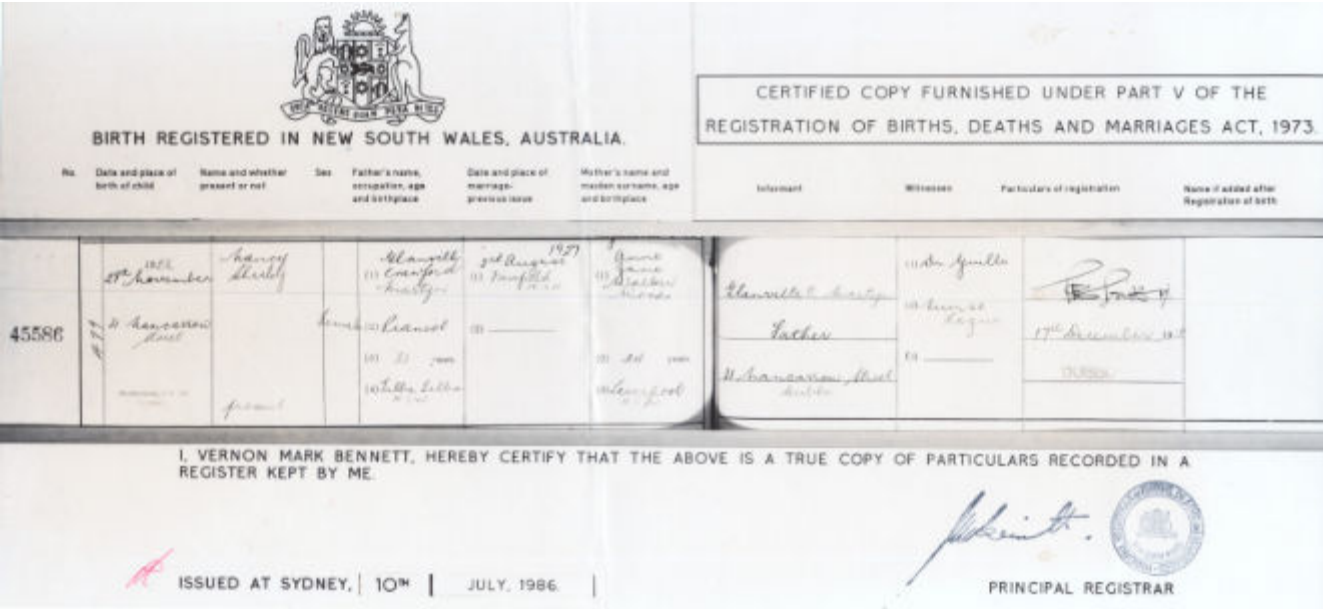




(Nancy) Shirley (née Martyn) Stevens

1928–2018



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Foreword

In 2019, I published my father’s memoirs and his father’s memoirs; we are very fortunate that both typed up their life stories. So I assumed that my mother would have prepared hers too. In fact, a hand-scrawled list of computer files that Dad compiled over several years identifies file number 676.doc as “NSS History”, but the file is nowhere to be found. So I have written down what I know, relying on old photographs, occasional notes that Mum wrote and Uncle Bob, Mum’s surviving brother. Readers are invited to submit corrections and additions.

Matthew Stevens
Thornleigh, NSW, 2020

Shirley was born at 31 Nancarrow Street, Dubbo, NSW.



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Top left: Anne and Glan with Shirley, Dubbo, December 1928.

Left: Portrait of Shirley, 1929.

Above: Shirley at about 6 months in Anne's arms, Glan behind and Glan's sister Auntie Dorrie.

Early life

Shirley's maternal grandparents, John James Woods and Elizabeth Jane Maxwell, were born in what is now Northern Ireland, in neighbouring villages, and migrated separately to Australia in the 1890s, where they met at her sister Maggie's pub near Central Station in Sydney. They had nine children—six girls followed by three boys. Shirley's mother was their second daughter, Anne Jane Walker Woods, born 4 January 1904.

Shirley's paternal grandfather, John Martyn, was born in Cornwall to Welsh parents, where he became a miner. He migrated to Pennsylvania, USA, to work as a mining engineer. Shirley's maternal grandmother, Dorothy Crawford, was born in Stockton, Pennsylvania, to English immigrants of Scottish ancestry. John and Dorothy met and married at church in Pennsylvania (John was a musician and became involved in the Presbyterian church choir) and had three children there before John moved the family to Australia. They moved around NSW and Victoria as John took a series of jobs managing mines and they added four more children. Settling in Tilba Tilba, on the NSW South Coast, close to another mine, they had their eighth and last child, Glanville Crawford Martyn, born 21 November 1893. They later moved to Sydney's eastern suburbs.

