MURRAY FORSTER – ARCHITECT

I first met Murray Forster in 1944. I was doing my third year of the Diploma of Architecture Course at the Melbourne Technical College and Murray was starting to lecture in a new subject called Builders' Quantities and Estimating.

I did not know at that time, but Murray was still in the Directorate of Works and Buildings (DWB) of the RAAF. The DWB was composed mainly of architects and engineers involved in the design of airfields and associated buildings within Australia during the second World War, and was housed in Reids Building in Chapel Street, Prahran. Some of the DWB personnel were in RAAF uniform, but most, including Murray, were in civilian clothes.

By 1944 war activities moved further away from Australia as the Japanese were pushed back, and the DWB staff were allowed to take on part-time work as a prelude to their eventual demobilisation.

Murray had been given the job of designing and teaching this new subject, commonly called 'Estimating', first to architecture students, and later to students of a 'Building' course which catered for ex-servicemen taking part in rehabilitation courses. Before this, there had not been any course in Victoria involving estimates of the cost of building. Architects and builders must have relied on years of experience and trial and error to gain a working knowledge of the subject.

As our curriculum already filled every available daytime period, and some of the night, Murray initially taught at night – I think it was Friday – 7 to 9 p.m.

The subject and many of the terms used were completely new to the students and it took a while to understand. Murray gave the impression of knowing exactly what he was talking about, and I remember him coming around while we were doing calculations of (say) the number of bricks in a house, or quantities of timber and making comments on our worksheets very quickly in neat small writing using a fine propelling pencil.

From the beginning of my course in 1942, we were taught mainly by experienced architects. These men had established their offices before the war, but as private building work slowed, then stopped completely, they took up teaching. Harry Winbush, who had taught Building Construction part-time in earlier years, was appointed Head of the School of Architecture in 1943.

Harry had his office at home in Fletcher Street, Essendon and had built a number of 2-storey Fire Stations, some small factories, and the new Grandstand at Essendon Football Club. Harry had a small Hitler-style moustache, but there the similarity ended. He seemed to have a smile strictly under control most of the time, with small creases radiating from the outer corners of his eyes. He would often interrupt his lectures to tell us the latest joke he had heard at that day's Rotary Club lunch.

John F. D. Scarborough was hawk-nosed, tall and thin. He had won a competition to build Scotch College chapel, had built many churches and a modern Bank of New South Wales in Collins Street. Scarborough lectured in Architectural History, was an authority on English Gothic, sketched beautifully with chalk on the blackboard, and smoked non-stop.

John Wilson was one of the Geelong boys from the Gordon Technical College originally, and was about the same age as Murray. He was always beautifully dressed in pin-stripe suits with a thin Hollywood-style moustache and dark hair centrally parted and brushed smoothly back. He had long tapering fingers which were emphasised as he tapped his Craven-A cigarettes on the packet before lighting up. He also smoked non-stop.

Other part-time architect lecturers were Fred Neuss and Don Ward who was also an accomplished artist and painter.

Murray Forster was also a heavy smoker in those days as were most of the returned servicemen who had been released early to resume their interrupted architecture courses. Add the smoke generated by us ''boys'' when we could afford the cigarettes or pipe tobacco, and at times you could hardly see the other end of the room!

During the daytime lectures most of the students wore grey or white dust coats (smocks in the case of girls) to protect our clothes from pencil dust, Indian Ink and paint materials, but these would not have been needed for the 'Estimating' lectures.

Claire Summers, who belonged to the Strathmore Presbyterian Church and I, regularly wore our PFA badges (Presbyterian Fellowship of Australia). These were quite small, circular, with a St Andrews Cross.

It did not take long of course for Murray's eagle eye to spot these badges and he said that he was Presbyterian and asked what churches we belonged to. He knew Norm Faichney (Strathmore) very well as Norm had been minister at Hampton a little earlier. He also knew my minister, David Munro at West Brunswick very well as Mr Munro had followed Murray's father, Karl Forster at the Colac Church in about 1922.

Murray was different from all the other lecturers as he always made time to chat with students on any subject. He seemed to be interested in everything.

At that time Murray was quite thin, with dark straight hair and a moustache. He would have been close to six feet tall but had slightly hunched shoulders which he attributed to years of leaning over a drawing board as a student, draughtsman and architect.

Later in 1944 Harry Winbush asked Murray to take over his Building Construction classes as he himself was overloaded. Harry was lecturing in Specification Writing and Professional Practice in addition to running the whole School of Architecture.
Murray quickly became the most popular lecturer and the following year was asked to take a new subject – Architectural Design. Apparently this subject had been considered necessary to introduce students to the Architectural Atelier at Melbourne University because many had complained of the difficulty they were having at the Atelier.

The Architectural Atelier had been in existence for several decades at the University, and from the late 1920's had been run under the strict control of a well-known practising architect, Leighton Irwin. Irwin was fairly small and thin with a natural sour expression. In my time he must have been in his late sixties.

Nobody could qualify to be an architect in Victoria without passing the 3-year Atelier course while working in an approved architectural office. This really meant that unless students were passed by Leighton Irwin, who was in control over a twenty-year period ending in 1950, they could not qualify as architects. At the 'Tech' word would come back of students repeating a year (or more) and still being failed. There would be stories of grown men breaking down in tears.

The Atelier involved attending two nights a week – Tuesday and Thursday 7-9 p.m. Lectures would sometimes be given, but the main item was setting a 'design' subject which would be worked on in the students' own time (nights and weekends) and handed in one, two or three weeks later depending on the complexity of the subject. When the finished design drawings complete with hand-lettered notes were handed in, strictly on time, they would be pinned up on

the walls of the large studio and 'criticised' by an architect member of staff or an invited architect who was known to be familiar with the type of building which we had been asked to design. Marks were then given – usually ranging from 4 to 10. In theory marks were out of 20, but in all my years at the 'Tech' and Atelier I never saw a mark higher than 12, and that was only once. To get a pass in each year it was necessary to obtain an average of 6 marks and at least one 'mention'. A 'mention' was any mark 10 or over, shown as M10, M11, etc.

In my final year I got six mentions and obtained First Class Honours. Only one other student, Ian Freeland from Geelong, also graduated with First Class Honours.

When I told Murray of my results next day, he said "Irwin must be going soft".

When Murray Forster started to teach 'Design', we students did not know that he had previous experience in that field. After he graduated in the late 1920's, Murray, along with all young architects in Victoria found there was no work available because of the Depression which had just hit Australia, so he packed up and sailed with his young wife, Edna, to Perth. In Perth he was able to get several commissions including a church, a dairy and many houses.

It seems that in those days, newcomers to Perth from Victoria and NSW were known as 'the Wise men from the East'. While in Perth, Murray was given the job of setting up an Atelier at the Perth University along the lines of that in Melbourne. Presumably he was the first Director, but I have few details of that period.

I was in my last year at the 'Tech' when Murray started teaching 'Design' and I remember the first simple subjects he set were – 1. A Potting Shed, 2. A Pergola and 3. A Ski Lodge.
Starting in about 1944 we were being joined by the returned soldiers and airmen who were being released into civilian life. All who joined our year had started their architecture courses before joining up, and during their time overseas had ample time to dream of what they would do after their return. Many of them had also spent their free time sketching and doing water colour painting of very high quality.

The injection of these students who soon made up more than half the class numbers, instantly raised the standard of work in all subjects, particularly in draughtsmanship and design.

I and most of my fellow students in the earlier years had always worked hard and particularly enjoyed the 'architectural' type subjects, but the standard set by these enthusiastic new men (there were no returned women) made us strive even harder and eventually improved our work considerably. I can still remember the watercolour perspective drawings of the Ski Lodges designed by John Murphy and Stuart Warmington in that first month. They were works of art of the type I would be proud to hang on my wall.

It was at that time that I grew a moustache and started smoking, foolishly thinking it would make me look older.

MY EARLY DAYS

I will now back-track and explain how I came to be a student at the Melbourne Technical College (originally The Working Men's College founded in 1887 by Francis Ormond) and later called RMIT University. Janet and I now live on half an acre on one corner of the original 35,000 acre sheep station where Ormond the great philanthropist made his fortune.

My mother and father were both about 22 years of age when they married and in 1928 they bought a 5-roomed timber Californian bungalow in a newly developed area at the edge of West Brunswick. This was to be their home for the rest of their lives.

Mum had grown up in Ballarat and moved as a teenager to Geelong where she met Maurice Walsh. Dad's father was a linotype operator at the Geelong Times. Dad had got his Leaving Certificate at Geelong High School and this would have allowed him to get his job as a proof reader on the Melbourne Herald.

Nancy (1926), Allen (1927) and Brian (1929) were born in what appear to have been prosperous days before the great Depression, and Geoffrey (1935) arrived when the Depression was easing. We all went to the North West Brunswick State Primary School which was newly built on a 5 acre site directly across the road. Being so close enabled us to go home to lunch and we could shoot out of the front door when the bell started to ring, climb the 4 foot high chainwire mesh fence and race up the steep hill in the playground without being late. Nancy was just as good as the boys at climbing that fence.

I remember when I was about four years old I was on the front verandah using the smooth jarrah threshold to the front door to support a sheet of paper I was drawing on and as Dad went past he said perhaps I could be an architect. When I asked what that meant he explained that an architect drew designs for buildings, but they had to learn all sorts of other things as well.

NORTH WEST BRUNSWICK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Occasionally in Primary School a teacher would ask the students what they wanted to be when they grew up. If asked, I would always say 'an Architect'.

Because it was a new area and there were young families all around, the children in my class hardly changed over the seven years of Primary School (bubs to Grade 6), but the leading students were the smartest lot in the whole of my school life. I was one of the top five, but it was always a battle to equal or beat Eileen Murray, Bob Smith, Ben Ogle and John Edwards.

Eileen was a quiet girl with longish wavy hair and at the age of seven I had a passionate crush on her. She never reciprocated – she never knew.

Bob was a very neat kid who was the only student in our class to wear a (short pants) suit and tie every day from the age of five. During the Depression most of us were lucky to have a pair of pants to wear.

Ben was the only boy younger than I was – there may have been one or two younger girls. He had fair straight hair that was always cropped short and he had an alert look, like a young chicken. I still see Ben at least once a year and have always considered him a good friend.

Not many people went to University in those days, but Eileen and Bob did. Ben won a scholarship to Scotch College and later went to University. I last saw Johnnie Edwards when we were about 17 and he was coming out of a night class at Melbourne Tech. I did not recognise him because he was suffering from leukemia, was extremely thin and had lost most of his hair. He died a short time later. I remember when we were in Grade 4, a tough little teacher, Mrs Morrison, said she had heard someone talking and the whole class would be kept in until the culprit confessed. Johnnie immediately owned up because he was a cub scout and had to tell the truth!

In Grade 6 we had to decide whether to go to Moreland Central School as a preliminary to Coburg High School or University High, or to Brunswick Technical School. Private schools were never a consideration in our area at that time. I chose the Brunswick Tech and had to sit for an entrance exam which was held at the old central Brunswick State School which had been built in

the 1870's and had open fireplaces in every classroom. (Forty years later my children went to the Albert Park Primary School which had been built even earlier, but its fireplaces had been built up).

BRUNSWICK TECHNICAL SCHOOL

The Brunswick Tech was a highly-organised Junior Technical School which consisted of two hundred students, in each of three years. Each year was broken up into eight 'Forms' of 25 students (1a to 1h, 2a to 2h and 3a to 3h). At the end of the third year you would sit for the Intermediate Certificate.
The Principal was John L. Ross, an ANZAC who had fought at Gallipoli. He was short, stocky and business-like and expected everybody to do the right thing as a matter of course. And most did. When war broke out in September 1939 (my first year) he arranged for a flagpole to be installed above the highest wall overlooking the quadrangle and said that the Australian flag would fly there until the war was won. When I left school the flag was still flying – but not the original. As soon as a flag showed signs of wear it would be replaced.

