

What if?

By Brian Walsh

If I had not been given the sack by CIG in 1950, when I was 20 years old (more on that later), it is certain that:

- Janatha would not now be living in Sydney, married to David Adams, with a "little" place in the country at Mittagong;
- Eleanor would not have met Irving and Ruth Berdy and later married Alan, and now be living in New York;
- Caroline would not now be living in Queensland;
- Catherine would not have met and married David Hamilton in NSW and spent many years living and working in Japan and Switzerland;
- Martin and Gregory would not have met Janine and Rosy in Melbourne and later married them and many other events in our family life would not have come to pass over the last 50 years.

Over the years, I have sometimes pondered on the effect that "fate" or "destiny" - a pre-determined course of events that affects people's lives - has had on our family. Due to our experiences, I am convinced that such a phenomena has played a large part in our family life, as I hope to show.

If fate had taken a different turn at any particular time, it is impossible to tell what effect that would have on us. As our lives have been affected to a marked degree by what transpired throughout my working life, I thought it would be of some interest to document the twists and turns that dictated the course of my work, and the subsequent effects that those moments eventually had on all of us.

(I should note here that none of the changes in my working life were due to any driving ambition to 'get to the top' or make a fortune - rather they were a matter of embracing opportunities that presented themselves in the context of my employment at any particular time.)

So, when determining the things that affected my working 'destiny', the events surrounding the only time I was given the 'sack' seem to be pivotal, although it wasn't obvious at the time.

To begin with, my introduction to the work force was normal enough for the times. After gaining the intermediate technical certificate at Brunswick Tech. in 1942, just before I was 14 years old, it was time to go to a senior technical college, or go to work. Although I had a fancy at the time to study surveying or something similar, I had missed out on a scholarship to attend a senior college, so work was the only alternative.

This was the norm in those days, for 'working class' families such as ours. Unless one won a scholarship to study for a diploma full time (as Allen did to do architecture at the Royal Melbourne Tech.) The expenses for a full time course were beyond the means of many

families, as there would be no income earned during that time. An alternative was to go to work in a chosen field as an apprentice (or, in my case, as a junior draftsman) and do at least five or six years of night school at two or three evenings per week, and gain a trade or semi-professional certificate.

I studied for an "expert's certificate in mechanical engineering and drafting", which was about 80% of a diploma course. The extra few subjects for a diploma was usually beyond the time span of students working full time, and six years or so of high school was more than enough for most of us in that situation. So, in February 1943, I registered with the 'manpower' department, which controlled all employment during the war.

When Mum and I were interviewed (Dad was in Darwin with the RAAF at the time), the manpower man noted that maths and mechanical drawing were among my best subjects, so suggested that I could do worse than become a draftsman. We agreed, and it was arranged for me to start work as a junior draftsman with EMF Electric Coy. in North Carlton. However, I couldn't start until May, when a vacancy occurred, due to one of their draftsmen joining the Air Force. (That's how it came about that I filled in three months until May, working in the head office mail section of G.J.Coles in Bourke Street.)

EMF Electric Coy. Made resistance welding equipment such as butt, seam and spot welders, and had been established for many years, with about 150 employees, including about 20 in the drawing office. I began on the lowest possible rung as a junior draftsman, earning 15 shillings per week. As well as learning to be a draftsman, I was the chief tea boy, sandwich boy and general 'gofer' for a long time. There were about 5 other juniors, ranging in age from about 15 to 19. It was a good training ground and, as all of the other staff were proud of their work, there was keen competition to outdo each other in drawing neatness and lettering.

I've never forgotten one catastrophe. It was usual at the time to draw full assembly drawings in Indian ink on blue 'linen' drawing sheets. One of the boys had been drawing a large assembly for several days and when he finished it, sat back and said something like, "Look at that - a masterpiece." He was instantly surrounded by a group of sticky beaks, but one of them accidentally knocked over a pot of Indian ink, which poured all over the new drawing and ruined it! Poor 'Tojo' (a nickname because he looked vaguely like the Japanese War Minister) who was about 17 at the time, was so upset that he broke down and cried!

