



Jane Hocking (nee Tinker)

JANE HOCKING

Jean Cassin

Recollections of stories told to us by our Mother, Jane (Jenny) Hocking, of her early life. This was written to commemorate her 100th Birthday on the 21st November, 1986.

From her daughter, Jean Cassin.

Our Mother, Jane Lindley, was born in Murrumbidgee (now called Wongarbin), New South Wales on 21st November, 1886.

Her father was an Englishman named James; and her Mother, whom I shall refer to as Grandma, was Albina Thorley before their marriage. It is shown on Mother's birth certificate that he was a farmer and storekeeper. She told us that he built the first hotel in Wongarbin.

She was about two and a half when she lost her father, so she has no recollection of him. Grandma took over the proprietorship of the hotel to keep herself and her young family. The children were Ada, an only brother Elijah, our Mother Jane, and Ruth.

Grandma later remarried and her second husband was Frederick (Fred) Tinker, also from England. He was a stationmaster. Thenceforth, the girls took the name of Tinker while they were growing up. It is also worth mentioning that from her childhood Mother was always known as Jennie, only using her real name of Jane for official purposes.

Their stepfather became ill, so the family moved to Lithgow where the climatic conditions were colder. They remained there for four years, during which time Grandma opened a mixed business shop.

When Fred Tinker had fully recovered, they moved to Bathurst where he opened a boot shop. Mother said they lived there till she was nine.

When the railway line from Perth to Kalgoorlie was opened up, her stepfather and others so recruited, came to Western Australia to become the first stationmaster in the country town of Tammin. Until the railway homes were built, Grandma and family returned to Wongarbin for two years, where she ran a boarding house. As soon as practicable, they took ship to join him. They landed at Albany and travelled overland to Perth,

thence by train to Tammin.

One of Mother's earliest accomplishments was to learn to crochet. In those days, hand-made lace trimmed many personal and household items. When she was older she was co-opted to teach other girls at school. All our family had beautiful examples of her very fine work. These included dressing table sets, dining table centre pieces and place mats. Once Mother crocheted a double bedspread, which Betty keeps as a treasured heirloom.

Washday in the household needed some preparation the day before; so, late on Sunday afternoon, the girls took their buckets to the big railway water tank situated near the station and some way from the house. They filled the galvanised tubs and the boiling copper. The older girls took turns to help their Mother on wash days. Our Mother told us that every two or three weeks all the white lace window curtains were changed and laundered because of the dust, as were the white bedspreads and pillowshams. When I think of all the starched ironing that was required in that household, I can readily appreciate the electrical appliances in use today. One can only imagine what ironing day must have been like with flat irons heated on the kitchen stove, sometimes in full heat of a summer's day. Grandma was also a registered nurse, so she kept a ready supply of starched aprons.

Each year Grandma's registration was renewed. Records in Perth verify this. She was frequently called to sick beds and to act as midwife. Once an Aborigine called and asked her to accompany him when his wife had difficulty in childbirth. Later, Grandma opened the first hospital in Kellerberrin, a town about fifteen miles further up the line.

Before there were sufficient pupils to open a school in Tammin, the family had to travel by train to Meckering to attend school, leaving home at six in the morning and not returning until six in the evening. In the winter mornings, grandma filled bottles with hot water for the children to warm their hands. It got too much for Mother when she was about thirteen, so for her final school years, she was a day scholar at the Coolgardie Convent. She boarded with friends who had left Tammin to live in that town.

When Mother left school at sixteen, she returned to Tammin happily thinking that her school days were behind her... but, the Tammin

community still wanted a school and they were still three short of the required twenty pupils, which would warrant the opening of a school and the posting of a teacher. Two young friends, Winnie and Millie Packham, were about to go to Perth to finish their education, but their parents were persuaded to keep them at Tammin for another year. Mother was also approached and asked if she would consider completing one more year at school. She did agree to make up the required number of pupils and so helped in the establishment of the Tammin school.

When she left school she became the principal dressmaker for the family. I remember Aunty Viv telling us that Grandma's blouses and dresses were all stiffened with whalebone. No electric sewing machines in those days.

Around the station house in Tammin, Mother had wild birds which were tame enough to approach and be fed. The family also had a large walk-in aviary housing a variety of birds, including talking parrots and galahs. They even had a pet magpie which we were told could talk.