The quadrangle was enclosed by 2-storey buildings on three sides and the whole six hundred boys and staff members would line up for Assembly every morning. Mr Ross would give a short pep talk from the balcony every day, usually finishing with a maxim such as his favourite – 'Good enough is <u>not</u> good enough'. Sadly Mr Ross died before the war ended.

The school's pride and joy was the new library which had been built above some existing buildings during the previous year. As all the other school buildings had been built before the first world war the library was treated as something of a wonder.

It had been designed by the Chief Government Architect, Percy Everett. Everett was one of the many capable architects produced by the Gordon Technical College in Geelong and held the above post during the late 1930's and the 1940's. I was told years later by one of his students that he had been Principal at Brunswick Tech during the Depression when architects had no work (he must have had teaching qualifications) and had made a practice of encouraging his best pupils to take up architecture courses. This could have accounted for all the ex Brunswick Tech students who were involved in running architects' offices in the years after the war.

Back to the Library. It was designed in the 'modern' style and consisted of one large room with built-in timber bookshelves, fairly elaborate plaster ceiling and indirect lighting. On the wall opposite the entrance there was a badge-like design with a lamp surmounted by the slogan 'Knowledge is Power'. The floor was covered with highly polished grey-green marbled rubber flooring of the type being used in the new hospitals.

This flooring material was unforgettable because strips of it had been set flush into all the drawing boards in the school, across the top, to receive the two drawing pins used to hold our cartridge paper in place. Strips had also been cut in the form of teacher's straps, so that every teacher was identically armed with a weapon to give 'six of the best'. Actually the strap was used very little in my years because the teachers had the knack of keeping control.

After a shorter lunch hour on Wednesdays the whole school would squeeze into a makeshift assembly hall formed below the library by knocking out dividing walls, and have 'Social Hour'. This consisted of items by the small school orchestra and sometimes solo items by a boy singing or Bart McDiarmid playing the cornet. We would enthusiastically sing Land of Hope and Glory (often as Land of Soap and Borax) and other rousing patriotic songs, Forty Years On, and songs from musicals, such as Goodbye from Whitehorse Inn. The words of the songs were beautifully lettered on large sheets of white paper by a Solid Geometry teacher and Social Hour leader 'Tichy'

Iverson, and set up on an easel so that they could be turned over by a student delegated to the job.

'Tichy' told us in one of his Solid Geom classes that a former student (probably an engineer) had come back to him for help in developing the tricky lines of intersection in a structure being built at Melbourne Zoo. This was a great bird aviary which had the form of a modern cathedral, wholly built of galvanised steel. A long nave, parabolic in cross section linked up with a taller parabolic dome. The aviary, with interior aerial walkways added in recent years, is still in use after nearly 70 years.

A lanky kid from my class was called Bruce Clarke. He played the guitar in the orchestra and had a slight stammer. After TV started in Melbourne he was praised as the leading writer and producer of TV jingles.

During our schooldays Bruce had once invited me to go with him on the following Saturday to meet a very, very friendly girl he knew in East Brunswick who liked boys. On the Friday my grandfather asked me whether I wanted to go to the football with him on Saturday. I went to the football!

Although I was not among the top marks in the entrance exam, from then on I was never beaten in mid-year or end-of-year examinations, eventually being dux of the school. This was not because of special brain power, but partly due to all the non-academic subjects that formed part of the curriculum. I was still quite young, but for years I had been drawing and making things myself, and had helped Dad build a catamaran and an outboard-motor boat at home.

I never got into much trouble at school, but I was lucky in first year Woodwork when I unwittingly answered back. The teacher was a nuggety chap called Simmonds who also taught Phys. Ed. He had demonstrated how to use a marking gauge, an adjustable tool made from wood and brass with two projecting metal spikes, which was used to scratch two parallel lines on a piece of timber. A few minutes later he saw me using it with my left hand instead of the right as he had done. Although I was only eleven I had sometimes used Dad's similar gauge at home.

Simmonds took it out of my hand and said it should be held in the right hand. Without thinking, I said I always used it in my left. He was a very tough man and afterwards I thought I could easily have got a clip over the ear.

After the exams at the end of my first year I was summoned to the Principal's office. Mr Ross said "Come in Maurice and sit down". Maurice? The only people who have ever called me Maurice (my first name) are strangers, and the students at Brunswick Tech were always called only by their surnames – even form teachers would hardly have known our Christian names. Mr Ross went on to congratulate me on being dux of First Year and said that my brother Brian had missed out by one place in gaining a scholarship in the entrance examination, but in view of my results he had decided to give Brian a scholarship. He kept calling me Maurice right through the interview, but I was too shy to correct him. I thanked him respectfully and left.

Brian was small and athletic in those days, (he's still small) and he was the star on Speech Nights when a horizontal bar was set up on the stage at Brunswick Town Hall for Phys. Ed. Demonstrations.

Brunswick Tech was provided with extensive trade workshops fully fitted with all the necessary machines and tools to cater for the teaching of carpentry, plumbing and engineering apprentices who would come in part-time to both day and night classes. I was in my element and could count on close to top marks in woodwork, sheetmetal work, clay modelling, free drawing, solid geometry, engineering drawing and similar subjects.

SCHOLARSHIPS

At the end of third year we were able to be considered for Senior Technical Scholarships which were based on our results in the external exams for English, Maths and Science only. We were never given our placings, but four fellow students and I got scholarships. There were about 60 technical schools in the state and only fifty scholarships to be awarded, so our school did very well.

The other winners were –

a) John Boardman, who also decided to do architecture and went with me right through the course, eventually running his own practice. He was very good at maths and science and I often thought that he would make a better engineer because he was just average at design.

b) Bert Young, an Australian Chinese whose ancestry probably went back to the gold mining days. He was small and neat, always popular, and good at all subjects. At a time when Chinese people were very rare in Melbourne, Bert became my best friend right through our Brunswick Tech days and for several years beyond. His father was the head of the family company, Tim Young & Co., a wholesale vegetable business with their own building at Victoria Market. Bert went to Melbourne Tech and studied aeronautical engineering, later working at Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation.

c) Alan G. Grummet, commonly known as 'Aggy' because of his initials. 'Aggy' was hopeless at sport because he didn't appear to have any co-ordination, but he was outstanding at maths and science. He was only average height and slightly built when I last saw him at the age of 14, but 40 years later the foreman building a gymnasium for us at Strathcona school told me that his wife was working as secretary to 'Aggy' and that he had grown to a big and heavy man.

d) Keith Farrell was smart-looking, good at all subjects, including sport and was very popular. Keith rejected the scholarship because he wanted to go out to work immediately. I thought it was a terrible waste of talent at the time as I knew his family was not poor. Twenty years later Hugh Schroeder, an architect working in our office told me that the manager of a firm called 'Wonderheat' in East Brunswick had taught him more about heating and ventilation in several short discussions than he had ever learned in his architecture course. He said the manager's name was Keith Farrell!

Another chap from Brunswick Tech named Cedric Gilbert also did the Architecture course with us. He was generally called 'Gil" and became a good friend. I remember him winning the annual mile foot-race at Brunswick and he would lead the way when we raced zig-zag fashion through the crowds down Swanston Street on our way to have lunch at Myers cafeteria.

He gave me an awful fright one day. With his unbuttoned grey dust coat streaming behind him he had just dodged around one group of pedestrians and there was a chap on crutches right in his path! I could see the look of terror on the poor fellow's face, but Gil somehow jumped sideways and the cripple was saved from being crippled again.

MY EARLY DAYS AT CHURCH

Because of her Cornish mining ancestry, my mother (Vera Matthews) had been brought up in the Methodist church in Ballarat and had briefly taught Sunday School.

Before we started school, Nancy, Brian and I had already gone to Methodist Sunday schools at North Brunswick and East Essendon, but had rejected the Methodist philosophy on the grounds that it was too far to walk! We finished up at the West Brunswick Presbyterian Church Sunday school and stayed there.

I never liked Sunday school. I didn't like the kids in my class who spent most of the time disrupting proceedings, I didn't like the weeks spent practising for the S. S. anniversaries or the anniversary services themselves and I hated having to put on tight leather shoes in January after going barefoot or wearing sandshoes during the holidays. Eventually, when aged about ten I did a deal with Mum: I would go to church on Sunday nights if I was released from the purgatory of Sunday school. Mum and Dad never went to church but I think Nancy must have gone with me.

After about a year of dozing through sermons and struggling to keep awake, I decided to take up the heathen lifestyle, the main advantage being NO SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Two or three years later when I was in my last year at Brunswick Tech, a very friendly kid with a gold tooth filling who played the cornet in our small school orchestra came up to me at school. His name was Bart McDiarmid and I knew that he had linked up with the church since I left.

Bart told me that the teenage boys at the church had decided, with the support of the minister, to form a Boys Club which would meet on Friday nights. Apart from the Chairman who would be an adult, the club would be completely run by the boys. Would I come back and join in?

I smelt a rat. Was this a plot organised by the minister, David Munro, and my sister, Nancy, to save me from a life of debauchery and pleasure? Sixty years later, I still don't know. But I said yes.

Nancy was already a member of the Presbyterian Girls' Fellowship (PGF) which met weekly, but till then there had been no club for boys.

The new club was quickly organised. It was held in the small Sunday School and all-purpose room at the back end of the wooden church. We would start with a business meeting followed by a talk given by a member of our church or an invited speaker, then finish with games.

The church property in Melville Road had an asphalt girls' basketball (netball) court at the north end with the church seating 150 maximum running parallel with it. On the south side of the church was a vacant area of land with about 70 feet frontage known as the manse paddock, then an old timber house which had been modified a few years earlier to serve as a manse.

David Munro the minister had arrived in about 1938 and I remember thinking he looked terribly old. I last saw him forty years later, just before he died at the age of 99. His wife, Emma, was a heavily built powerhouse of a woman who had once been head of the Kindergarten Teachers' Training College. They had never had children. David was the kindest, most unassuming person I ever knew, but his manner concealed an amazing brain.

Years after he retired, whenever he was invited back to West Brunswick, he would ask after family members by name, often when talking to people without close connection to the church in his years. At a memorial service after his death we were told that as an engineering student before deciding to go into the ministry he was a brilliant mathematician.

David and his sister Florence had grown up in affluence. Their father, also David Munro, owned the largest heavy engineering business in Melbourne and in the boom years of 'Marvellous Melbourne' he built Princes Bridge, Queens Bridge and the railway bridge across the Yarra, cable tramways and railways, before losing everything when the banks crashed in 1893.

Florence (Miss Munro of St Leonards School) told me in later years that when they were children they lived in Park House on the beach front at Brighton, and on Sundays the family would leave from the circular driveway in their carriage, to travel to Scots Church in the city.

Park House was an Italianate mansion designed by the well-known Brighton architect Charles Webb, according to Weston Bate, for his brother James, in the 1850's. Charles Webb was one of Melbourne's finest architects, designing St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Brighton, the Windsor Hotel, South Melbourne Town Hall and many other notable buildings which now have Heritage listing.

I believe that David Munro Snr. Leased the property from James Webb's widow. Park House still stands just south of Park Street but is almost unrecognisable because of extensions and alterations made in converting it to Flats in the 1920's.

Back to West Brunswick Presbyterian Church which the congregation decided should be named St. David's in the early 1940's.

I joined the newly-established Boys' Club and went regularly to church, sometimes morning and night, and to the Bible Class which was run by Mr. Munro in his study on Sunday afternoons. Nancy and Brian were also regular attenders at church and Bible Class.

