

Westlake Newsletter Christmas 2001

During the last twelve months our numbers have thinned and I think if Heaven has the equivalent of a Westlake Hall, a football field, the Molonglo River and so on there will be many ex-residents having a great time up there. If the large bonfire down below goes out we know where to point the finger.

The following are those whom I know have died during the last year. They are:

- Monica Mulcahy's husband Terry died on 28th April 2000. Monica and her first husband lived in one of George's flats at the back of 29 Westlake.
- John Van Ewyk, husband of Rhona (nee Bourke of No 1 Westlake) died in December 2000.
- Doug Waterhouse died on 1st December 2000. He was one of eleven people who were interviewed in the ABC programme *Blowflies and Opportunities*. This film has recorded his humanity and love of the Canberra district.
- Yvonne Arnell (nee Gibbs) nursed her son Laurie until his death. He was followed by her husband Harrie who died on the 21st July 2001.
- Beryl Day, wife of Claude of Briar Farm Westlake, died on 8th April 2001.
- Arthur Freeman who lived at Howie's Cottages and in the old Westlake Hall when it was still the Mess Room for the men of No 3 Sewer Camp died on 21st July 2001.
- Vera Bondarenko died on 31st August 2001. She was born on 25th October 1919 and came to Australia with her husband and small children in the early post war years.
- Bruce Hawke who had moved down the coast died in October 2001 and I have been told that he is buried in Queanbeyan.

Charlie Law had a letter written to me during the year in which he mentioned a few details about his generation of Westlake lads – *Jimmy Brill of 22 Westlake was a champion Rugby League player and represented the ACT and the Australian Army in the sport. He played a team from the British Army during the time he was stationed in England during the war. He also won the ACT Ballroom Dancing Championship and was runner up in the NSW Championship (years?). Jimmy was taken POW by the Germans during exercises in the Sahara Desert. Jimmy later became President of POW Association and met the Queen when she came to Canberra. Richard Brill, Stan and Jimmy Brill's brother represented the ACT in hockey. Ted Brill became a chauffeur for the Governor General when the family moved into the Caretaker's Cottage at Government House.*

The Grant brothers – Jimmy and Sandy were great characters. Jimmy was a gentle giant and hardly ever picked a fight but he would fight anyone who picked on his mates. He was trained by Ernie McQuillan of Sydney where Jimmy fought and won a couple of fights. He became homesick and returned back to Canberra. I think Jimmy was the only survivor of the terrible accident near Murray's which killed Roy (Snooks) Blewitt and Alf (Streeker) McDonald and Alice Smith all of Westlake... [Anyone remember who and when? I did come across an accident in the paper c1946 – Murial Grant of Westlake died.]

On the 8th April 2001 a Walk Around Westlake Brochure paid for by the National Trust ACT Branch was launched. The Chief Minister Gary Humphries did the honours of launching it. Guest speakers were Mike Hodgkins of the Trust and Karen Williams who donated the drawings on the brochure. The editing of text and arrangement was carried out by Paul Wallace and I wrote the text. Hazel Kennedy (Haines), Roma Banks (Brien) prepared the feast and *Gunty* mowed a path through the long grass for the walkers. We did cut a cake made by my daughter Robina. Here the honours were done by our oldest – Kay Keeley (Walters) and Lionel Haines. I did take photographs but in the excitement forgot the film! After the launch members of the public arrived for a walk that I led around our old home sites and it was a good day.

The National Trust (ACT Branch) has shown a keen interest in promoting the history of Westlake and other working class temporary suburbs. They made a video using old films and photographs. Jack Lette of Causeway and I had a few words to say. The Video is part of a travelling exhibition.

The majority of photographs that I collected are now lodged in the ACT Heritage Library that now lives above the main library in Woden. In the library are a number of new books that I have compiled that include the 1928 and 1935 Electoral Rolls with additional information about individuals, 1943 Westlake Electoral Roll with excerpts from *True Tales* and other sources and Canberra's Camps (an update). Only a few copies of each have been printed. There is a story that can be told about each person who lived at Westlake. One that I came across in a book called *Monaro Mosaic* by WC Stegman has a chapter on Ernie Corey part of which follows: *Ernie Corey should have had a VC. It was a wicked shame that they didn't give him one. Unless you saw him you wouldn't believe what he did under fire. He was so brave and so cool. He was a marvel.*" These words were spoken by a World War I Digger, Bert McDonald of Cooma. Bert had known Ernie Coorey in the trenches on the Western Front during the Great War. Today in Cooma's central park is a memorial to Ernie Corey, in recognition of this soldier's remarkable feat of being awarded a Military Medal and three bars for his conspicuous bravery in four separate actions as a stretcher-bearer during 1917-18. He was probably Australia's most highly decorated soldier for gallantry of World War 1. He is certainly one of the Monaro's most distinguished sons.

The wording of the citations, written in the field at Brigade Headquarters for each of Corey's four decorations, conveys in the best possible way the details of his actions, and indicates something of his self-sacrificing character. The first citation, dated 29 May 1917 reads, *During the enemy attack on the front line facing Queant on 15th May 1917, Private Corey whilst acting as a stretcher bearer showed great courage and devotion to duty. Although under direct enemy observation he carried out his duties continuously for 17 hours without rest, and in a manner worthy of the highest commendation. Although an untrained stretcher-bearer, he, together with the rest of the bearing party, saved by first aid the lives of seriously wounded men...*[the document continues with details of the other awards and that Ernie was wounded. He was also recommended for the Distinguished Conduct Medal but for some reason this was reduced to bars.] *Ernie Corey returned to Cooma but was unable to find employment. For two years he supported himself by rabbiting and then in 1922 went to Canberra to live and work. From then on his life as a Monaro identity came to an end, for he did not return to live there again. During World War II Corey served for two years in the medical section of the 13th Garrison Battalion stationed in Port Kembla. He died in 1972, dying as he had lived, quietly and in obscurity, never having attempted to exploit the honour which was rightfully his, that of national hero...*



I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU – STORIES FOR NEXT YEAR AND DO YOU HAVE ANY PHOTOGRAPHS THAT I COULD COPY?

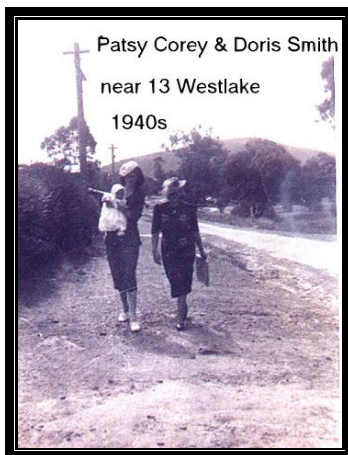
HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

Happy Christmas 2001
&
New Year 2002



Ngunawal scarred tree on Stirling Ridge; Lady Denman 1913 and Box's garden at rear of 23 Westlake (with sewer vent in background).

Below: Patsy Corey & Doris Smith 1940s and Westlake Children - 39 Westlake in background early 1950s



May life treat you well -
Regards Ann (Gugler)