Glan was a highly talented pianist, largely self-taught, and was church organist at the McNeill Memorial Presbyterian Church in Waverley, although he worked as a clerk at the Coastal Farmers' Co-operative Society. In 1917 he enlisted in the Australian Army and, following training in Sydney, sailed to the UK to serve as a gunner in France and Belgium in the last year of World War I. Following the Armistice, there weren't enough ships to bring the troops home quickly, and his battalion stayed

for most of 1919. Being a musician, he joined The Courtiers' concert party, which kept the waiting troops in France and then England entertained. Returning home, he followed his career as a musician, finding work in the silent movies as an accompanist.

Anne worked as a seamstress, but also helped out at her parents' open-air cinema on The Crescent, Fairfield, which had roles for most of the siblings. This might be how she met Glan.

Anne and Glan married on 3 August 1927 but moved to Dubbo, in central NSW, where Glan had a job as an accompanist at the Monarch Empire Theatre. Shirley later told her grandson Robert: "They had a theatre and they also had an open air cinema where people sat in deck chairs in the summertime to watch the movie in the open air."

Shirley was born on 29 November 1928 at 31 Nancarrow Street, Dubbo, a simple worker's cottage. Her mother wanted her to be named Nancy. Her father wanted to call her Shirley. Both won. As a baby, Shirley used to sleep beneath the piano while Glan played.

With the arrival of the talkies, Glan found himself out of a job, and took up work as a local bus driver for a while, but the arrival of the Great Depression forced the family to move back to Sydney. They moved to Fairfield, where Anne's parents and siblings lived, and Anne's parents set them up in a little grocery shop at 24 Frederick Street. "So we came back to Sydney where my mother's mother—my Nana, your great-great grandmother—had bought a little shop and put my parents in there to work."

"Now, my dad was out every night playing the piano and my mother used to have to cook on the wood stove at



Shirley (seated) with cousin Betty Osborne, Lackey Street, Fairfield, 1931.



Shirley on Betty's trike, Lackey Street, Fairfield, 1931.

night and give us our dinner and bath us, put us to bed, and then she'd go into the shop, where she used to weigh up bags of sugar. Butter came in boxes and she used to have to cut the butter, wrap it up in paper and then put it in the icebox. There were no refrigerators then either. And she worked very hard and she looked after us very well; she made all our clothes for us. And at that time, during the Depression, there was very little money about. So she used to unpick the bags that the flour came in. And she used to boil them up in the copper and stitch them together and make sheets for our beds, and she made our underwear out of the same bags. She was really very special."

Despite having food in the shop, they lived a hand-to-mouth existence, as they could barely afford the food that they stocked. Her friends couldn't understand why the family couldn't just eat their stock, and felt that they were somehow privileged. Shirley's brother Bob wrote: "These were tough times for our little family as most of Mum's and Dad's customers were very hungry but couldn't pay their bills, and there was often a last-minute dash by Dad to the bank to make a deposit to cover a cheque before it bounced." At least Glan had his musical skills and picked up extra income by playing for local dances with his orchestra, which became a popular part of the social scene in south-western Sydney during the 1930s.

Shirley's brother John Glanville Martyn was born in 1931. Shirley started school in 1934, at the age of 5. "I went to school at Fairfield Public School right through from kindergarten to [year] six. I was always known as the best reader in the school, and whenever there was any special function on Anzac Day or the Queen's [King's?] birthday, I would be the one standing up on the stage at the picture show reading something special that



Above: John and Shirley with Big Teddy, 1932. Below: Big Teddy at 90.





Above: Dossie Slender, Shirley, Betty Osborne and Ronnie Slender, 1932.
 Top right: Shirley and John with Anne and another at Mona Vale, 1932.
 Right and below: John and Shirley, 1933.



the headmaster had chosen." Being taller than the other girls (an irony given that she reached only 5 feet 6 inches tall, or 167 cm), she was often called on to lead marches in the playground.

Until her first haircut at the age of 6, she had long blonde curls down to her waist. Being of a similar age to the child star Shirley Temple, with similar hair and the same name, she drew a lot of comparisons. She liked to sing and dance, too, which one day led to disaster as, dancing down the hallway in their house, she fell through the rotten floorboards! "I could sing and I just enjoyed myself. I wasn't a noisy child. I used to love to read a lot and I still like to read a lot, but then when you're small like that you don't realise what life is like when it's hard work for your parents."

Shirley was left-handed (along with George and both of their children). But while most left-handed children were forced, often by physical punishment, to write with their right hand (as George was), Shirley escaped the irrational "correction": at the start of each school year, her mother would meet the teacher and instruct him or her not to coerce Shirley. In later life, Shirley would look for opportunities to identify with other left-handers she randomly encountered.