The kids from Sunday School whom I did not like had been replaced by a wonderful group, many of whom became close friends for the rest of our lives. Janet and I still get together with ten or more from this group once a year when we have lunch with Peter Lindupp who suffers from Motor Neurone Disease.
Although Mr and Mrs Munro were well into middle-age they were young in outlook and deliberately fostered activities for the young. Numbers in the Sunday School and Bible Class soon outstripped the available accommodation. Mrs Munro was confined to bed for years because of a serious hip disease, but this did not slow her down. She used her forceful personality to run activities from, and in her bedroom. She produced the monthly church newsletter called 'The Record' and often used it to push her own opinions and causes. She was not one to hold back.

She held court in her bedroom and sometimes ran the PGF, Christian Endeavour and Bible Classes there. If she needed to speak to Mr Munro she would call "Daveeed, Daveeed" until he came running.

At that time every room in the manse was occupied for Sunday School and Bible Classes on Sunday afternoon, including the laundry and garage.

Our church and Sunday School buildings were smaller and less impressive than any in the Brunswick/Coburg/Essendon district, but because of the numbers it could call on (all regular church attenders) St. David's soon established a name in the cricket and football competitions and was rarely beaten over a period of many years. Allen Walsh was conspicuous by his lack of prominence.

Mr Munro was strongly against drinking and dancing. His stance on drinking probably stemmed from seeing his own father trying to drown his sorrows by turning to drink after he lost his business and all his money following the collapse of the Land Boom. Most Presbyterian churches did not allow dancing on church premises at that time, and although many of the youth of St. David's would go elsewhere to dance, such as at Moonee Ponds Town Hall, they respected Mr Munro's sincerely held views and there were only a few grumbles.

ST. DAVID'S YOUTH HALL

From about the time I returned to the church there had been talk of providing a new building to house all the youth activities and I think it was Mrs Munro who decided this building would be called the Youth Hall. Fund-raising was begun and it seemed that for years there were special events held to raise money for the dream project.

When I was about sixteen I was asked to see Mrs Munro – in her bedroom of course. She knew I was a couple of years into the architecture course and asked if I would like to start planning the Youth Hall. Mrs Munro was the type of person who would authorise action and sort out legalities later. She seemed to think I had the ability to do the job and I said I would like to give it a go.

The site was very restricted – it would be necessary to move the old wooden church onto the 'manse paddock' next door and the bulk of the new hall would be built on the basketball court. I did preliminary designs for the building, and at the suggestion of Mrs Munro, made a hollow model of it with a slot in the roof to receive donation envelopes from members of the congregation.

To help with fund-raising 'bricks' were being sold for sixpence each, and one of our Elders, Lindsay Bride, an outstanding gardener who had planted out a special strain of daffodils in the church paddock sold bulbs for two shillings each.

At this time I had been elected to the Board of Management and in 1946 with Mr Munro's support, was made secretary of the Board, a post I held for twenty years.

Earlier, during my discussions with Mr and Mrs Munro, I learned that they knew Murray Forster and in 1922 had followed Rev. Karl Forster as minister at St. Andrew's, Colac. Mrs Munro said that one of the first things she noticed after moving into the Manse was the initials 'K.M.F.' carved into the timber mantelpiece.

Another time she told me how she had to reprimand her husband (but I think she was actually proud of him). They were at Port Adelaide, one of Australia's poorest areas during the Depression and Mr Munro had gone into the city to buy a much-needed pair of boots. On the way home by tram he had seen a chap without shoes at all and had handed over the new boots to him. I was not surprised.

As we got nearer to building the Hall we got approval to appoint Murray Forster as architect and he modified and improved my design without changing the layout. Eventually tenders were called and the contract was awarded to Garrett Constructions. The Garrett family had close connection with Brunswick Baptist Church in Sydney Road and one of the brothers, Tom, had gone to the Melbourne Tech specifically to study Estimating under Murray at the time I was there.

The builders moved onto the site and started to move the church away coincidentally on St David's Day (March 1st, 1947). So far, so good. But it was a time of galloping inflation and shortage of building materials.

The building, with the grandiose name 'St David's Youth Hall and Christian Community Centre' was finally completed four and a half years later and the cost had risen from £7,500 to £11,500. Mrs Munro did not live to see it finished, but the small library at the front was named the 'E. M. Munro Memorial Library'.

FINDING A JOB

When I was getting close to completing my last year at Melbourne Tech I had to find a job in an approved architect's office for the three years of Architectural Atelier at the University of Melbourne.

Earlier in the year I had been offered a job in one of Melbourne's biggest architectural offices, Stephenson and Turner, hospital specialists (Royal Melb. Hosp. Etc.). Through the Tech, four final year students had been asked to measure and draw up an existing industrial type building that S. & T. were intending to alter. I was offered a job on the strength of my measured drawing, but declined.

One day Mrs Munro asked me whether I would like to work with Murray Forster. I said yes. I had always hoped that I might be able to work with him, but he would have been first choice with more than a dozen other students who were in my position.

Before I could say anything, Mrs Munro charged ahead and offered to speak to Murray. I was not happy about this because I believed I should do the asking and I was accustomed to getting part-time jobs myself. On the other hand I thought it would be churlish to knock back her offer. The next time I saw Murray she had spoken to him and the job was arranged.

Ann Montgomery, our free drawing and watercolour teacher had been asked by two architects, Leighton Irwin, Director of the Atelier and Don Ward who had just been appointed in-house architect for the Myer Emporium, to recommend good students who might work for them the following year. Ann told me she had recommended me (and possibly others). I went to the offices of the two architects and told them I would be working with Murray Forster.

Leighton Irwin was gracious. Don Ward was ungracious.

STARTING WORK

At last! I've finished the introduction and am ready to go to work with Murray.

As the September holidays approached in 1945, Murray told me he was snowed under and asked could I work during the holidays. I said I would and started to plan how to get from West Brunswick to East Brighton – not easy.

I started off by taking the Albion Street bus to Essendon station. I knew that the Essendon train was on the same line as Sandringham, so I went to Brighton Beach station, caught a bus along South Road then walked along Canberra Grove to number 29. Later I went by tram to the city then the train to Brighton.

At that time I did not know I was passing the sites of two schools that Murray and I would be involved with for many decades – Haileybury on the south side of South Road and St. Leonard's (future) on the north side.
On arrival I was introduced to Mrs Forster (Edna) who was due to have her second child two weeks later. The baby turned out to be Kirsty. I think Edna was wondering how she was going to cope with a stranger working in the house every day when she was bringing up a new baby. Fortunately it worked out all right and she was soon treating me like one of the family.

29 CANBERRA GROVE

I was shown around the house. It had been recently built and was finished in May 1941. It was 2-storied, built of brick bagged and painted white. The roof was of pale grey-green Vermont slate and the windows quite large and steel framed. The open fireplace was very wide with low cupboards both sides and a mantelpiece that extended full width of the Living Room.

I am sure that I could reproduce that house in the form of a working drawing nearly sixty years later because I admired it and got to know it so well.

The main entrance was on the south side via a slightly curved driveway paved with Lilydale stone toppings (later brick paved) leading to a Carport with a small workshop/store at the rear. From the driveway or Carport the front door was approached by walking past the wide Living Room window and below a pergola to a partially enclosed Porch formed by a curved brick wall which backed onto the Dining Room.

The house was not large but was spread across the fairly wide block. On the ground floor were a Living Room with Kitchen directly to the north, Dining Room projecting at the front, Sunroom to the north of the Dining Room and entered through four folding glass doors and a large roofed Porch north of the Kitchen giving access to the Sunroom, Kitchen and Laundry.

From one corner of the Living Room a stair with plastered brick balustrades led to the first floor where there were two double Bedrooms and the Bathroom. The Bathroom had burgundy-coloured fittings, pale blue wall tiles and black rubber flooring.

I was able to go in and out of the Sunroom, which became the Drawing Office without going through the house, but I had access to the phone in the Dining Room and the kettle in the Kitchen for making a cup of tea. Murray's roll-top desk which formerly belonged to his father, was in a recess in the Dining Room. The Dining Room also had a wide window seat with a hinged top for storage.

In the 1950's Murray added a Den and small spare Bedroom at the back of the Living Room.

The garden, built by Murray with help from his father, was well developed at that stage with large trees growing so quickly that only a few years later several had to be removed. The removal was done by a wiry looking character, 'Soapy Vallence', who had been one of Carlton's greatest footballers many years before.

In 1945 the Living Room and Dining Room were furnished in the 'modern' style of the 1930's with dining chairs and lounge chairs having chromed skid frames and red leatherette upholstery. The walls were pale blue, ceilings white and carpet plain dusty pink. Edna's beautiful black baby grand piano stood near the west wall at the base of the stairs. Altogether very smart and what you would expect to see in the latest architectural magazines.

I think that Edna must have become dissatisfied only a few years later when her friends were talking of buying 'antique' furniture, because all the furnishings which I had so admired were replaced – a darkish red and blue carpet with small pattern, traditional style Dining Room table and chairs, and in the Living Room an upholstered couch and chairs. Probably more comfortable, but the 'style' was gone.

REV. P. L. FORSTER

The Rev P. L. Forster was the younger brother of the Rev Karl Forster, and was generally referred to in Murray's family as 'Uncle Peter'. From what I can make out, Karl was a calm and studious man, but not Uncle Peter!

Peter had made a name for himself while at Ormond College by addressing the annual Assembly of the Presbyterian Church – something unheard of for a student. He demanded that the Assembly ban the drinking of alcohol in the college, which he claimed was rife at the time. He

was unsuccessful, but continued his campaign in later years. Someone once said to Murray "your grandfather must have been a terrible drinker!" referring to Peter's attitude to drink.

I can't remember ever seeing Uncle Peter, but I seem to know him well.

Soon after I started working with Murray we were asked to design a Nurses' wing at the Presbyterian Babies' Home in Canterbury Road, Camberwell. Rev. P. L. Forster was director of the home.

The large property was originally the home of a Mr Craig of Craig Williamson, the big department store at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders Streets in the early days. The mansion, called 'Linda' was being used as the administration building for the Babies' Home. I remember it for the grand staircase in the large entrance hall and the elaborately patterned parquetry floor.

Murray planned the nurses' wing as a 2-storey building with well fitted out small single bedrooms on both floors and direct access to the existing building. It was built without much trouble by Pollard Bros. Builders, but building materials were short at the time. The building was later named the 'P. L. Forster Wing'.

In those years Murray made a practice of giving large donations in the form of discounts on all church work. I always thought it was his way of repaying the church for the free education he got at Scotch College because he was the son of a minister.

The Institute of Architects would not allow architects to offer discounts below the minimum fee of 6% on the cost of a project for full services, but provided the full fee was clearly shown on the account, then the donation was acceptable.

I didn't normally see the accounts for fees, but Murray showed me the account and payment cheque for the Babies' Home job with a letter from Uncle peter. The account read –

Total fees	£600 – 0 – 0
Discount	300 – 0 - 0
Balance due	£300 – 0 – 0

Without any word of thanks for the gift of three hundred pounds, Uncle Peter wrote that Murray was lucky not to get a 'contra-account' from him. We never found out what he was referring to.

Before the war when Uncle Peter was minister at the South Yarra church in Punt Road, Murray designed a 2-storey manse which was built beside the church. When the building was nearly finished the builder needed to know the paint colours urgently. Murray had given Uncle Peter a colour scheme for approval, but could not get a decision from him. When asked yet again, Uncle Peter said "Don't worry about colours, just get the paint on!"