About 1947, CIG bought the EMF Electric Coy and the company was split up. The resistance welding department was left in North Carlton, while a new company - CIG Equipment - was formed and set up in a new factory in Elgin Street, Carlton.

By that time, I was 18 and had graduated to working on tool designing, where we designed manufacturing tools and gauges for the equipment made by CIG, such as cylinder valves, pressure gauges, cutting and welding blowpipes, plus some medical gas equipment. In the company split-up, I along with a group of engineers and draftsmen, was

transferred to work at the new CIG Equipment. We all got on well together and, in general, it was a god company to work for. By late 1949, I had been with EMF and CIG for seven years and was well entrenched in the work, full time on tool design and seemingly set for a long career with CIG. But Robbie Burns was spot on and some plans went "agley"! That was about the time we got hooked on golf.

For our Christmas holidays, Allen and I and a couple of mates arranged to have a two week golfing holiday at Torquay, staying at the local hotel. We booked and paid in advance for the two weeks at the hotel. But somehow, the last few days of our stay overlapped with the time that I was due back at work. I asked to juggle my leave to avoid the overlap or, alternatively, to have an extra three days of unpaid leave. In those days, annual leave was fairly inflexible and my request was denied. So, off we went to Torquay and enjoyed two weeks of golf. Towards the end of the second week, I had to consider what to do about returning to work. In my naivety, I calculated that the cost of three days board at the hotel as worth more than three days pay, should the firm dock my wages for being late back to work.

So, probably a bit cheekily, I sent a telegram to work, saying I was delayed, and would be back on a certain day - which I was. That was a novel approach, particularly for those days, which apparently was not appreciated by whoever was the big wheel at the time. The upshot was that Jack Hood, the chief draftsman, called me in and told me, apologetically, that he had been ordered to give me the sack! I don't recall what the actual offence was - insubordination? And so I left CIG in disgrace. When I got home that day, Mum said jokingly, "Did you get the sack?" And when I said "Yes", she was most put out. I can't recall what Dad's reaction was.

It caused a bit of a flap in the office. Most of the staff thought it was pretty harsh, and one of my mates left soon after, as he reckoned he couldn't work for a firm like that! So there I was - out of work and not sure what to do.

About that time, I had the first notions about going to England at some time, but it was too early and I had no savings. So I thought I would get any sort of work for a year or three, save up and plan a trip later on.

And that is when all the subsequent 'what ifs' began, which directed the course of my working life for the next 40 years, and the destinies of my future family.

Although I can't recall how it came about, I was directed to a job at *Lightning Fruit Graders*, close to home in West Brunswick. At that time *Lightning* was owned by John Tuckfield, an elderly genial man, who some years earlier had set up his factory in Brunswick. It was well-established in 1950, employing about 40 people, and was the main manufacturer of fruit grading machinery in Australia, with its equipment well entrenched in all of the fruit growing regions. *Lightning* also made a range of small plows and cultivators for orchards.

The actual job that I went to see John Tuckfield about was not as a draftsman, but as a machine operator in the machine shop. As far as I was concerned at the time, any regular work was useful. But John Tuckfield was astute enough to foresee that it would be useful for me to draw up some of the machines they made, as their records were mainly only sketches, or in the minds and notebooks of some of the senior tradesmen. So, after only a few weeks in the machine shop, I was set up in a hut alongside the factory with a drawing board, and began to put some order into the records with proper drawings and a filing system. As is often the case, when some semblance of order in the way of drawings is established, the factory people came to rely more on the drawings, so my job developed into an essential part of the business.

I got along well with everybody, including Mick Fitzpatrick, a short, gruff fellow who was the works manager. Thus began my introduction to the agricultural machinery business.

