and he and Lola have become very enthusiastic members of the Busselton Club. Millar went around the course in a seventy seven recently and at seventy six years old that is pretty good. He hopes to go round the course in the same number as his age and if he keeps up his form and health he may do it. Along with others he may get his name in the Guinness Book of Records.