Towards the end of his long life, Uncle Peter had some serious illness and one leg was amputated. Murray's younger brother, Alec, was running a small business from home (it may have been as an insurance agent) and one day every week for at least a year he would pick up Uncle Peter in his little Volkswagen beetle and take him to Prince Henry's Hospital for treatment. Alec was a non-stop smoker and he told me he was regularly harangued on these trips about the evils of smoking. One day when he could take it no longer he pulled up somewhere along St. Kilda Road and said "I've had enough, get out!" Uncle Peter, when he realised that Alec was serious, said "You wouldn't leave an old one-legged man in the street, would you?" Alec said "Too right I would", and he told me he meant it. Eventually Uncle Peter promised never to mention smoking again. Alec drove on.

ALEC FORSTER

Alec Forster was Murray's younger brother and apparently went to Geelong College, then did an Agricultural Science course.

I am not sure how much (if any) actual farming Alec did, but Murray told me the story of a farm horse that was intended to go on a property which Alec was on at the time.

The Rev Karl Forster arranged to pick up a horse which had been sent by train to Melbourne – possibly Spencer St station – and walk it to the Manse at St Cuthbert's, Brighton, where Alec could collect it.

Rev Karl, who would have had experience in handling horses in his early years, collected the horse in the afternoon and set off walking in a southerly direction through the City and South Melbourne. He was glad to get off the hard roads when he reached Albert Park and walked through the park itself. In those days (pre-war) the park was completely fenced and provided with heavy double gates at both ends. The gate piers were still standing at the Albert Road end in recent years. When the horse and Rev got to the southern end (it must have been after 5 p.m.) he found the gates closed and locked.

There was no alternative – he had to go back to the northern entrance, which fortunately was still open – then set off again on the outside of the park.

By the time he got to Fitzroy Street St. Kilda, his stomach was starting to rumble and it was now dark. He decided to have a meal at a café and tied the horse up to a verandah post. After the meal he came out.

Guess what! The horse was gone. I never heard what ministerial statements he made, but I think anything could be excused after what he had been through.

Eventually the horse was found in a lane behind the shops where he had found a rubbish bin, tipped it over, and was looking after his own rumbling tum.
Horse and man arrived in Middle Brighton in he dead of night.

I think that during the 1930's Alec must have had second thoughts about a farming career and joined the police force.

In 1936 the Force had been rocked by scandal when its most senior detective, a man named Brophy, was shot while in a parked car late at night with a woman who was not his wife. Afterwards the police tried to cover up the facts by spreading false stories.

The Chief Commissioner, Thomas Blamey, who had previously been an army officer was forced to resign in disgrace.

The state government was shaken by the publicity and decided to bring in a new leader who had served at New Scotland Yard, London. His name was Alec Duncan, a scotsman complete with a strong scottish accent, who finished up being a leading layman at Karl Forster's church, St Cuthbert's, Brighton.

During the war Alec Forster must have been a military policeman because he told us something of the wartime history of a building which was to become the St Kilda Presbyterian manse.

This building was a big 2-storey mansion of about 60 squares standing alongside the church in Barkly Street. It had been built for a merchant in about 1870 according to a National Trust

book, and bought by the church in 1919. I don't know whether it had ever been used as a manse, but during the war and immediately afterwards it was let out to someone as a 'Rooming House', broken up into single rooms with gas stoves in passageways and on stair landings and only one poor bathroom on each floor.

A new minister – a weedy little chap called Harold Perkins – had been appointed in the early 1950's, and rather than use the current manse his wife decided that she would like the two of them to live in the main part of the mansion and the church caretaker in the rear wing because she "liked the idea of gracious living". She got her way, but a lot of money was wasted.

When Alec heard that we were working on alterations and renovations to that building he said that he remembered it well from the war years – it was a notorious brothel and he and other MPs regularly raided it when trying to find AWL soldiers.

After the war Alec somehow finished up teaching general education subjects to police recruits in the Police Academy which was in St Kilda Road near Victoria Barracks.

Alec was always in civilian clothes when I knew him. He was over 6 ft tall, thin with wavy hair going grey, and wore glasses.

During the 1950's Alec's ordered way of life was turned upside down. A new Commissioner of Police was needed in the Northern Territory and Alec Duncan who was still in charge in Victoria, somehow nominated Alec for the job. He got it.

This meant relocating the family from Oak Grove, North Brighton to Darwin where they stayed for a few years. Alec's wife was Jean, a motherly woman with wavy brown hair and very blue eyes. They had at least two boys, but I just don't know about any other children.

One boy was a bit of a villain and after he had been caught smoking, Alec (the heavy smoker) decided he had better nip this in the bud. He bought the biggest cigar he could find, sat the offspring down and told him to smoke it completely. When he had finished, Alec asked him how he liked it. The reply was "Not bad, but I would rather have cigarettes!"

I think Alec must have had a small truck and a caravan so that they could do some touring. When they left Darwin to return to Victoria they took a stock of new spare tyres with them. They had travelled quite a distance before it was necessary to replace a tyre, but Alec found several full lemonade bottles carefully hidden inside the tyre. When the other tyres were checked they were all found to be full of drink bottles. The young smoker had spent all his pocket money to ensure that he wouldn't perish from thirst in the desert.

RAY MEAGHER & RON CHURCHES

Two of Murray Forster's best friends in post-war years were Ray Meagher and Ron Churches. They had both been prisoners-of-war of the Japanese, in Changi prison.

While the treatment of prisoners in Changi was bad, it seems from books we have read recently that it did not compare with conditions on the Burma Railway where men were worked like slaves, often until they died.

Both Ray and Ron appear to have spent their early years in the Brunswick and Pascoe Vale areas, but post-war they finished up in Mentone and Brighton respectively.

Although they must have known each other in Changi, I got the feeling (through Murray) that Ray looked down on Ron because he had been in the Medical Corps and not a real soldier carrying a gun.

Ray Meagher was tall, serious-looking and quietly spoken.

I believe that as a young man, pre-war, Ray worked in a clerical position at Brunswick Town Hall. At that time Edna Forster worked with Ray's wife, Win, in an office, probably in the city.

Shortly before the war the Meaghers got Murray to design a small house for them on the side of Coonan's Hill, Pascoe Vale South only half a mile north of where we Walshes lived. Win Meagher lived in this house on her own all through the war years.

After Ray returned he may have gone briefly back to his old job but could not settle down and decided to try something different.

I first heard of the Meaghers when Murray told me they had been at Canberra Grove the previous evening. Murray said that Ray had a vague idea of starting a chicken farm somewhere on the edge of the suburbs. As an alternative Murray had suggested that if Ray wanted to work for himself he consider buying a little shop to be run as a mixed business in the new areas being developed for housing in the south-east. Because we were designing and supervising houses in these areas, Murray could see the possibilities in such a shop.

It seemed to be only a short time later that Ray had bought a shop and was in business. The shop was a milk bar which sold groceries. It was quite small and narrow, not new, and was surrounded by open paddocks and a few scattered houses. It was in Charman Road, Mentone, just north of Balcombe Road.

The area developed far quicker than even Murray could have expected and the Meaghers prospered.

Within a couple of years Ray asked Murray to design a much larger shop just to the north. This was to be a grocery shop which became self-serve a little later. I remember designing racks of shelves with plastic edge strips to allow labels to be slid in and out – new at the time.

I think it must have been 1952 when Murray was away on his European trip that I was asked by Ray to accompany him to the Licensing Court where he was making application for a licence to sell bottled liquor. An architect was required to prepare drawings of the premises and state that these were correct when asked by the applicant's barrister.

It was the first time I had met a barrister and I was not particularly impressed. He was young, slickly groomed, cocky and fast talking. His name was Bill Gillard and in later years I would see his name in the papers, eventually as a judge.

After Murray's return he was asked to design a house for the Meaghers in Beaumaris, not far from the shop. The house, which Murray designed with what he termed a generous 'breezeway' in the middle dividing the living area from the bedrooms, was built on a good wide block in Hutchison Avenue, just back from the beach. It had simple lines with a low-pitched gable roof and I think it would have been a pleasant house to live in.

While the business was developing Ray had apparently been involved locally in the Boy Scout movement. The locals recognised his drive and organising ability and persuaded him to stand as a Liberal in the forthcoming State elections. I think I am right in saying that the electorate was Mentone and had traditionally been Labor.

To everyone's surprise, including his, Ray won the seat and held it for many years, until his retirement.

Henry Bolte's Liberal government was in power (Bolte was premier for a record 17 years, 1952-1969) and I think every one of the Liberals was a returned serviceman. While there were some lawyers, most were self-made youngish men who believed that a new era was dawning where anything was possible for Victoria.

Ray soon progressed to being a Minister and held several different portfolios. I particularly remember Transport, Aboriginal Affairs and Housing.

I was involved with Ray Meagher some time after Murray died, when I called him with a request for help.

This needs quite a bit of preliminary explanation.

Janet and I had lived in Albert Park in a small house we built, since 1966, and had involved ourselves in local affairs including the church in Dorcas Street, two kindergartens and two schools.

One Sunday morning we went to a meeting which must have been announced in the local paper. It was held under Elm trees on a small grassed reserve beside Eastern Road, South Melbourne. Several speakers, including a Methodist Minister from Fitzroy, Brian Howe (later turned politician and deputy PM in the reign of Bob Hawke) castigated the Housing Commission.
They claimed that the Commission intended razing two city blocks in Raglan Street, South Melbourne to build 'high rise' flats and the local people would be turned out of the area. They wanted the Council to boycott anything proposed by the Commission.

Then a small, youngish chap who had been the only person sitting down, spoke up. His name was Des Keefe, he lived in the affected area, worked with the Customs Department, and was suffering from hepatitis at the time. I think he spoke last and his views were different from all the previous speakers.

He headed a small committee composed of locals, which had agreed to their homes being replaced provided a completely new approach was agreed to by the Commission.

Their conditions included –
a) Every person who wanted to be rehoused in the area could do so.
b) Building to be carried out in stages to quickly rehouse the locals.
c) Buildings to be 'low-rise' not exceeding 3 stories.
d) Persons of all ages to be catered for, including family units.

Janet and I were impressed by his reasonable attitude and quietly approached him later. We offered to do simple drawings to illustrate his ideas so that he could enlist the help of South Melbourne Council to put pressure on the Commission. He accepted and we became good friends.

It was a long, long process with a lot of in-fighting and local politics involved, but eventually we got the support of the local people, the local paper and the Council.

Then the Housing Commission dug in their heels. They did not want to work that way at all. It would be too slow and too costly – they were not interested.

It was at this stage that I thought of asking for the help of Ray Meagher. I knew of course that he was Housing Minister but in South Melbourne at that time – overwhelmingly pro-Labor – any suggestion of help from the 'enemy' would be fatal.

I rang Ray who remembered me from the earlier years with Murray and he offered to come to the office (still 618 St Kilda Road) to discuss the problem which I had briefly outlined.

To my great surprise he brought with him the head of the Housing Commission, Ray Gaskin, a big solid man who had ruled the Commission for years.

They squeezed into our little office and Ray asked me to describe the proposal which the Council was backing. No promises were made, but we later heard that the Council and the Commission were consulting and the Commission later produced sketch plans of 'low-rise' buildings for the site. These were displayed at the Town Hall.

It was Des Keefe who first pointed out that the drawings did not comply with the Council's agreed conditions. They were sent back.

The Commission's second proposals were accepted. They showed below-ground off-street parking covering the whole of the two blocks, nicely designed 3-storey buildings above with different types of accommodation for residents of all ages, and landscaping throughout.

Designs were accepted and construction would have taken a couple of years. The only unsatisfactory part that we could see was that demolition and re-building were carried out in large sections and often former residents would drift away and find housing elsewhere while they waited.