So, if I had not gone to work at *Lightning*, I would not have got into the agricultural machinery business, with all of the subsequent jobs and moves that ensued over the following 30 years and more. During my four-plus years at *Lightning*, a lot of work was on designing and recording variations of the basic front grading machinery, to supplement the fruit grader business.

In 1951, there was a shortage of two types of machinery used in sugar cane farming in Queensland - a large single disc plow for hilling up the rows, and a grubber with two large tines for ripping out the ratoon cane after harvesting. Our dealer suggested that *Lightning* could help by making those machines. So, Mick Fitzpatrick and I flew to Cairns and sent two weeks there, while I drew up details of the machines made locally. There were no patents involved. Subsequently, we designed our own versions of those machines and produced about 50 of each for our Cairns dealer.

On another occasion, John Tuckfield was persuaded that there was a market for a one-way disc plow, similar to the old Sunshine Sundercut plow. This type of machine was entirely new to us at *Lightning* but, undaunted I was sent on a 10 day survey through the Victorian Mallee and Wimmera, sketching details of similar machines and building up a machine specification in discussion with dealers and farmers. (I did that trip on my new 1952 Matchless 350 cc motorbike and the company paid me three pence a mile expenses!)

We then set about designing a new machine from scratch, which was quite a daunting task. We finished up with a quite satisfactory machine, which included some innovations not previously used in Australia-made plows, particularly sealed tapered roller bearings in the disc housings. We were quite proud to be the first to use those bearings in disc plows, as they became the standard fitting by everyone in later years.

We eventually made a small number of those plows, but didn't get into large production, as they absorbed a lot of time for limited returns to a small company. Another 'special' tested by our ingenuity at one

time, - a small single disc plow for the Ransomes 15 h.p. MG4 Caterpillar tractor, which was commonly used in orchards. As that tractor lacked any rear linkage on which to mount a plow, we designed it as a single-point hitch arrangement. Suffice to say that our new little plow worked quite well in soft soil, but would not look at any hard soil or clay without wandering all over the place!

As Thomas Edison is reported to having once said to cheer up his assistants after another failure - "That's good - that's another thing that won't work - let's go onto something else!" (That single disc plow was the smallest tillage machine I ever designed - the largest turned out to be the monster 42 foot sweep plow which Hartley Young and I designed when I was in Wellington over 20 years later.)

During 1953, John Tuckfield retired after selling his business to the Braemar Hot Water Systems Company. The Braemar people tried to turn into agricultural engineers overnight, but it didn't turn out too well. By that time I had two draftsmen working under me. Braemar appointed one of their engineers to run our office, but he turned out to be not much use to me, as he was more adept to talking than designing. While I got on well with him, he wasn't very helpful in the day to day business of designing machinery.

So, by late 1953, I began thinking seriously of my ambition to go to England, to see how the other half lived. In making plans to leave for England in May 1954, I wrote to various firms in November 1953 - Henry Ferguson's at Coventry, Ford's at Dagenham, IHC in northern England, and two or three smaller companies, inquiring about the possibility of employment. By early 1954, I had received replies from most of them, with no firm offers, but they were amenable to seeing me after arriving in England.

The next few months were spent in making arrangements for the trip, booking a passage on the *Surriento* and saving up to pay for it all, including sending 100 pounds to the Commonwealth Bank in London as a reserve "stake".

In May 1954, I signed from *Lightning* and with good wishes from all, headed off to Europe.

Even with the confidence of youth, it was still a daunting prospect to ail off into the unknown, as a working trip to England was still a bit of a challenge in the early 1950s.

Among my plans, I'd already booked into the Regent Palace Hotel in London, with the idea of using London as my initial base. For work, I intended to start by trying Ford's in Dagenham, which could possibly get me established in London.