Having five aunts and three uncles on her mother's side and four aunts and two uncles on her father's side, Shirley was blessed with dozens of cousins: 35 on the Woods side and several more on the Martyn side. "I had lots of cousins and I played every afternoon after school with all my cousins. My mother had five sisters and three brothers and we all lived close to each other. In those days people didn't move about the country a great deal; they just stayed with their families in the area where they were born."

Shirley's brother Robert (Bob) Crawford Martyn was



Glan, Shirley, John and Anne at an exhibition at the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylon, 1935.



Above: Class photo, Fairfield Public School, 1936. Shirley is in middle row, second from left.
Left: Detail of class photo, Fairfield Public School, 1935.

born in 1937. Being 8½ years older than Bob and with both parents flat out trying to earn an income, Shirley became a second mother to Bob, who later wrote: “As I became a little older I began to realise I had two Mums because you were there to care for me when Mum was busy in the shop, being 8 years older and with a noticeable maternal instinct. I would have been doing OK except for our brother who made it clear that his preference was for me to move to another planet.”

“World War 2 had started and things got pretty grim. Dad dug a trench in the shed [behind the Fairfield shop] that was in the backyard [in case] we were bombed. He chose to dig the trench inside to stop it filling with water when it rained. Being a veteran of WWI he doubtless had plenty of practice.”

After 10 years of running the shop, around 1940 Glan and Anne sold it and moved to Ashfield. Bob wrote: “Dad’s Fiat car broke a tooth off the crown wheel, and as we were then at war with Italy, parts were unavailable, so I am guessing that this event triggered the decision to move to Ashfield. This meant a new car and a new job for Dad.” Glan joined the Producers’ Distributing Society (a rural produce co-op), where he worked for 8 years.

In 1941, Shirley started at Liverpool Girls’ High School in what is now called year 7. At school, all the girls learned to touch-type, and their mothers were required to make and supply a bib for each girl to tie behind her neck and over the typewriter so that the girls couldn’t look at their hands as they typed. In year 9, Shirley qualified in Pittman’s shorthand. In the same year she was confirmed in her church fellowship, where she had many friends. One friend, perhaps from later work, invited her home one day for dinner. Her mother served spaghetti bolognese, the first such that Shirley had ever eaten. It



Shirley, John and Bobbie, 1937 (above) and 1938 (below).





Above: Class photo, Liverpool Girls' High School, 1941. Shirley is in the second-back row, third from left in that row. Below left: At Circular Quay, from left: Eunice, Kathleen, Betty (friend), Gladys, Norma, Shirley, 5 November 1944. Below right: In Hyde Park, from left: Shirley, Betty (cousin), Lorna, Miss Cuthbert, Margaret, Pat, Berenice, Shirley, Joan, September 1940.



made a change from her mother's rigid meat-and-three-veg meals of chops, mashed potato, un stomachable boiled pumpkin or choko, and a slurry of green vegetables.

Shirley left school in what is now year 9, as most kids did then, and with her stenographic skills earned a series of jobs with firms in the city. She said that in those days, one could walk out of a job and straight into another. She worked from 1947 to 1954 for the Mercantile Mutual Insurance Company in Pitt Street as a “shorthand-typiste”. Decades later she still took notes in shorthand and could still belt out correspondence on a typewriter.