About this time Mother acquired a pony of her own, which enabled her to get about and enjoy rides in the countryside. Sometimes, the pony would become temperamental and pig-root, so she would have to dismount and walk him home, sometimes for miles.

At this time Tammin still had no Post Office, so Fred Tinker attended a meeting of the Progress Association to put in a request, through them, that he open a Post Office. Back came the reply from Perth in the affirmative and the minutes of that meeting are still able to be read and give written testament that the Postal Authority would grant such a request; but seeing that Mr Tinker was already the recipient of a Government salary, it would not be permissible to draw another. His Post Office salary must be paid directly to the Receiver of Public Monies.

It is stated that Mr Tinker then asked if his daughter might run the Post Office and receive the salary herself. This proposal was agreed upon; so, as is written in the minutes, Miss Janet (Jane) Tinker opened the first Post Office in Tammin. She was then about seventeen. In the meantime, Mother was working in a fruit shop in Claremont, but when she received the letter from the Progress Association outlining their agreement, she was overjoyed. She had not liked living in Claremont. Grandma had built two cottages in Tammin, so Mother occupied one of these. At first there was not sufficient work to keep her busy, so she took in dressmaking,



Matron Tinker (at Tammin Maternity Hospital) with Mrs Bingham and baby son Ted about 1914.

part-time. About six months later, Grandma built a store and the Temperance Hotel. I remember seeing that building years later when we were living at Kitchener Park. It was used as a boarding house then and was directly opposite the Post Office. It was a one storied iron structure with a railed verandah opening directly onto the street. Mother moved into the shop premises, so she could open a general store and run it in conjunction with the Post Office. She would sell "anything and everything" and would send away to Northam or Perth to fill her customers' orders. Sometimes her sister, Ruth, would help her. The store prospered and, by and by, Mother transferred the Post Office to a lady friend and concentrated on the store. She kept the shop for about six years, finally selling out just prior to her marriage. She sold to a man named Williams from Moora who, in turn, sold to the Lardi brothers. I believe their families still run the business in Tammin today.

It was while Mother still ran the Post Office and store together, that the man she was to marry entered her life. This young man's name was



Railway dining rooms or Temperance Hotel. Photo Marjorie Russell.

Norman Willie Ernest Hocking. Dad had taken it upon himself to turn his first names around, so that his initials would read - NEW. This simplified his signature. In later time, when Dad had died, it required quite a rigmarole for Mother to get all legal documents corrected, because after all those years Dad was still registered as Norman Willie Ernest. None of us were aware of this fact.

Dad told the following story of their first meeting, but Mother always maintained that she had no recollection. At that time, Dad was working for his brother-in-law, George Uppill, his sister Gertrude's husband, to gain further experience before setting up on his own farm. He had heard of the beautiful young post mistress, so he was determined to see her for himself. Mother was considered beautiful. She had a clear complexion with not a blemish, blue-grey eyes and an abundance of golden brown hair. Strange, none of her children had those lovely eyes. All seven of us had the Hocking brown eyes. On the questionable pretext that he required some stamps, he visited the Post Office and shop. In those days stamps cost two-pence (tuppence), so he asked for a "couple of tuppennies, please!" I guess Mother had become used to confronting fresh young men and as she also sold lollies for the same value, her answer was "two tuppenny whats?"



Back row L-R: Geo Uppill, Gertrude Uppill, N. Hocking, H. Hocking Sen., W. Raston, Elsie Hocking. Front row L-R: Allan Uppill, Bernice Uppill, Valarie Hocking, Merrill, Kathleen, Keith Hocking, Mrs Hocking Sen., Mrs Raston, Ross & Lois Raston, Doris Hocking. Photo: Bette L. Lantz

time, they became engaged. Dad acquired his farm at Tammin, which was given the name Wongarbin, after Mother's home town in New South Wales, and he set about preparing their future home. The dining room furniture was a gift from Grandma and her step-father, and Mother told us that Dad constructed their first dressing table from packing cases, which she disguised with a flouncing of material.

Their wedding took place at Tammin on April 14th, 1910. They took the train to Perth for their honeymoon and, for a part of the time, stayed with Grandpa Hocking in Palmerston Street, West Perth. Dad's father had come to WA from South Australia with his brothers. Two stayed in Kalgoorlie and started the "*Kalgoorlie Miner*", while Herbert (Dad's father) and Ernest came to Perth and entered the stock market. Grandpa Hocking was, at one stage, president of the Perth Stock Exchange. He retained his business until his death at the age of 82.