But, another "what if" arose during the voyage on the *Surriento*. One of my three cabin mates was Colin Westwood, a lad from Birmingham, who was returning home after a working trip to Australia. We got a long well together, and, by the time we reached Europe, Colin had suggested that, instead of staying in London, I should go onto Birmingham with him and stay with his family or friends. That idea sounded OK to me.

So, after "jumping ship" at Marseilles, instead of completing the voyage to Genoa, Colin and I, after an adventurous 36 hours by trains and ferry through France, the Channel and England, arrived in Birmingham in the middle of the night, got Colin's parents out of bed and Colin introduced me by saying, "This is Brian, he's come to stay for a while!"

I never got over how his family accepted me, and as it turned out, I stayed at Westwood's as a boarder for six months. In Birmingham, (actually Halesowen, a town close to the city) my first task was to buy a small motorbike. Then, after sightseeing around the Midlands for a month, I decided that I'd better look for work. As the closest of my previous contacts was Harry Ferguson Ltd. at Coventry, that was my logical first approach. Fortunately, they had (or made) a vacancy for a senior draftsman, and I started work there in July 1954.

So, if I had not shared a cabin on the *Surriento* with Colin Westwood, I would have not have gone to Birmingham and would not have subsequently worked at Harry Ferguson's. Meanwhile, some other fateful movements, over which I had no control, had been, and were, afoot. Harry Ferguson had sold his business in the UK and North America to Massey Harris in 1953, but the Coventry plant was still a Ferguson entity in 1954. It was more than 12 months before any major influence of Massey Harris made itself felt at Coventry.

Then, in 1955, Massey-Harris-Ferguson (as it was known for some time until the old Harris name was dropped) bought out the HV McKay Massey Harris Company in Sunshine, Melbourne, Australia. These changes had no immediate effect on our work on Ferguson equipment at Coventry.

(An aside - the Ferguson organisations in the UK and the USA were rather unique. In Detroit, until the late 1940s and Coventry until the late 1950s, there was everything from design, prototype building and testing, sales, service and product training departments, but no factories! Instead, Harry Ferguson had his tractors made under licence by Ford in Detroit and by the Standard Motor Company in Coventry, and the implements were made in both countries by subcontractors. In the late 1940s, Ferguson parted company with Ford and set up its own factory in Detroit and, in the late 1950s, after the amalgamation, Massey-Ferguson set up their own tractor factory at Banner Lane in Coventry.)

The engineering office in Coventry was overseen by a chief engineer, with a number of project engineers and draftsmen. Two or three draftsmen usually worked with each engineer and moved among the engineers as the worked required. During my time there, I worked on a variety of implements, including a mouldboard plow, a mid-mounted cultivator, a fertiliser broadcaster, and a kale 'cut-rake'. The 'cut-rake' was a rear mounted platform with a mower cutter bar. In operation, you reversed into a crop of kale (a cabbage-like crop that grows about two feet high and is used for cattle feed in winter). As you reversed into the crop, the cut kale fell onto the rear platform. You then raised the platform with its load of kale and delivered it to the barns or yards. I've always remembered that machine because I went

out one day with the engineer to test the prototype in the dead of winter. I had cut a load of kale and was heading through a gateway that had deep ruts with the ice about two inches thick, covered with snow. Halfway through the gateway, the ice cracked and the tractor sank about a foot into the ruts. To add insult to injury, it began to snow while we were unloading the kale to lighten the load. Such is the 'fun' one had when farming or field testing during an English winter!

As the rearrangement of the new MHF organisation took shape, one particular move was planned that eventually affected me. (To go back a few years - in the late 1940s, Harry Ferguson [Australia] was formed under the direction of three men sent from England, plus three or four men recruited in Australia. This small group, located in Melbourne, set up the distribution network in Australia, using new company, British Farm Equipment, as a means of distribution with a dealer network, and all equipment was imported.)