On completion the development (it was not our design of course) won an award from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. Until now Janet and I are the only ones who knew of Ray Meagher's involvement in the Raglan Street development, but without his intervention I think they would still be arguing.

Ray and Win's son (little Dougie to his mother in earlier days) became a barrister and was the QC assisting the Commissioner in the enquiry into the scandals in the NSW Police Force.

Ron Churches was just a little above average height with neat brown hair and like Ray Meagher, quietly spoken. Whether they had always been quiet or if it had developed in Changi under the sharp eye of the Japs, I do not know.

I never met Ron before the war, but he had been one of a small group of exceptional young men in Mr Munro's Bible Class, all of whom appear to have joined the army or air force and served overseas. I was younger, but got to know most of them after they returned.

Ron had married his wife, Bon, before the war and I knew her as the leading soprano and soloist in the church choir in the years that he was away. Soon after he returned Ron was asked to give a talk to the Men's Club on his Changi experiences and that was where I first saw him.

Ron joined in the life of the Church at West Brunswick again, but in the early 1950's moved to Baird Street East Brighton. I suspect that the hand of Rev David Munro might have been behind an introduction to Murray Forster, because after briefly going to a Brighton church where they didn't feel welcome Ron and Bon ended up at Hampton Presbyterian Church where they were members for many years. Ron and Murray became good friends and I know Ron was taken to the farm many times.

One day in the mid 1950's Murray was leaving the office which at that time was at 381 Latrobe Street. He had just got into his car when he felt severe chest pains and he knew something was wrong. He drove just around the corner into Little Lonsdale Street where he knew Ron Churches was Deputy Manager of the Peter McCallum Institute, walked into Reception, asked for Ron, and collapsed.

Fortunately Ron was in. Murray was quickly put to bed and the problem was diagnosed as a 'coronary occlusion'. The heart attack was the first of many problems with his heart over many years. The last attack caused Murray's death in 1967.

Ron was an accountant and helped Murray with the office accounts for a period. He became Manager of the Peter McCallum Institute and held that position until he retired.

In later years Ron and Bon lived in Balnarring, then moved into a retirement village at Baxter on the Mornington Peninsula.

Note: While I was writing this, my sister Nancy rang to say that Ron had died (April, 2005) and that she had just been to his funeral service. Ron was 91 and had kept in touch with many of his pre-war Bible Class mates all his life.

W. A. DEUTSHER

W. A. Deutsher was one of those men that a whole book could be written about. He was a self made industrialist, and a leading member of the New Street Methodist Church who appeared to me to be prepared to go to any lengths to get what he wanted.

Murray must have been involved in the pre-war building of the Deutsher factory on the Nepean Highway, Brighton. In the early 1950's we were asked to design an extension which was a rather tricky triangular fill-in abutting the highway. At about the same time we designed a house for the youngest of Deutsher's four adult sons. The only unusual feature of this house was the large fish tank which was required to form part of the dividing wall between the Dining Room and Hall.

Murray told me that W. A. Deutsher had made a fortune during the war years. He had imported two special machines from Germany just before war broke out. They were less than the size of a dining table, but each of them made aluminium alloy aircraft screws from a large coil of wire. Murray said that one screw dropped off the end of each machine every two seconds, and every screw was worth one shilling and sixpence. Apparently these machines were kept going 24 hours a day right through the war, and the only manpower required was a worker to change over the coils of wire and to look after maintenance!

It must have been in 1951 that W. A. Deutsher told Murray that he wanted him to design a house and showed him a recent copy of PIX magazine. There was a double-page spread featuring artists' drawings of flash modern houses of various sizes from modest through to the one Deutsher had fixed his eye on – The Executive's Residence.

This was a 2-storey monster designed in what Robin Boyd called 'waterfall' style with striped brickwork and rounded windows at every corner. There were lots of corners.

Murray was a bit shocked at the 1930's non-architectural design, but architects are accustomed to being presented initially with something that a client has considered his 'dream home' and he thought he could handle this one.

"Mr Deutsher", he said, "the best people are not using rounded corners these days".

Deutsher's reply was a bit hard to handle – "Mr Forster, we are the best people".

We were still asked to prepare sketch plans for an enormous 2-storey house of 50 squares. It was to be built on a prime site on the corner of Milliara Grove and Howell St, East Brighton, facing across Hurlingham Park to the Highway.

We managed to get around the problem of rounded corner windows by combining them into one great semi-circular end to the projecting Living Room and having square corner windows elsewhere. We had a free-standing circular staircase in the large entrance hall. The sketch designs were accepted and we were told to prepare working drawings.

Strict building controls limiting the size of a brick house to twelve and a half squares were still in force and we could not see how Deutsher could get around this. A copy of the working drawing for any house had to be approved by the State Building Directorate in the city before a Building Permit could be issued by the Council.

Deutsher said he would look after the Building Directorate. We know that he said in his application that his mother-in-law and all sorts of relatives would be living in the house. We don't know what funny business went on, but he eventually presented us with the stamped plan, four times the permitted size, and told us to call tenders.

The successful builder was a fairly large firm called H. T. McKern and Son from North Melbourne and they handled the job well.

Soon after the building work started, Murray left Melbourne with Edna and Murraie on a six-month trip to Europe' leaving me in charge. I turned 25 later in the year. While the building work was going ahead, Mr Deutsher's brain was also leaping ahead.

He decided that he would like the ceiling in the main Bedroom painted a deep blue with silver stars, probably inspired by the State movie theatre, later renamed the Forum.

He said he wanted the veneered panels on the walls in the entrance hall to be in Camphor Laurel. Camphor Laurel was used in overdone bedroom suites on show in Italian furniture stores at the time. It had a grain combining streaks of cream and brown with splashes of red which looked like blood smears. Repulsive, but he got his way.

He designed his own front entrance double gates of wrought iron with the letters WAD worked in script style, one mirror image so his guests could read them both coming and going.

After the concrete flat roof to the second storey had been poured, Mr Deutsher thought it would be a good place to add a swimming pool. I told him that I did not think the structure of the building would support the great weight of water even if only a couple of feet deep, but he insisted that I check it out with the structural engineer. To my surprise, the engineer said it could be done, and it was.

The foreman on the house was a very capable young Englishman and he told me the story of the bet made by the owner when the house was half built. One of Deutsher's sons, Ray I think, was building a large house at the same time as his father. Deutsher senior knew the proposed completion date for Ray's house, and wanted his to be finished first. He approached the foreman, said he wanted to beat his son, and said he would bet him one hundred pounds that he could not finish his job first. If he lost, the foreman would not have to pay.

The house would have been completed by the contract date, but the foreman said the 'bet' was too good to refuse. He speeded up the job, completed it ahead of Ray, collected his winnings from the old man, and was very happy.

At about the time he was building his house, W. A. Deutsher featured on page 3 of the Sun newspaper. He had always done a lot of travelling in Australia and overseas and was known as a keen moviemaker. The newspaper featured a photo of two aboriginal girls about 6 or 8 years of age whom Deutsher had adopted after a recent trip to Central Australia.

Mr Deutsher did not live long to enjoy his house. He died in 1959. The last time I saw his name in the newspaper was four years later. His name headed the list of 'Tax Defaulters' published by the Taxation Department. His estate was ordered to pay £35,000 to the department – an enormous sum at the time. His widow was forced to sell the house to raise the money.

I thought of the sign posted on the wall of the change room in the W. A. Deutsher factory which had caught my eye ten years before because of its specific wording –

ANY PERSON CAUGHT STEALING
IN THIS CHANGE ROOM
WILL BE PROSECUTED TO THE
FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW

I have written of Mr Deutsher as I found him in the fifties, but I think he must have been respected for what he did for his New Street Church and charitable activities.

Self made businessmen often seem to have the urge to show off their success by building their houses to impress.

We had built a house in Wattletree Rd Malvern for Henry Page, a little chap who had an engineering business pioneering the construction of prefabricated garages and sheds. Architects had always been trained to swing hinged doors to screen Bedrooms and Bathrooms when half open. Mr Page wanted the door to his bathroom hinged the other way because "If I am showing my friends over the house I don't want the door to obscure their view of the bathroom".

HAROLD C. BLENKIRON

Harold Clarence Blenkiron would have claimed K. Murray Forster and later Allen and Janet Walsh as his architects for more than fifteen years, but we never built anything for him or provided him with normal architectural services, other than to supply a detail drawing of new Kitchen cupboards.

They must have thrown away the mould when Harold C. was born – at least I hope so. He was odd.

He contacted Murray in 1954 and asked for advice over the phone. He had bought a fairly ordinary 1920's brick house on a good sized block in Illawarra Road, Hawthorn and needed help with things he thought required attention.

Murray told us that Harold was in his year at Scotch College and was made fun of by the other kids. Once during 'Cadets' the boys were given a rest period and most had settled down under the trees. Harold had fallen asleep and someone tied his bootlaces together. Of course he fell flat on his face when the order came to 'Fall in'.

Harold had become a teacher at Scotch – I think in Maths and Economics. He was entirely lacking a sense of humour and took things literally. He was nearly 6 ft tall and swarthy-looking, with dark patches around his eyes, like an Indian.

Murray was told by another master at Scotch who had also been a fellow student that he had seen Harold, as an adult, regularly take out his long-term ticket and wave it as he went onto the unattended Kooyong railway station platform. When asked why he did this, he explained that the railway regulations said that the ticket 'must be presented at the gate'.

We heard another story in later years after Harold had a mild heart attack while still teaching at Scotch. (He actually lived past the age of 90).

He thought he had better be prepared in case of another attack while teaching, so he trained four boys to lift him onto a stretcher and carry him out of the classroom. In case one of the four was absent, he trained another four boys to do the same, as a back-up squad. We never heard where they were to take him.

Harold treated Murray's every word as gospel – he was like a pet pup that wouldn't go away. Unfortunately after Murray died, he transferred his allegiance to me.

When he first contacted Murray about the house (he must have rung him at home) his main worry was how to prevent birds getting into the roof through the old louvred wooden gable vents. Murray answered all his detailed questions in a long conversation.

It must have been a week later that 2 copies of a 'specification' handwritten in ink (before copiers) arrived in the mail for Murray to check and approve.

Mr Blenkiron must have made notes of Murray's answers to all his questions such as "How do I stop the birds getting in?" – "You use birdwire". "What is birdwire?" – "Wire woven into a mesh". "What size are the holes?" – "Small enough to prevent birds getting through". He had taken all Murray's comments and written them out in longhand to produce his own 'specification' which he then gave to tradesmen to quote on. When the job went ahead he closely checked everything that was done. He would regularly hand-write five copies of his 'specification' in order to get quotes.

He followed this procedure for years with numerous small jobs around his house.
He was quite prepared to pay fees to us for time spent, but you could never send an account large enough to cover all the unnecessary wasted time.

When Murray could stand him no longer, he generously palmed Harold off onto me. Ross Ingram and Janet were in the office at that period and our hearts would sink when a voice on the phone said "It's Harold Blenkiron here". Every time he would carefully explain that he had a silent number and to take a pencil and make a note of it. We didn't tell him that we all knew it off by heart!

Once he told us that he was going on holiday to a beach resort and that he would make a long-distance call to the office at 1 p.m. on a certain day in the following week. Ross, Janet and I decided to check the time of his call, and gathered around the phone at two minutes to one. Sure enough, the call came through exactly at one!

I had to go to the Blenkiron house one day to discuss his proposed Kitchen cupboards. His wife, a plain middle-aged woman was there and we sat around a table in the old Kitchen. As usual, Blenkiron was asking questions about some unimportant detail and his wife, trying to help, butted in with a comment. Harold stopped, took off his glasses, turned and said "Jean, would

you please not interrupt when I am talking to Mr Walsh. You are disturbing my train of thought!"