For some years Mother and Dad had a very happy life, during which time four children were born to them. The eldest Phyllis, then Lloyd, Clyde and the baby, Rex. When Phyllis was about seven, an epidemic of diphtheria was rampant and, firstly, Clyde (three and a half) and then Lloyd caught the disease. Mother and Dad rushed them to Grandma's hospital in Kellerberrin. Although Lloyd responded to treatment, Clyde did not get better and died in three days. A little over two weeks later, Phyllis also went down with diphtheria. Mother and Dad decided to take her to Perth and drove all day through pouring rain, a journey of about 113 miles over potholed gravel roads. The doctor said that Phyllis must go to the Infectious Diseases Hospital at Subiaco, and Mother could stay there with her. Rex was just about six months old at this time, so Grandma came from Kellerberrin on the train and took Rex back with her. Sad to relate, Phyllis did not survive. There were just three weeks between the children's deaths.

This first tragedy in their lives was very hard to bear, and the doctor advised Dad that it would be best if they sold the farm and left Tammin. Mother has said since that she would have preferred to stay in Tammin, but the decision was largely taken out of her hands.

The family moved to New South Wales where they stayed for about three years. On returning to the West the family lived in Perth and Dad travelled for "*Westralian Farmers*". In North Perth another son, Max,

was born and I, Jean, was born on 26th May, 1924 in Chelmsford Road North Perth, their address at that time.

Farming still lured Dad, so he bought a property first of all at Toodyay and then at Brookton. The eldest, Lloyd, was away at boarding school Guildford Grammar, where he stayed until he was about sixteen. Later, Rex and Max stayed with friends in Perth to continue their schooling. The last of the family, Betty, was born at Brookton. With the exception of Rex, who was born at Grandma's hospital at Kellerberrin, all of Mother's babies were born at home. Betty's arrival was imminent during the bad floods of 1926 and Dad set off in the rain to bring the doctor. On the way back the car stalled while crossing a swollen creek, so they had to walk the remainder of the way. Dr Hilda Kershaw was a tall lady so she had to don Dad's dressing gown while her clothes dried. Afterwards, Mother was ill for weeks and took a long time to recuperate, so the doctor arranged for a nurse to be in residence.

My earliest recollections of life are at Brookton. There were some huge granite boulders near the house, where we loved to play; an orchard; and I remember the long farm house kitchen and the living room, the ceiling of which appeared to be of hessian coated with a white plaster-like paint. I also remember crying on cold winter mornings because I hated having the hard leather boots laced onto my feet. I had a manicure set in a blue leather case, which apparently cured me of nibbling my fingernails, when it was presented to me as a present. I also remember a gold chain bracelet which I later lost at Tammin, when I took it off as we travelled home from school in our little sulky, drawn by our little black pony, Jessie.

When Betty was about two and a half another tragedy struck. Dad was away in Perth at the time on business. On this particular summer's day, there was a sound as though a car was speeding up the approach road. Max, then about seven, reported that all he could see was some smoke. Smoke, it was, from an approaching bushfire with our farm directly in its path. Afterwards, it was verified that someone on a harvester had carelessly thrown a cigarette butt. Other farmers had seen the danger too, and came to our aid. They fought the blaze all day. Max, Betty and I were placed in the middle of the stone farmhouse. Max related to me, only recently, that once during that day he raced Betty and me out to stand in the dam. Luckily, we were discovered and quickly returned to

the house. Fortunately, I don't remember much about that day, except that one of our young neighbours sat and told us stories until we fell asleep. We did not see Mother that night. She had helped in the fight too, and by nightfall had all but collapsed. Our neighbours remained and were very supportive. A phone call had summoned Dad and he arrived as soon as he could. Everything was gone. We were wiped out.

It was back to Perth and Dad bought a milk round. I remember Mother had her work cut out trying to keep us quiet while he slept through some of the daylight hours. The result was that Betty and I went to the new kindergarten in Oxford Street, Mt Hawthorn. I had my fifth birthday in that Centenary Year, 1929 and was able to choose a birthday gift from the "birthday box". Every child in WA received a bronze medal to commemorate the Centenary and the children at kindergarten enjoyed a picnic in King's Park to accept their medals. The kindergarten also organised a Fancy Dress Ball to celebrate, and Betty wore her Kewpie Doll costume and I wore gold lame as the Girl of the Golden West. There were colour photographs of us in these costumes. Unhappily, I do not remember what has happened to my copy.