In 1955, MHF planned to eventually absorb Harry Ferguson Australia into the Sunshine organisation, and to begin the manufacture of Ferguson Implements in the Sunshine factory. To achieve this, it was proposed to send a Ferguson project engineer from Coventry to Sunshine, since none of the 'old guard' at HV McKay were familiar with the Ferguson tractor and implements. Alan Williams, one of the engineers with whom I had worked, was offered the job in Australia. He accepted and with his wife moved to Melbourne in May 1955.

At the time, it was generally known in the Coventry office that I intended to return home to Melbourne at the end of 1955. So, before leaving Coventry, Alan Williams suggested that I could be useful to him at Sunshine as a back-up man on Ferguson equipment. That sounded OK to me, as it meant the possibility of a certain job on returning home. I still planned to tour Europe with Don Williamson from July to September, then return to work at Coventry for three months before leaving for home. In retrospect, it may seem surprising how tolerant the company was to the plans of the 'colonial', as I at times jokingly called in the office, but it was probably because my plans dovetailed with theirs.

Eventually, in October, after letters between the chief engineers at Coventry and Melbourne, and Alan Williams, I was offered a position in the Sunshine office, to begin in January 1956, with one of the conditions being, that I spend a month at the Ferguson farm school at Stoneleigh, to bone up further on the Ferguson system' before returning home.

All of this suited me fine, and so it came to pass, the wheels turned, and I came home to Melbourne to a ready made job.

So, if I had not been at Coventry at that particular time, I would have not been offered a job at Sunshine, where I spent the next nine years.

One of my first tasks at Sunshine was to go through all of the drawings of the Ferguson implements that were to be made in Australia and, in conjunction with the materials engineer and metallurgist, to

modify the drawings with suitable local materials and standards. That was a pretty intensive bit of work, but eventually got it done. During that time, Alan Williams and I also got involved designing some new equipment required in Australia, and also in strengthening some implements that tended to get bent by some Australian farmers. In late 1956, the new FE35 tractor was introduced into Australia, so we had to revisit the design of some implements to strength or enlarge them to suit the new tractor. And this process was repeated when the MF65 was introduced. After the first year or two, the work on the Ferguson equipment didn't occupy all of my time, and I worked on other machinery at times, one notable job being the new sugar cane harvester which MF decided to develop. After the general layout of the harvester was agreed upon, various engineers and draftsmen were allocated different sections to design, under the supervision of the chief engineer, Ken Gaunt, and the chief project engineer, who happened to be Jim Wood, who had a big influence n my working life over the following 20 years. My initial job was to design the rear elevator, which delivered the chopped cane to a chute, then to a bulk trailer for delivery to the mill. In one way or another, I was involved in the design of that first machine and later models, right up to the time that I left MF in 1964. From 1956-1964, I worked on most of the range of MF machinery, including tillage tools and plows, mowers, balers and hay rakes and cane harvesters, somehow I steered clear of combine harvesters.

So, in 1964 I was well settled and happy in my work, Jean and I had been married for four years, had built a new home in East Keilor in 1961, and had two daughters, Janatha and Eleanor. We were also deeply involved with the establishment of the East Keilor Uniting Church and kindergarten, and I was well entrenched at the Northern Golf Club and in a lodge in Brunswick.

Then fate reared its head again, posing yet another "what if?" In the previous year (1963) Jim Wood with whom I'd worked closely for many years, had left MF and joined Ralph McKay Ltd as chief development engineer. Sometime earlier, Ralph McKay Ltd had bought out Port Implements, a company in Adelaide which made a range of potato machinery, grader blade and concrete mixers, plus a wide range of agricultural points and discs. (The main products of Ralph McKay Ltd were discs and truck wheels.) Port Implements had been established many years earlier by Otto Kretschmer, who retired from management of the company after it was bought by McCoy's. In 1964, the chiefs at Ralph McKay Ltd (who included Jim Wood at that time) decided that Port Implements needed a design engineer to formalise the design and development that division's products and to integrate the engineering side with that of Ralph McKay's.