Mr Blenkiron invariably finished up disputing details of his small jobs with the tradesmen he had engaged, which was not surprising to us.

He sent a letter to us once enclosing his own hand-written copy of a letter he had received from his fed-up plumber. At the top he had carefully written out every word of the plumber's letterhead in a combination of capitals and lower case with the name Curtis in large letters –

Head Office and Works:
494 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH. CARLTON, N4

Telephones:
FW 1462, FW 1463

FRANK CURTIS & SON

Master Plumbers
SINCE 1883

In the letter the plumber said he refused to return to the job because he had no intention of 'sending good money after bad'!

I don't think the Blenkirons had children and they probably had no friends. Their house looked pretty sad.

BROADMEADOWS

THE FIRST BUILDING

Not long after Murray returned from his 1952 trip to Europe he was invited to the Broadmeadows Shire Offices to discuss alterations and additions to their existing building. He took me with him and we met the man I believe would have issued the invitation. This was a Brighton friend of Murray, Charlie Seabrook, the Shire Engineer, and a brother of Norm Seabrook, a well-known architect who had won a competition to design the McRobertson Girls' High School at Albert Park as a young man in 1934.

Charlie was a debonair type who looked like Rex Harrison, continually smoked, and gave the impression that nothing was worth getting upset about. He introduced us to Mr Smiley the Shire Secretary who fitted his name beautifully – unexpectedly young with rosy cheeks and usually wearing a happy smile.

Only a few years later, after being constantly battered by local politics, he retained the name, but not the smile.

The existing Shire Offices were single storey, built in Spanish Mission style in the 1920's and stood alone in open country facing east towards Pascoe Vale Road and the station, some distance away.

Murray only had to deal with these two men and he came up with a very workable scheme for the new municipal offices resulting in a two-storey building spread across the front of the existing building and retaining the old council chamber at the rear. A colonnade with simple round columns extended along the ground floor front with smallish square windows in a plain wall above and two small cantilevered balconies. It had a slightly Swedish look.

The job went ahead smoothly, with J. J. Clift, an experienced builder from Essendon in charge. Joe Clift claimed, and seemed to be accepted as being the inventor of the Australian brick-veneer house.

THE SECOND BUILDING PROPOSAL

About three years later we were asked to design a much larger building – a new Town Hall – or City Hall as they called it. Charlie Seabrook explained that the State Government was planning big things for the area.

Town Planners had been given the job of designing a Civic Centre just north of the Shire offices and the Housing Commission and private builders were to build thousands of houses to cover the land to the north and west. We were told that Broadmeadows was expected to have a population of 70,000 within ten years.

The housing certainly went ahead and outstripped the forecasts. Census figures for Broadmeadows in 1966 and 1971 were 88,000 and 101,000 respectively, making it second only in size to Moorabbin among Melbourne's municipalities.

We were given the requirements for the building and produced sketch plans for quite a large Town Hall with a tall modern clock tower at one side.

The sketch plans were approved, but the job did not go ahead because of uncertainty with local finances. We were paid for our work.

BROADMEADOWS CITY HALL

It would have been about 1960 that we next heard from Broadmeadows. Charlie Seabrook must still have been the Shire (or perhaps City) Engineer.

The whole organisation of the Council had changed. Labor councillors were now firmly in control and instead of dealing with the easy-going Charlie, we were to take instructions from John Chester, the local Building Inspector.

We heard that Chester was a Labor man and that Charlie was being squeezed out.

Murray and I went to a few meetings at Broadmeadows and we soon learnt that the Labor councillors had bigger and bigger ideas for the Town Hall.

They said that Secondary Schools in the whole of the northern suburbs were complaining that they had to go as far as the City to find halls large enough for Speech Nights. Broadmeadows intended to fix this. A school with 800 students plus two parents each, plus staff would need a building seating 2,500! This became their starting point.

Mayoral Balls and public dances were still popular and had to be catered for. Mayoral Balls required a Supper Hall nearly as large as the main auditorium (supper in two sittings) and a commercial-style Kitchen.

In addition to the Town Hall building we were to design new larger Municipal Offices. Murray never liked officious public servants, and wasn't at all impressed when Mr Chester presented his own plan showing his layout of offices, on a grand scale, spread over two storeys. We later managed to pull this into shape. All the buildings were to be fully airconditioned.

We produced sketch plans of a vast set of buildings. The main Auditorium was as large as the Melbourne Town Hall; it had balconies at the right hand side and rear, similar to those at the Memorial Hall at Haileybury, Brighton. The Supper Hall was at Ground Floor level immediately below the Auditorium and matching it in size, with a fully fitted stainless steel Kitchen. There would be the usual two sittings for supper at Mayoral Balls.

There was a full-sized Stage with adjacent dressing rooms so that theatrical performances could be staged. Behind the Stage was a Plant Room 60 feet long, 30 feet wide and 30 feet high which was packed with airconditioning equipment serving the whole complex.

At the last minute we were instructed to add a vehicle lift about 20 feet by 12 feet because they thought it should be possible to hold trade shows in the Auditorium on the upper level. Ford cars and Caterpillar tractors were only some of the products being produced in the municipality.

To avoid a common problem where members of the public visiting one department in the offices would be sent to the cashier at the other end of the building and then made to return with a receipt before having a document stamped (as at Springvale) we were asked to install a Lamson tube system.

This system, originally from America, consisted of a series of brass vacuum tubes about 2 inches in diameter built into the structure of the building, connecting various departments and in particular the cashier. Documents could be put in a small cylindrical container about 8 inches long at the various departments, inserted in the tubes and sent to a selected destination. Great if it could be afforded! It went in.

The Sketch Plan and estimate were sent to the Council and after they had time to consider them, Murray and I were invited to a Council Meeting.

This was a meeting of the full Council in committee, and a decision was to be made about proceeding with the building.

As it turned out, there was no discussion about the design of the building – only the cost.

There were ten Labor Councillors and two Independents seated around a large table. The Independents doubted whether the Council could afford this enormous project, given its other commitments, and whenever they got up to speak, their opponents put on an unbelievable exhibition.

Most of them were smoking and three sitting opposite would blow smoke into the Independents' faces while they were speaking. Then they would turn away and chat noisily with the next person.

A tubby Labor man was sitting directly across from the two serious and quietly spoken Independents. His name was Mutton and he distinguished himself by belching across the table while his opponents were speaking. Murray and I could hardly believe what we were seeing.

The Labor Councillors were apparently those behind the project and the more the Independents questioned it, the more determined they became.

The upshot was that by the end of the night the decision was made to go ahead and prepare to call tenders. This meant a lot of work in our office and bringing in Consulting Engineers for the structural, mechanical engineering and electrical design.

It must have been nearly two years later that the Broadmeadows City Hall and Municipal Offices were completed and opened – in 1963.

Murray and Edna, Janet and I were invited to be at the official opening. By this time Councillor Mutton the smoke-blowing belcher, was Mayor. His was the only speech that remains in my memory from that day. He always spoke quickly, as though he was afraid of someone else cutting in, and he would spray as he spoke. There were beads of sweat on his forehead as he got wound up and said "To quote from Longfellow, a Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever!"

Janet and I looked at each other. Longfellow? An American? We were pretty sure it was Keats, and confirmed it later, but a little thing like that wouldn't have worried Councillor Mutton.

The Civic Centre to the north was not built for several years and the Town Hall complex stood alone surrounded by open space – like some monument left by a long-gone civilisation.

Eventually the whole of the surrounding area was built up and the neighbouring site now houses a Safeway Supermarket and a theatre complex in addition to a Courthouse and shops.

This is now the 'Town' Centre for the City of Hume.

FOREMEN

In England, the foreman on a building site was someone of importance. In the old days he wore a suit and bowler hat, was shown respect, and was paid accordingly.

The situation was different in Australia. The Australian worker's attitude to a boss, particularly after WW2 was "I'm as good as you any day, mate", and any man who took on the job of foreman had to be prepared to take on all the responsibility for very little extra pay.

We came across some wonderful foremen and the following are some I greatly respected –

Mal Osborne Builder – W. A. Bruce

I first met Mal when I was sent by Murray to inspect a job under construction. When I arrived two young blokes, Mal and the painter, were sitting outside eatng their lunches with their thermoses balanced on a sawhorse. They barely looked up and certainly didn't stop eating when I introduced myself. They had probably met young architects before.

Over the next twenty-five years Murray and I got to know Mal very well. He was small and nuggety and could keep working hard himself while issuing instructions to the other men on the site.

Mal fitted out our offices at 101 Punt Road, 618 St Kilda Road and 82 Bridport Street, in widely separated years.

He probably worked on a dozen different building contracts at Haileybury – Brighton and Keysborough, as well as numerous church jobs and houses all over the place.

When Bill Bruce retired after metrics came in, Mal carried on the firm for many years.

Luti Builder – Alert Constructions

The best thing that we got out of doing the Broadmeadows Town Hall was meeting Luti. (Pronounced Looty).

While we did not supervise that job, we knew that a firm of builders called Alert Constructions run by two Italian brothers called John and Sereno De Pellegrin had built it and appeared to have done a good job.

They asked to be put on our list of tenderers and one of the first jobs they did for us was the Music Building at Haileybury, Keysborough. Sereno was running the firm as John had died suddenly. Sereno was a charming man and Janet and I remember how his whole face would light up in a smile when he greeted you.

Luti, who was related to the De Pellegrins, was foreman on that first job and he was so co-operative and efficient that you had confidence in everything he did.

We were so impressed that whenever Alert Constructions were the successful tenderers on a job, the first question we would ask was "Is Luti available to be foreman?"

Luti built the Senior School Science Building and at least two stages of the Junior School at Keysborough, two buildings at Strathcona and the Uniting Church at Craigieburn.

Daryl Beary Builder – Edmanson Constructions

Daryl was average height, thin and quiet and you would say he was insignificant – looking until you saw him in action.

He and his employer, George Edmanson, 6 feet 5 inches tall, thin and serious, were probably the best organisers of a building job that we met.

George worked from a small office he had formed off a side porch at his home at Glen Iris, and we always knew that if he was the successful tenderer, the job would go without a hitch.

Our clients, whether the schools or private also got to know and appreciate George and Daryl. In the years they were working for us it was common to have weekly 'Site meetings' for the larger building projects. This system worked well because the client, the builder, sometimes a relevant sub-contractor and the architect would regularly meet on the job and discuss progress, any problems and the next stages of construction. Minutes were kept by the architect and promptly sent to all parties.

The great advantage of the Site meetings system was that everybody was kept up-to-date with the progress of the job. If necessary the builder could be pressured to speed up the work and the client could not claim later that the architect had not told him what was going on.

It was at these Site Meetings that Daryl shone. While other builders or foremen might say "Yes I must look into that" when asked a question about future work, Daryl was able to say what he had planned and when it was going to happen. He could confirm these things from paperwork which he had with him.

I was told by one of the men who worked with him that Daryl had been a very good baseball player and that he was now a baseball coach. I am sure he would be a good one.

Clarrie Builder – Pollard Bros.

While Pollard Bros. did a great deal of work for Murray in the 1940's and 1950's, I only remember Clarrie being foreman on one job – Haileybury College Assembly Hall, Brighton.

Clarrie was middle-aged at the time and very experienced in building. He was big – he would have weighed more than 16 stone. Clarrie also had a problem. He stuttered badly.

One day Murray and I called on the job when the Assembly Hall was partly built. The walls were up and the roof on. We were inside the Hall itself and Clarrie was asking Murray a question about how he wanted the diagonal lining boards to the roof to be finished. He was pointing to the junction of the wall and roof more than 20 feet above our heads.