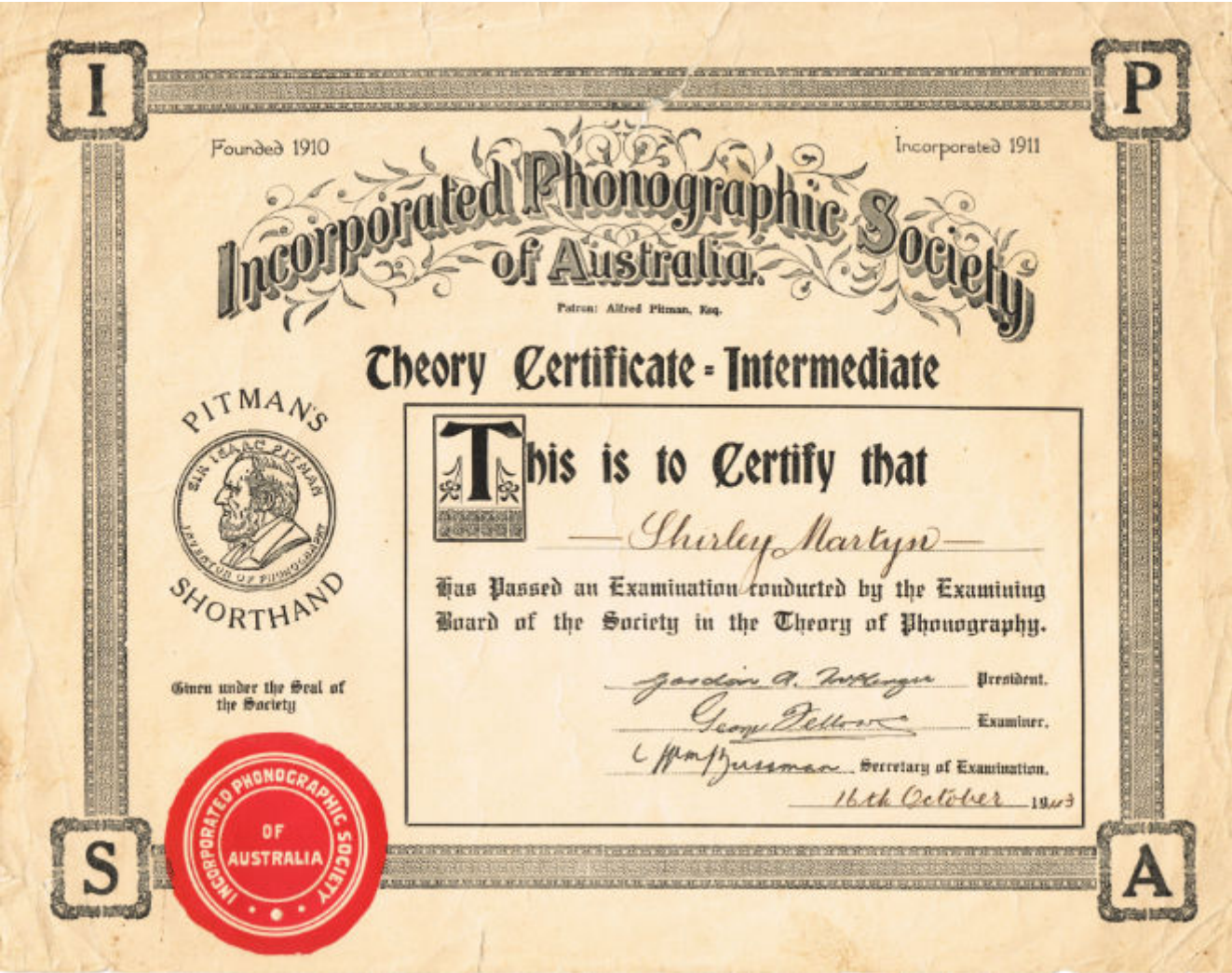
During her late teens she joined the Fairfield Players, an amateur dramatic group that put on light plays, including “Bus Stop” and “Annie Get Your Gun”, in which she played—and sang—Annie. There she met Jacqueline Oram-Burd, whom she invited home one day for lunch. She recalled her brother John laying eyes on Jacqueline and “his tongue hanging out”. John and Jacqueline later married.

At around the same time, the family moved to 83 Berwick Street, Guildford, a few kilometres away. Glan later worked for 10 years at Winns Department Store in Auburn. During another period, he worked as a piano demonstrator and salesman at Palings Music Store on George Street, Wynyard.

Shirley was the second grandchild to Nana and Pop Woods. Her cousin Betty (Eva Elizabeth Osborne) was born 2 years earlier, and the two of them remained best friends throughout their lives. The other Woods cousins were younger than Shirley, but the Martyn cousins were all much older on account of the gap of almost 20 years between Glan and his oldest sister. Both of Glan's parents had died many years before Shirley was born, so



Shirley, Bobbie and Anne in a street photo, 1939.



she never knew them, but her elderly aunts and uncles and the older cousins were regular features in her life. Glan's sister Auntie Blanche, who lived in Newport, survived until 1961. Glan's great-niece Minnie Collett, granddaughter of his sister Minnie Maud, was one cousin Shirley remained in contact with into the 2000s. Minnie bore a striking resemblance to Shirley.

Nana and Pop Woods lived for many years over the road from the Bowtell family, and the Woods children grew up alongside the Bowtell children. (Nana and Pop lived on the corner of York and Frederick Streets; the Bowtells lived opposite in Frederick Street. Pa Bowtell had a wood yard.) The Woods children were all kept clean and tidy. The Bowtell children were allowed to roam free. When someone once wondered why the Woods children often got sick and the Bowtell children didn't, Nana Woods suggested that the germs couldn't get through all the dirt. When Shirley was a child, Nanna (Emily) Bowtell became a second grandmother to her. Nanna Bowtell's daughter, Auntie Vera Jones, took a role in raising John, who would have preferred to be an only child. Nanna Bowtell lived to the age of 103 (circa 1974), and looked after herself, despite failing eyesight, to the end.