So, Jim Wood placed an advertisement in Adelaide and Melbourne papers with applications to be processed by a firm of head hunters in Melbourne. Jean noticed the ad, and we guessed the job meant working with Jim Wood. I was quite happy with my lot at MF, and, with all the elements to our life in Melbourne, had no particular ambition to move onto something new. But Jean kept at me for a while (probably mostly out of curiosity) to get in touch with Jim Wood and asked for details of the Adelaide position. I eventually succumbed. And we started to

think seriously about the prospects. At first, any change, including a move to Adelaide, seemed too big a step to take, considering our involvement in so many things, including our families. (Among other things, Jean's father was still living on his own in Yarraville.) Finally, we decided the prospects were worth it. I applied for the job and got it and we made the monumental move to Adelaide in December 1964. (Years later, Jim Wood told me that he was after me at the time!) Without our being aware of it then, fate had moved us one step closer to NSW as, if I had not joined McKay's and moved to Adelaide we would not have later moved to Wellington.

Initially, the work in Adelaide involved design and improvements to the range of potato machinery and other implements and to the agricultural tines and points. We later designed many new products such as slashes, post drivers, concrete mixers, rotary hoes, a wider range of grader blades, tool bar components and new types of points. (At one stage, we had to become instant experts on dairy vacuum pumps, after McKay's bought out a company which made those pumps!)

As was usual in the industry, some of the new products were successful and some were not. For many years, my R&D staff included four or five draftsmen and about six men in the experimental workshop. After some years, we wound down on the machinery side and concentrated more on development and improvement on some components such as tines and points, eventually reaching the company's new goal of supplying original equipment components to most of the Australian machinery manufacturers. The Melbourne plant already had a virtual monopoly on supplying discs and agricultural wheels to those manufacturers and also had a thriving export market for discs. In later years, we had no cause for regrets in moving to Adelaide.

My work was demanding but interesting but involved a lot of travel which was hard on Jean at times with an ever expanding family. Caroline, Catherine, Martin, Gregory and Rosemary were born in Adelaide between 1965 and 1970, and, as the children grew up, we were involved in all sorts of activities including school councils, church groups, sport and guides. I also got involved with the new Highercombe golf club and an Adelaide lodge. And we were roped into a variety of community work. We built a new home in Tea Tree Gully in 1967 and expanded it with a study in 1974. So, once more we were well settled in our work and family life with no intention of ever moving from Adelaide.

Meanwhile, and separate to my work in Adelaide, other things were going on at McKay's which subsequently affected our future. In Melbourne, Jim Wood and Bill Johnson had developed a range of row crop equipment which was used mainly in the cotton and maize growing areas in NSW and Queensland. As always, the company was on the lookout to expand their product range and, in 1974, a small company in Wellington NSW - Soil Erosion Equipment Co. (SEEC) - came to the notice of McKay's. That company made a range of row crop equipment similar to, but on a larger scale than, the existing McKay equipment, and at the time also had a contract to supply MF at Sunshine with a range of their products for export.

For various reasons, SEEC was in financial straits at the time and McKay's decided to buy the company, as the prospects for expansion in the row cropping areas looked very rosy at the time, with the bonus of supplying MF with equipment for export. The acquisition of SEEC presented one new problem to McKay's - and us - who was going to be the development engineer at Wellington? The initial work required the redesign of some equipment to reduce costs, as the existing equipment, while well-made, was overly expensive to produce. Other work required some new products to be developed, plus the transfer of specifications to Wellington of some of the equipment being made in Adelaide and Melbourne. Bill Johnson was a possibility, but he was more of a field engineer type, so I was offered the position.

So, there we were again - faced with the decision of whether to make another interstate move after 10 years of settled life in Adelaide. After some indecision, Jean and I agreed we would go, so once again went through the process of selling and buying homes and moving interstate, which we did in December 1974. A minor consideration at the time was the children's schooling, but we thought that would be managed OK and it did work out all right.