Clarrie started "Arr – Arr – Arr". Murray and I looked away, but it dodn't make any difference. Poor Clarrie was getting nowhere, and we couldn't help. This went on for about a minute until he suddenly shouted "Bugger it!" and then went on speaking normally.

ORBOST

Only a few weeks after I started work with Murray he made a visit to Orbost.

He must have been invited by the local Presbyterians – possibly through the Presbyterian Architectural Committee in Melbourne – to discuss the building of a new church.

It appears that at a meeting of the Congregation which Murray attended that all Hell broke loose.

Murray told me afterwards that many of the local people wanted to build a new church and turn the existing church building into an all-purpose hall, something that many churches were considering doing at that time.

The existing building was a nicely detailed larger than average timber building erected in 1896 and designed by Harry Hopkins, an architect based in Bairnsdale.

The main opponent of the move to build a new church was a senior elder, Alec Cameron, whose father was the builder of the existing church. Alec himself was also a builder and had the reputation of being the best in Orbost.

The argument must have continued for some time, because although no decision was made to build a new church, Alec Cameron was so offended that he ended his life-long membership of the Presbyterian Church and transferred to the Methodists, just down the road.

Murray must have acted very diplomatically on that first visit to Orbost, because Alec Cameron, far from associating Murray with the move for a new church, became one of his greatest fans. For years Alec would send us details of his residential clients' requirements together with information on the site, etc. and we would send sketch plans, then working drawings to him.

Later he introduced us to the Shire Engineer and Shire Secretary and we gradually became the Shire's architects, designing an Infant Welfare Centre, Library, Youth Building and Elderly Citizens' Clubrooms, spread along one side of the Recreation Reserve.

Just before Murray died we designed the new Shire Offices and Council Chamber. This building was constructed in 1968 and officially opened by the Premier, Henry Bolte in February, 1969. Janet and I took Edna down for the opening. Bolte, who had grown up in Skipton near where we now live said during his speech that he "loved to be among country people".

This project was built by Bob Greenwood, Orbost's second best builder. Bob lost his life only a couple of years later, during the last big flood of the Snowy River which flows past Orbost and discharges into the sea at Marlo, 15 miles away. News reports were full of the flood, with trees, cattle and sheep being swept far out to sea. Bob Greenwood apparently had a motor boat moored near the wide river mouth, and while attempting to save the boat he also was swept away and drowned.

Although born in Australia, Alec Cameron seemed to me to be a typical Scotsman. In the early 1950's he was middle-aged, lean and serious with thinning grey hair. He was always trying to find new and better ways to build. He kept working on his building sites well into his seventies.

Alec was always a gentleman and never used first names when speaking to Murray or me, although I must have been in regular contact with him for over 30 years.
After Murray died, Janet and I were involved in building at least ten more buildings in Orbost, some for the Council and others for private owners.

In the mid-1960's the Presbyterians asked us to design a new church on their land. Alec Cameron was the successful tenderer, and after the Uniting Church was formed, he came back to where he had started.

VEHICLES

In 1948 I bought my first motorbike. I would have preferred a car, but new cars were beyond my reach and the only old ones I could afford would have needed constant repairs and maintenance. I had neither the time nor interest to be working on a car.

The only alternative for reliable transport was a new motorbike. I bought an AJS 350, then in 1951 a Triumph 500. Although I didn't go in for motorbikes by choice, I got to like them – they

gave a feeling of freedom similar to flying, and with less traffic in those years, were not as dangerous as now.

My first car was a Ford Zephyr made in England, which I bought from Melford Motors in 1955. It was not a big car, but had 6 cylinders and a powerful motor. The power came in handy a couple of years later when I was leaving to come home after looking at a house Murray Clement was building in Romsey. I was outside the farm at Springfield and couldn't get the car into any gear except top – third gear.

Robert and John Clement were with me and agreed to give me a push with the clutch disengaged, so that I could try to drive home in top gear without stopping. It worked, and for the next hour I drove with an eye on the road far ahead, looking for a break in cross-traffic or judging the changing of traffic lights so that I wouldn't have to stop.

Eventually, after travelling several miles through the north-western suburbs, I turned into our driveway in West Brunswick and turned off the key. Whew!

In 1946 Murray was driving a silver-coloured medium-sized Willys car which had previously belonged to his father, Rev. Karl Forster. Karl had died in July 1945 after being minister at St. Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church, Brighton, since 1922.

Murray's previous car was a small, strange-looking brown Willys with a dished radiator that looked as though it had been pushed in. A year earlier, while still driving the small car, Murray approached me quietly at Melbourne Tech and asked if I could lend him two shillings to buy petrol to get home. He had apparently left home in a hurry without even small change.

When Kirsty was a little over 12 months old, Murray had her on the front seat of the larger car (no seat belts or child restraints then) and was travelling along Were Street towards the beach late one afternoon. As he approached Roslyn Street with the setting sun in his eyes, he didn't see the Middle Brighton bus coming, and the next second the front of his car had been sliced off. He couldn't see Kirsty at first, but found her jammed into the recess below the dashboard, luckily unhurt!

This Middle Brighton bus was the one I regularly used because it seemed to run more frequently than the Brighton Beach bus, and I was not at all surprised by the accident. I would hold my breath at nearly every cross road because the bus drivers would not even slow down. Travelling down the Church Street hill they seemed to accelerate, roaring across Male Street and then the railway lines before the gates closed.

I must say that the accident may not have been entirely the bus driver's fault. Murray took me with him to all parts of Melbourne and Victoria and I could never entirely trust his driving. This was because, although his eyesight was first class, (he was a great shooter) his mind would often be elsewhere. In later years, after being a passenger when he had gone through red lights twice, I would mutter "lights" as we approached a red light, purely for my own protection.

After the Willys had been put back together and painted grey-green, Murray continued to drive it until about 1948, when he took me with him to Melford Motors in Elizabeth Street to look at a new car.

This was a Ford Consul, produced in England – not very big and four cylinders. It did not take Murray long to decide that it was unsuitable for him.

As we were walking down the street towards Melfords, a youngish fellow walking towards us suddenly stopped and said "Well, if it isn't the great Mr Forster!"

I took an instant dislike to him. People didn't speak to my boss and friend like that.

Murray spoke with him for a few minutes before walking on. He told me that the brash one was the son of a painter, 'Kerosene' Walker, who had done work for Murray before the war. He was commonly knows as 'Kerosene' because he would add kerosene to oil paint before using it. The kerosene would make the paint flow more smoothly off the brush, but also reduced the life of paint exposed to weather.

We had a lot to do with the son, Fred Walker, in the following years as he had his own small painting business. I got to know him quite well, but I took with a grain of salt many of his wartime stories, when he was a pilot in the RAAF working from a US base in the Pacific.

Murray later bought a new 1948 Chevrolet car. It was the first Chev model produced in America after the war and was a slightly modified version of the 1939 Chev. This proved to be a very good car and must have covered many miles. It was grey-green in colour, similar to the Willys.

About five years later Murray bought what I think was his best car – another Chev, dark blue in colour. This was a completely new post-war design. While it was not spectacular to look at, it was comfortable, and just felt good to drive and be driven in. Edna was driving Murray a lot by this time, and needed to sit on a cushion to see over the dashboard.

The next car was entirely different. Tail fins had been added to most American cars and they were getting bigger and gaudier. This was another Chev, and although it didn't have tail fins, it couldn't have been much longer or more colourful. It resembled an aircraft carrier – the bonnet and boot each seemed to be about 6 feet long. It was two-tone white and red.

I think that the next car could have been chosen as a reaction to the gaudy monster. It was not new – a Mercedes. It was of European conservative design, dark green, and I think it had 'wire' wheels. It looked good.

The last car was also a Mercedes, bought in about 1965. Big, white and new. Murray asked me what I thought of it, and I remember saying that generally I liked it, but was not keen on the headlights. The double headlights were mounted one above the other rather than side by side. I did not intend to hurt Murray's feelings, but he had asked my opinion.

Janet and I remember Murray telling us how good this car was for travelling across the rough paddocks on the farm.

In about 1947 John Timlock worked with us at Canberra Grove for a few months. 'Tim' as he was always known, had been in my year at Melbourne Tech and was helping us out during a busy period. Tim lived at Strathmore, rode an oldish BSA motorbike and he would occasionally give me a lift home.

At the end of the year we must have been working right up until Christmas Eve and he was taking me home. We were going down the centre section of St Kilda Road and as we stopped at traffic lights a red PMG (Postal) van pulled up beside us. The driver shouted something out of the open left hand doorway. He seemed to be annoyed about smething. Tim turned around to me and asked if I had heard what he had said. I said 'No", and Tim who was wearing gloves, stuck his thumb up as though to say "Blow you anyway", and moved off with the green light.

We didn't think any more of the van until further down the road, when we realised he was right behind us and likely to run us down. Tim accelerated and so did the van. We were doing well

over 50 miles per hour and the position was getting desperate. There were fewer traffic lights than now, but we knew that eventually we would be stopped by a red light.

As we got nearer the Shrine, Tim did a sudden left hand turn, circled a triangular plantation containing a tall war memorial, and shot into Domain Road, heading east.

We were not game to look back, but we knew from the squeal of tyres that he had swung wide at that first turn and possibly missed the next. We never knew what caused this 'road rage' before the term was invented, but I think the driver could have gone to a Christmas 'Break-Up' party during the afternoon and had to much good cheer.

VISITORS TO NO. 29

In my early years with Murray, as we were operating the office in a private house, I met nearly all the family's visitors as well as those involved with the business.

I will try to recall some of these people as they were then.

Mrs Annie Forster, wife of Rev. Karl. Called in occasionally and always seemed to be dressed in black, possibly because Karl had died only a short time before. Mrs Forster at that time was very deaf and because of this she tended to shout. I couldn't carry on a conversation with her because she couldn't hear me, which was a shame because published reports from the churches which Janet and I read later show she was greatly admired.

Murray had planned a house for his mother on a block of land in Baird Street near Garden Avenue. This was a wider than usual block with an angled side boundary. The house was a simple rectangle and was built parallel to the angled boundary with space left for another house.

The Rev. Karl Forster had been an outstanding Presbyterian minister serving at Cobram, Casterton, Colac and St Cuthbert's, Brighton.

He was honoured by being appointed Victorian Moderator in 1939. His meticulous diaries and the printed reports from the various churches, many of which Janet and I have read, show that Karl Forster was a capable and greatly respected and admired man throughout his life. He died in July 1945 after a long and painful illness.

Mrs. Cox, Edna's mother, was a small spritely talkative woman who often called in several times a week because she seemed to rely a lot on her eldest daughter. Although he never said anything to me, I had the feeling that Murray thought she was around the house too much. Mrs Cox thought she had medical problems and had many operations before dying in her sixties.

I only met Edna's father a couple of times, but from what I remember he was a friendly, neat-looking, quiet man. Murray told me that Mr Cox (Bert) had lived in Sea Lake and had made his fortune three times. He lost the first two (one would have been in the Depression) and twice he returned to start again. Mr Cox owned a house at 5 Dendy Street, Brighton, which he had Murray turn into flats when he returned from Perth about 1937.

Amy, Edna's youngest sister, lived in the early days in the Dendy Street flats with her husband Pat and daughter Lisleen. Amy was friendly to everyone. She had dark hair at that time.

Pat Caldwell, Amy's husband, had dark hair turning grey and a narrow grey moustache reaching from nose to lip. Pat was a representative for a pharmaceutical firm, visiting doctors. Whether it came from his job I never knew, but he had a confidential bedside manner of speaking and gave the impression that the state of your health was important to him.