As a child, Shirley would go with her family for long drives out into the countryside of what is now West Penant Hills and Castle Hill to visit the farm and orchard of Auntie Edie Gee, one of Nana Woods's nieces. Her father's original car—a Ford Model T—was built before pumping technology was invented, so the petrol flowed from the tank to the engine solely under gravity. If he ever had to drive up a steep hill, he had to drive up in reverse or the engine would stop for want of petrol. "My dad always had a car. He needed that because of going out at night to play the piano for dances and balls and



Nanna (Emily) Bowtell's 90th birthday party, circa 1958.
Back left: Uncle Sid. Three Woods sisters present—Isabella Margaret (with glasses), Anne Jane Walker, Eva May —and Eva's younger daughter, Rosemary Maitland Jackson. (Woman in centre is not identified; perhaps Auntie Vera)



Top left: Shirley at Narrabeen camp ground, December 1944.

Left: Shirley and Anne in street photo, Martin Place, 1949.

Above: Friend Betty and Shirley in King George V Garden, Hyde Park, 25 February 1945.

people's weddings, and he also played the organ at church. He was really very talented. And on some days he'd take us all somewhere for the day: to the beach, or we'd go for a drive around Castle Hill. In those days there were very few houses out there—it was all lots of paddocks and cows and orchards out that way—and the beaches were always fairly empty and we'd take sandwiches with us, and we could buy some boiling water somewhere; there'd always be a little shop by the beach. We'd go and buy boiling water for our tea and we'd have soft drinks with some fruit. It was a really happy time. Quite different from the way people live these days."

One annual trek involved packing the car, an Austin by this time, with camping gear and driving the arduous journey into the foreign wilds of Narrabeen, on Sydney's Northern Beaches, where the family would camp every summer. The tradition started in 1942 and lasted 15 years. Glan would rig up a kerosene tin of water over the fire so the family could have a hot shower every day. He would commute to work each day from the campground. Later, Shirley would catch the bus to Manly and the ferry into the city to work, and then come back to the camp for a swim in Narrabeen Lagoon.

One day Glan had a car accident as he was driving home in Guildford from work. Shirley wrote:

"Coming home from the train, the temperature was cool, getting dark, and as I turned the corner I saw my Dad's car parked askew in the gutter instead of it being in the garage. A tragedy had occurred; the car should have been in the garage.

"I went into the house to see Mum crying and Dad in shock—a lad aged 16 ran into the car on his motorbike. As Dad was turning the corner, the bike went under the



Above: Glan, Shirley and Anne at Shirley's 21st birthday party, November 1949.

Below: Shirley and Bob at Narrabeen camp ground, 1950.



No. 21

NEW SOUTH WALES

No. C 93532

in Minister's Register.

7740

Register's No. []

MARRIAGE ACT, 1899-1948.
(FOURTH EDITION.)

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE

I, ARNOLD CEDRIC PIKE,
Assistant District Registrar of Marriages,
do hereby Certify that I have this day at the Registrar General's Office, Sydney duly solemnized Marriage between
George Woodford Stevens
and Nancy Shirley Masters
Minister, 13 Brunswick Street, Sydney.

after declaration duly made before me as by law required.

DATED this 14th day of October 1952

[Signature] (Signature of Minister or Registrar.)
(Deputy Registrar.)
(Deputy Registrar.)

File No. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800

[illegible]

Anne, George, Shirley and Glan following Shirley and George's secret civil marriage ceremony in Sydney on 16 October 1953.

car, and the lad was thrown onto the footpath. The police came; so did the neighbours. The boy died. Dad had to go to court, but he was not charged."

A neighbour in the next street—83 Bangor Street—heard about the accident and sent his son, visiting on leave from the Navy, around to ask after Glan. The young naval officer was George Stevens. Only a year later, he and Shirley were married!

Marriage

As George was in the Navy and thus away a lot of the time, he and Shirley decided to get married in secret so that she qualified for a wife's allowance while he was away for several months, giving them both time to plan for a church wedding and to work out where to live. So on 16 October 1953, they were married in the Registrar General's office in Sydney with only her parents and his father and stepmother present. George didn't tell his mother, who could be difficult, and Shirley didn't tell her brothers or anyone else. While George was away at sea, Shirley continued to live with her parents as Miss Martyn and continued to go to work, never letting on that she was now married.

They then took several months to decide, via frequent postal exchange from Sydney to the HMAS *Sydney*, when and where they would marry, and where they would live. They eventually settled on 26 June 1954 at St Mark's Church of England, Granville. It was a lavish affair, with many guests, including Shirley's parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Afterwards, they flew to Lord Howe Island. This involved catching the flying boat from Rushcutters Bay, on Sydney Harbour, at half past



Glan, George, Shirley and Anne following Shirley and George's church wedding, Masonic Hall, Granville, NSW, 26 June 1954.