From August 1974, after McKay's bought SEEC, I visited Wellington each month for a week, when Bill Johnson and I began the task of upgrading the design of some of the equipment. Another important job during those visits was to look for a suitable home for the family. I eventually found a large, run-down Edwardian home that I thought would suit us, but it was a far cry from the modern home we were leaving in Adelaide. It was a shock to their systems when Jean and the children first saw it, but with a lot of hard work and expense, we restored it completely over the next 12 months and it turned into a very comfortable, large family home.

After the move to Wellington, business was fairly good for about two years. But by late 1976, the effects of the Whitlam Government policies began to put the bite on all industrial manufacturers, with inflation taking off and wages and material costs rising regularly.

Our prices had to go up, although our company like many others, absorbed some of the cost increases at times, at the expense of profits. MF eventually decided that they could source their equipment for export more cheaply from Europe, so we lost most of their business, which had been the 'cream' of our turnover that helped make a profit. To compound our problems, the boom in expansion of row cropping in Australia didn't reach the heights anticipated two or three years earlier. All of these factors had a marked effect on the profitability of the Wellington division and, by late 1978, it became clear that we could not continue to operate for much longer.

In late 1977, McKay's bit the bullet. Viable parts of the business were sold off and the Wellington plant was closed. (Fortunately I was offered a position at the Melbourne plant and off we went again, completing the interstate circle and returning to Melbourne early in 1980.)

On the family front during those five years in Wellington, the children attended St. Mary's Central School, Rosemary and Gregory started school, and Janatha and Eleanor both went to senior boarding school at Perthville in Bathurst. After our return to Melbourne in 1980, both Caroline and Catherine subsequently went to Bathurst and boarded at Perthville for their two senior years. In 1978, Jean resumed her nursing career by joining the staff at the Wellington Hospital. I kept up the golf and spent some time on the golf club committee. I also got caught up in school activities and was 'roped in' as chairman of St. Mary's School Council in 1979. Both at work and in our private lives, our family were generally well-received in the Wellington community and, as in Adelaide, we and the children, formed many friendships, some of which have been maintained ever since.

By late 1979, Janatha had begun her nursing training at St. Vincent's in Sydney, and Eleanor had begun her journalistic career as a reporter on The Daily Liberal newspaper in Dubbo, later moving onto TV work in Sydney. From 1980, after the rest of the family moved to Melbourne, Janatha and Eleanor remained together in Sydney and became regular Sydneysiders. From that time, their futures were in the inexorable hands of 'fate', culminating in their present family situations, neither of which would have eventuated had we not moved to Wellington.

While Caroline and Catherine's present circumstances may not be attributed solely to our move to Wellington, I think our various interstate experiences made it much easier for them (and others in our family) to make their own peripatetic movements in later life, including interstate and overseas trips - Catherine's stint at Wagga Wagga where she met David Hamilton, and Caroline's eventual adoption of Ipswich because she 'liked the place'.

After our move to Melbourne in 1980 - the last move due to my work - Martin and Gregory finished their schooling at Rupertswood in Sunbury, then went onto various jobs, eventually settling on careers in golf and mining respectively. They stayed in Melbourne after Jean, Rosemary and I moved to Chewton (though Gregory lived with us for a while) and eventually Martin married Janine and Gregory married Rosy.

So, if I had not had to move back to Melbourne for work, we would not now have Janine and Rosy in our family. Over the last 25 years, all of our family have covered Australia and the world in a multitude of working trips, business trips and holidays, and marriage and settlement all over the place.

.....and the catalyst for all of this was the day I got the sack from CIG!

So, if this story has a moral, it would seem to be - don't worry if you get the sack; it could be the start of the next adventurous 30 years of your life!

You never know what fate has in store for you.

Fini.