The milk round was also doomed. One rainy night Dad slipped on the wet pavement and injured his elbow. It became infected and had to be lanced. Dad remained in hospital for several weeks. I remember visiting him once with Mother and watched the nurse fill a deep dish with boiling water, into which salt was added. Into this Dad dipped his open wound every twenty minutes or so and each time more boiling water and salt would be provided. Medical science and treatment has advanced a long way since then, but I have heard that the water and saline treatment is again becoming popular in medical practice.

With Dad unable to work all this time, financial resources were not good, so Grandpa Hocking came to Dad's aid. He set him up on a farm again. This time, back at Tammin, on a property called "Kitchener Park", named after Lord Kitchener and where some of the troops had trained during the 1914 - 1918 War. We were to find evidence of trenches and rifle shells on the property. We had a new farm house which Mother made very comfortable. An old iron hall had been purchased from a neighbouring town and it was brought to the farm on jinkers. It then served as a barn. On arrival at our new home, we spent the first night in that barn, sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Dad and Mother were too

horse used for riding. Its name was Anzac, and had been at Grandpa's property at Wanneroo.

One Spring afternoon when there had been some recent rain, we children went across to play in the gravel pit opposite our house on the main roadway. The gravel pit had been used in the construction of the railway and roads. By and by we all heard a dingo. Scared as they were, Rex and Max hurried Betty and me towards home, while throwing stones at random as they followed. On nearing the home gate we spied Dad circling around to the back of the house. On arriving home we discovered that it was tea time. Except for a wink that passed from Dad and Mother, we were never sure just who or what had made that scary sound. We were in time for tea!

I commenced my schooling at Tammin and my first teacher was a second cousin, Lois Raston. It was from her that I received the only 'caning' I was ever to receive at school. She gave me a sharp slap with her ruler on my leg for talking in class.

Our farmhouse was in the direct flight path of the aeroplanes en route from Kalgoorlie to Perth. They seemed to follow the railway line to navigate. The house had the railway, pipeline, and main road, directly in front. The Hercules, with its triple tail fins and the Vi-Asta with its square box-kite like tail would take it in turns to fly over on Sunday afternoons. They flew so low, sometimes, that we could see the passengers looking at us through the windows. We exchanged waves.

Lloyd married while we were at Tammin. His bride was Lucy Aileen (Lu-Lu) Simmons, a daughter of the Postmaster. Their first daughter was Pamela and their second child, another daughter, Colleen Jean, was born a few years later.

Two of Dad's brothers were also on the land at Tammin. Herbert (Uncle Herb) and Stanley (Uncle Stan). Their families are still farming there today. There were eight children in his family. The eldest was Auntie Gert (Gertrude), then Herb, Stan, Hazel, Dad, Myrtle (always known as Tot), Elsie and Doris.

At last, Grandpa decided to sign the farm directly into Dad's name. So, leaving us billeted thereabouts, Mother and Dad set off to drive to Perth to sign the necessary papers, for Grandpa had not been well and was confined to bed. Again that quirk of fate. Just before Mother and Dad arrived in Perth, Grandpa died. Afterwards, the Executor of Grandpa's

estate decreed that Kitchener Park was to be put up for sale. Back we moved to Perth.

Dad started a real estate business. This proved successful for a few years until he took as a partner a man named Penfold, who was also an auctioneer. This man embezzled some money and finally took his own life. Dad suffered a nervous breakdown, so Mother decided that the best way to keep us going in the meantime, would be to open a general shop. We lived in the premises behind that shop in Rokeby Road, Subiaco, for four years, until Dad was well again and able to go to work ... and we could return to the house we all loved in Northwood Street, West Leederville.

Dad died in March, 1959, after a long illness, aged 74. Mother continued to live an active life till she was well into her 90's. It was then that she reluctantly agreed to move into Mt Henry Hospital where she lived till her death on 10th March, 1988, aged 101 years.

In terms of time and of the events which have played an important part, I guess our Mother could well be called a pioneer.



Jane Hocking (nee Tinker)