Samarai
Main Road
Pondicherry
Nov. 26th 1953.

Dear Shirley,

It's no use being really formal, is it? So I am calling you Shirley to start with. Indeed we are getting used to hearing your name when our letters come from Guildford.

Moreover I am just sending these few lines to Congratulate you upon your engagement to "our" George. He is a dear boy & I most sincerely hope that the future holds great happiness for you both. I guess the parting was pretty awful for both of you, but time passes so very quickly that the "Sydney" will soon be coming

Letter welcoming Shirley to the family from Pem (Emma née Daws) Stevens, George's paternal grandmother, 26 November 1953.

2

home again. I must send a few lines to George, but I had to wait for his address. His Dad sent it yesterday. How strange that your homes have the same No. 93. It was that you are able to pop in & see our folk at 83. Bangor St. I was so pleased to hear that your Father liked the tone of the little Organ I am so glad they have it, but we miss it all the same. I guess Ian has fun staying to play. We often talk of him & long to see him - Also his Mother I do hope she is getting quite strong again.

We heard of the beautiful flowers you were presented with. No doubt you wished George could have seen them.

3

We have had such a lot of rain today. The weather changes so suddenly. Sunday has gone to a Birthday afternoon, then was fortunate a friend called for her & saved her getting wet. She will be sending you a message soon also.

With you please give our kind regards to your Father & Mother - also the Season's Greetings.

So again wishing you much happiness dear, of course George is included in this - With a happy welcome into our Family I remain

Yours with love.
George's Grand-ma

Mrs S. Harris.
93. Berwick Street.
Guildford.
H. S. W.



Above: Shirley on her honeymoon on Lord Howe Island, June 1954.

Top right: Shirley and John with John's fiancée, Jacqueline Oram-Burd, Wentworth Falls, 1953.

Bottom right: Shirley knocking in the survey post for the house in Huskisson, 1957.

Below: Bob, Shirley, John, Jacqueline, Anne and Glan at John and Jacqueline's wedding, 23 October 1954.



midnight to coincide with the tide. At Lord Howe Island, they were met by the only vehicle on the island, a Holden ute, and so began their honeymoon.

During their long-distance correspondence, George revealed that his mother had decided to sell her house in Melbourne and split the proceeds with George and his older brother, Dick, who had both contributed to its renovation. That would then give George and Shirley enough money for a house deposit. But it took a while for a house to eventuate, as first they lived on base at Jervis Bay in Married Quarters, and then later moved off base to rent in a series of grubby two-room shacks while they saved for the rest of the deposit. Finally, in 1957, they scraped together enough money to buy land at 22 Owen Street, Huskisson, not far from the naval base, and George then took leave from the Navy to build the house himself. He bought books on building, with step-by-step diagrams showing how to saw and drill and lay bricks, and bought several hand tools that are still in use 60 years later. Shirley worked as his labourer. She called him Corky (a pet form of George) and he called her Tom, as befits a builder's labourer.

He cut all of the timber by hand and hammered in all of the nails by hand. The house was clad in fibro-asbestos sheets, and why he didn't contract mesothelioma will remain a mystery. Being a qualified electrician, he later (not initially) wired up the house. Being a self-taught man, he did all of the plumbing, joinery, roofing and glazing himself too. For heating, they installed a slow-combustion stove, which kept the house warm in winter and provided hot water for the bath and shower. It also cooked all of the meals.

Out the back they kept chickens for their eggs. In those days, chicken feed was supplied in cotton fabric bags, typ-



Above: 22 Owen Street, Huskisson. Below: George (left), Shirley (right, with Matthew) and naval wife Jenny Moloney (with twins), for whom Jennifer Rosalie was named, Huskisson, 1960.





In 1954 in Hong Kong, George took a black-and-white photograph of Shirley to a man who painted portraits. The man was deaf, so perhaps he had an interpreter. The man painted a portrait of Shirley on silk (left). He asked George what colour Shirley's eyes were. "Um, brown?" Shirley had blue eyes. Back home, George's father, Fred, decided to fix it, and pulled out his watercolour paints. The blue paint immediately ran into the silk and spoiled the painting. It took several decades to fade.

ically striped in pastel colours, which Shirley would unpick to make clothes, following her mother's example.

The house was a 3-minute walk from the shops in Owen Street and a 1-minute walk to the cinema. The cinema was the social hub of the village. Two of their neighbours from their previous rented accommodation were Mr and Mrs Van. When a movie was showing, Mr Van would place a brick in the oven for an hour and then wrap it in "a good-quality *Herald*" so he could rest his feet on it in the cold cinema.

One day while George was away serving in Korea, Shirley was at the cinema, and the newsreels were showing while the audience waited for the feature to start. Suddenly George marched across the silver screen in an old newsreel featuring the Australian contingent at the Queen's Coronation. Shirley cried out, "It's George! It's George!" The whole theatre knew.

Mr Van was an early form of television remote control. When George was away at sea, Shirley would visit the Vans for meals and company. Mrs Van would issue the instruction, "Nine, please, John," and the channel would change. The television was an early colour model: the screen was covered with a sheet of blue cellophane, ostensibly to mask the snow in the picture, which came all the way from Sydney, 100 miles (160 km) to the north. A few years later, Shirley's mother's back-fence neighbour, who kept budgerigars in an aviary, acquired a blue budgie that was called Johnnie Van. The neighbour also kept Trixie the Corgi, who would come to visit Anne through the gate in the fence.

To keep Shirley company during the frequent periods when George was away at sea, and to provide some protection, George acquired Carl, a German shepherd. Carl kept Shirley safe at all times, particularly when she



Carl the German Shepherd beside the Holden ute at 14 Shackel Avenue, Guildford.



How this gathering in 1954 came to take place, and where, is not recorded. Rear: Glan. From left: Jean Stevens (married George's brother Dick) with son Christopher William Stevens, Cecily (née Pescott) Stevens (George's mother) and Shirley.



Above: George and Shirley in the Dandenongs, Victoria, 1955.

Above right: Shirley with Matthew and Carl the German shepherd, 1960.

Below right: Shirley with Matthew, 1960.



tried to go swimming at the beach in Huskisson, when Carl would dutifully dog-paddle out in the waves, gently take Shirley's wrist in his mouth, and tow her back to shore. Carl proved to be too loyal to the family when he attacked the postman one day, and in 1962 was put to sleep.

In July 1957, one of Anne and Glan's neighbours, Mrs Leslie Tobin, hired a recording engineer (David Cummings of Wonder Records, a one-man operation) based in Pymble, on Sydney's Upper North Shore, to bring his recording equipment to Guildford to record Glan at the piano. Despite having played as a church organist, in the silent movies, at dances and for friends and family, Glan had never made a recording. The resulting cutting, with only six or seven copies, was the only recording he ever made. Many years later it was converted to CD and lodged with the National Film and Sound Archive. The timing was fortuitous: Glan had a stroke in late December 1957 and was admitted to Fairfield Hospital, where he had a second stroke and died on 27 December. This was the third death in the family in quick succession, as Pop and Nana Woods also died during 1957.

By late 1955, with no pregnancy in sight, George underwent testing, which showed a 5% motility count, so he was prescribed a course of a drug called Antuitrin "S" (anterior pituitary-like sex hormone). In the meantime, they began an application to adopt. Just as the adoption application approached fruition, Shirley became pregnant in 1959.

George was away at sea in April 1960 when Matthew Lindsay was born, and it was 6 weeks before he got to meet his first born. So when Shirley went into labour, Mr Van drove her to the Shoalhaven Base Hospital in

Nowra. He then brought her back home again. George had wanted to call his son Simon. Shirley got in first.

Life in their little house was at first tough, as it was a few years before George installed electricity. Despite repeated applications for promotion in the Navy, George ran into the seniority wall, which ensured that officers were promoted on the basis of time served, not merit, and the income was not much. His smoking habit didn't help. From the age of 16, when he joined the merchant navy, George had smoked heavily. He was still smoking when Matthew was born. One day, Shirley was unpicking chicken feed bags to make clothes for Matthew on account of having no money, and George announced that he was off to the shops to buy cigarettes. Shirley threw a fit: "I'm unpicking chook food bags to make clothes for the baby and you're wasting money on cigarettes!" There and then he quit, and he never touched them again.

The frugality of making clothes, and the pride in doing so, continued throughout Shirley's life, as she continued to knit jumpers and make shirts, pyjamas, dresses and trousers for all of the family until she was about 80.



Shirley with Matthew and Jenny, 14 Shackell Avenue, Guildford, 1962.



Shirley with Matthew and Jenny, 83 Berwick Street, Guildford, 1963.

A civilian wife

Having missed the birth of his first child and unwilling to wait another 10 years for promotion, George resigned from the Navy in 1961 and the family moved to Sydney, initially to rented accommodation in a two-room flat behind a dentist's rooms at 26 Smart Street, Fairfield. This suited Shirley, as her now-widowed mother was close by. It was far preferable to her regular drives from Huskisson to Sydney and back with the baby in a bassinet unsecured on the front seat of the family's ute. Shirley and George's second child, Jennifer Rosalie, was born on 13 September 1962. By this time George had tried two unsuccessful jobs, first as a radio technician at TCN Channel 9 in Willoughby and then selling shirts in David Jones on George Street, before successfully talking his way into IBM as a customer engineer. This gave George enough income that they were able to sell the house in Huskisson and buy a fibro shack at 14 Shackell Avenue, Guildford, close to Shirley's mother and youngest brother.

George worked hard, and rapid promotion in IBM saw him offered a two-year transfer to Melbourne. So in 1964, with IBM's help in moving and financing the sale of the house in Guildford and the purchase of a house in Melbourne, the family drove from Sydney via overnight stops in Gundagai and Wangaratta to Melbourne. At first they stayed with George's father, Fred, and stepmother, Nance, at 2 Kyarra Road, Glen Iris, while they scouted around for a house. They settled on a newly built spec home at 40 Grenfell Road, Mount Waverley (for the total sum of £6000). At first, Shirley knew no one in Melbourne, but quickly made local friends, particularly with the next-door neighbour, Edyth Kirk, and her husband, Brian. The Kirks had a little boy, Gregory, who was just 3 days older than Jenny, and two younger daughters, and



Above: George with Jenny and Matthew at 40 Grenfell Road, Mount Waverley, 1965.
Below: Shirley with Jenny and Matthew at 40 Grenfell Road, 1964.





Matthew and Jenny at the flat in Grasmere Road, Cremorne, 1966.



Shirley (centre) and Jenny (below) at the reception for Bob's wedding to Karen Morgan (far right), Pymble, NSW, 1965. Photo includes Auntie Eva (obscured) and Hilary Tobin (right).



Shirley (centre), George (far back right), Matthew and Jenny, along with Uncle Keith Goodacre (far left) and Auntie Marie and Uncle Davey Woods (right), 26 June 1965.

the children got on very well. The day after Shirley and George moved in, Jenny, at only 15 months old, scaled the dividing paling fence and invited herself in to play. The Stevens children and the three Kirk children remained playmates for years after.

George had grand plans to make money. One involved turning the house into a restaurant at which Shirley would cook. Shirley's response was that she would walk and take the children with her. Another was to buy a block of land as an investment. They bought a block in then uninhabited Vermont in Shirley's name (for taxation purposes). The purchase price isn't retained, but it sold in 1976 for \$15,000.

In the 1960s, door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesmen were a clear and present menace. One day while the children were asleep, Shirley opened the door to one such menace. He used the trick of sticking his shoe in the door and wouldn't take no for an answer. He threw dirt on the carpet and then showed how his cleaner picked it all up (it didn't). In distress and unable to get rid of him, Shirley caved in and bought one. When George got home, he was furious, and the next day phoned the company and forced them to refund the money. The residual dirt eventually came out.

In 1965, they travelled to Sydney for Shirley's brother Bob's wedding to his first wife, Karen Morgan. Bob worked for the PMG (Post Master General's Office) as an electrical technician, and had just come back from 1 year living and working in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. So their mother, Anne, was very upset when Bob and Karen announced that they were moving to Tasmania for Bob to join the Hydro-Electric Commission. To Anne, Tasmania was self-evidently "overseas", and Bob was abandoning her.

In 1966, impressed by George's abilities, IBM transferred

him back to Sydney, *during* the 2-year contract in Melbourne. So the family spent the first half of 1966 living in a flat in Grasmere Road, Cremorne, once again bringing Shirley and the children in contact with family. Then they moved back to Melbourne for another 7 years of the 2-year contract.

In 1967, Jenny started kindergarten at the local church, St Mark's, which she loved. (Matthew had hated the noise.) Shirley picked her up one day and asked who had been there that day. With a lisp (which Shirley had had at the same age), Jenny replied, "Franthoithe wathn't" (referring to twin French children, François and Françoise). The distinction was never clarified.

The years 1967 to 1971 saw the family grow in Melbourne. Perhaps to pay for the investment property in Vermont, Shirley took a job as a dressmaker at a garment factory in an inner Melbourne suburb. Most of the women there were recent migrants. One took a liking to Shirley and regularly gave her home-made salamis to take home. Shirley never really worked out what to do with them. To get to work, Shirley bought an ancient black Hillman Minx with a hole in the floor on the front passenger's side, through which the road could be watched during travel. During this period, also, Anne used to come and visit about once a year, taking the Southern Aurora sleeper train overnight from Sydney Central to Spencer Street Station. It was always a special time for the children.

During this time, Matthew joined the Cubs, and on a trip to Trentham, in western Victoria, with George as one of the cub masters, acquired a kitten. She came to be called Dibbies, and became a much travelled cat.

George drove an old Ford Falcon, registration JCA 295. The family called it the "Batmobile", on account of its top



16 Glendowan Road, Mount Waverley, Victoria, 1973. Far left: Shirley; far right: Matthew; on roof: Jenny.