I was grateful for Pat's help in 1956. I had a bad cough for some time, was losing weight and feeling tired. Edna was concerned about me and enlisted Pat's help to introduce me to a diagnostician at Epworth Hospital. After a long series of tests it turned out that I had viral pneumonia and I was off work for three months.

Amy and Pat had a baby daughter, Lisleen. As a toddler Lisleen was spoiled rotten, and was always calling out for 'Mummy' to do something for her. To my surprise Lisleen turned out to be a nice teenager and later, a wonderful woman – one of the best I have known.

May, Edna's other sister, lived in Canberra and was married to Max Kelly who worked for the government, I think in Taxation. May seemed to me to be a little cheekier than her two sisters. On her first visit to Melbourne after Kirsty was born, May greeted Murray by saying "I thought you'd forgotten what it's for".

I only met Max once, but I'll never forget him. He was tall and thin and played golf regularly. Murray organised a game at the nearby Brighton golf course one morning. Edna had lent me her right-handed clubs for a few rounds before I bought my own. Murray was a left hander and hadn't played for some time.

Max drove off first – straight up the middle. Second shot on the green. One putt – birdie. Second hole – on the green in one, sank putt – birdie. Third hole, on green in regulation 3 strokes, sank putt – birdie.

While Max was putting on this exhibition, Murray and I were slaving away like ordinary golfers.

I remember thinking to myself "How good is he – 3 birdies on the first 3 holes?" But from there on Max came back to the field and played just like us.

I think that the professional golfers must occasionally play like Max, but in all the years I have played golf I have never seen anyone start like that.

Jean McAdam (Miss) was a friend of the family since the days when Karl Forster was minister at Colac. Jean's father George McAdam was a wholesale butcher in the town, and Elder and the largest regular financial contributor to the church. Her brother Alan was a Presbyterian minister at Launceston.

In about 1950 when I and a group of mates were on a motorbike tour of Tasmania in the January holidays we could not get accommodation at any of the hotels. There must have been a special function on and the town was booked out. I looked up Alan McAdam and he allowed us to stay the night in his Sunday School and even borrowed blankets from some of his parishioners to make us comfortable.

Jean still lived in Colac and would call on the Forsters whenever she was in town.

Murray Clement and his wife and two boys, Robert and John would call in when down from the farm at Springfield near Romsey. The two Murrays were cousins and until he got his own farm Murray F. loved to go to Springfield and generally got in some rabbit shooting while he was there. I was taken to Springfield a few times and although the rabbits were in plague numbers I would be lucky to hit one.

Robert and John went to Haileybury as boarders.

Colin Robertson lived in Were Street in a house Murray must have designed just before the war. Col was small, fair haired and quietly spoken. He worked for E. L. Yencken and Co., suppliers of hardware and bathroom equipment to the building industry, and was regularly quoting on and supplying equipment for our jobs.

Nell Burton and her husband Ron lived in a 2-storey English-style house in Canberra Grove. Nell was a close friend of Edna. Ron was manager of a large textile works which was taken over by a larger British firm when Ron was in his early fifties. He was the first person I heard of being 'retrenched'.
A few years later the Burtons got us to build a pair of houses for them in Roslyn Street.

Bob and Ethel Wilson lived on the corner of Were Street and Canberra grove. They were both tall. Bob worked with T & G Insurance and talked like an insurance man.

Noel Garside, his wife Madeline and daughter Janet moved into 31 Canberra Grove in 1955. They had arrived from England in 1951 and had been living in Balcombe Road, Beaumaris. Noel had been sent out by his employers, a British firm which made equipment for power stations, to manage their Australian branch.

Janet's mother later contracted cancer and Edna told me that immediately before going into hospital for the last time, she asked Edna to take her to the hairdresser because she wanted to look her best. Madeline died in July 1962.

At that time Janet was doing her final year of the Architecture course at Melbourne University after being a boarder at Ruyton Girls' School, Kew, since arriving in Melbourne.

Ron Weekes worked in the Building Surveyor's Department at Brighton Council. One day he was standing in the Sunroom looking out to the north while talking to Murray and me. He suddenly peered over the paling fence to the house next door (No. 31) where a pergola had been built in front of the garage. On top of the pergola and laid to a slight slope were small sheets of glass put there by the owner, Noel Garside. Weekes said "I can't remember giving a permit for that", apparently referring to the glass.

I don't know what happened after that, but I do know that Janet has never forgiven her father for pulling down the greenhouse, the source of the panels.

Charlie Turner and his wife lived at No. 31 before Janet's family. Charlie had been a Brighton Councillor and Mayor in 1946. Murray and Edna hosted a night of slides when the Turners returned from an overseas trip. Charlie was a friendly sort of man and all I can remember of the night when I wasn't dozing off was Mrs Turner continually butting in and talking over Charlie while he was trying to comment on the slides.

Jim Davidson (I think I've got the name right). Another night at Murray and Edna's was to help Jim promote and sell Aboriginal Art.

Jim must have been entrusted with the sale of watercolour paintings by the aboriginals who had been taught by Rex Battarbee in Central Australia in previous years. Although Albert Namatjira's work was not included, many members of his extensive family were represented. I bought two moderately priced watercolours which I thought were good.

MURRAY'S FAMILY

Edna Forster was, of course, Murray's wife, but she was much more than that.

For years, Edna was Murray's receptionist, secretary and typist. Even when we had the office in other places people would still try to contact Murray at home and that often meant dealing with Edna.

I always thought that Edna was fast when typing our specifications. In the days before copying machines we would need several carbon copies of all specifications. Originally four copies would be made, but as Councils and the Public Health Department kept asking for more, up to seven carbon copies would be needed and this would be a difficult job for any typist.

Edna would always accompany Murray to the laying of foundation stones and the never-ending official opening of buildings. I, and later Janet, would usually be with them.

As Murray got sicker in later years, Edna would be his driver not only around Melbourne, but on the many essential country trips.

When the office was at Canberra Grove, Edna used to play tennis once a week on the court of a nearby friend. Although she didn't seem to play her beautiful black baby grand piano much at that time (she had a very busy life), I think Edna often played the organ at the Hampton church.

In 1965, about two years after we were married, Janet and I bought a small vacant block of land in Ashworth Street, Albert Park, with the intention of building a house for ourselves.

Ashworth Street was quite narrow and would have originally been a service street to the large houses on the beachfront. Our block had been formed by reducing the size of backyards of three houses facing a street to the side. The block had a frontage of 30 feet and abutting the footpath at the front was a rusty corrugated iron garage and a pair of high timber gates. One day Janet drove Edna past the site of our future dream home, and Janet said it was the first and only time she has seen a person's jaw actually drop!

When Lindy was born, Edna looked after Peter until Janet came home, which was a marvellous thing for us as we had nowhere else to turn. Edna was a wonderful and generous friend to Janet and me both before and after Murray's death, and we will always remember her with affection.

Murraie would have been about 12 years old when I started working with Murray. Murraie was going to PLC in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne after doing her earlier schooling at St Leonard's, Were Street under Miss Munro.

I didn't see a great deal of Murraie as she would leave early to catch the train and would not normally get home until the time I was leaving. I think Murraie played a lot of tennis as a teenager.

I can remember Murraie and David's wedding day well. I am sure that everyone who was there would never forget it. It was held in St Leonard's Presbyterian Church facing Were Street and the temperature was 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

The church building would have baked in the sun all day and by late afternoon it was stifling inside. I didn't have anyone to take, so I 'borrowed' Jennifer Lindupp, a long-time friend and the sister of one of my close mates, Peter. Jennifer was engaged to be married to another pal, Charlie Arnot, and I appreciated the generosity of them both.

Kirsty of course, was always around in the first three years or so that I spent at 29 Canberra Grove, as a baby and a toddler. When Kirsty was just starting to walk, she came into the sunroom one day. Murray had come home the previous week with our first roll of the new

transparent sticky tape – 'Sellotape'. The tape was less than half an inch wide, but the roll must have been nearly six inches across.

I don't remember whether Murray gave Kirsty the tape to play with or she just helped herself, but she made a lasting impression. She sank her newly developing teeth several times into the sides of the tape (no dispensers then). Because of the difficulty of lifting the free end every time we used it, that tape with its serrated edges lasted us for years in three different office locations.

Kirsty spent all her school years at St Leonard's – first at Were Street, then South Road.

In later years Kirsty came into our Office occasionally and typed our specifications.

When Janet and I got married, Kirsty agreed to be Janet's bridesmaid.

VARIOUS OFFICES

After about three years at 29 Canberra Grove starting in 1946, Murray thought we had better look for an office elsewhere.

316 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE

This office was on the fourth floor in the Colonial Mutual Building on the NW corner of Collins and Elizabeth Streets.

The building was designed by an American architect named Edward E. Raht and built in 1893 by Nellie Melba's father, David Mitchell. It was of bluestone with marble floors and walls in the public areas, and floors of parquetry blocks and panelled dadoes in the offices. The ceilings were about 15 feet high and our fourth floor was level with the ninth floor of a newer building across the road.

The Collins Street entrance had a giant archway nearly 40 feet high enclosing a balustraded classic balcony supported on marble Ionic columns. A stone statuary group rose at the front of the balcony. The building was replaced in the 1960's by a taller but more mundane Colonial Mutual Building. Myles Whelan, a son of Whelan the Wrecker said in later years that of all the city buildings his firm had demolished in that great period of rebuilding, the only one he was sorry about was the Colonial Mutual, because of the sheer quality of the building and its finishes.

Murray had arranged to share a suite of offices which had been held for several years by an architect named Arthur W. Purnell. Purnell was a small dapper man with silver hair brushed smoothly back, and very blue eyes. He was still very active although he must have been over 70 at the time. He could be very charming or very rude.

The reason Purnell had vacant office space was that he had practically no work, due to restrictions on building anything but housing. In 1937 he had built (with a partner named Pearce) the great concrete outer stand at the MCG, and most of his other work was commercial, such as Dalgety's and other wool stores at Kensington.

The accommodation consisted of a drawing office about twenty feet square and two private offices, one opening directly off the drawing office and one off a vestibule which had doors to all three rooms.

Purnell's office, which he had always used, was the one further from the drawing office and he always took a short cut through Murray's room to get to the drawing office instead of going

through the vestibule. This was bad enough in normal times, but when Murray had clients in his office, Purnell would still go through and I could sometimes hear chairs being moved about to allow him through. All this would be to show that the offices were still his. Murray would be speechless with anger.

Purnell always treated me well and even arranged with Murray to 'borrow' me to do a Working Drawing for him. This was for a red brick 2-storey dormitory wing being added to the Institute for the Deaf in St Kilda Road.

His employees didn't fare very well. He would take on young typists straight out of a typing course and then bitingly criticise their mistakes. None lasted very long.

Purnell, who grew up in Geelong, told me that as a young architect he lived many years in China, where he was involved in the design of reinforced concrete buildings, and he had even built a concrete floating dock to cater for very high tides. He lived in a house half-way up Punt Road hill, South Yarra. It was single-storey, with a shingle tile roof having the ridges and hips turned up, Chinese style.

The Melbourne Cricket Club offices were also at 316 Collins Street, on the same floor as Purnell's office and right next door.

In about 1953 an important architectural competition was held by the Olympic Games Organising Committee to design an Olympic Stadium at the Princes Park Oval (Carlton) for the 1956 Olympics. Two Melbourne architects won the Australia-wide competition with a first-rate design having stands entirely circling the arena in a similar manner to present-day stadiums.

With building ready to start, the Melbourne Cricket Club, which had previously said their ground could not be made suitable for the Olympics, stepped in using political pressure. Their Trustees included many Federal and State politicians, and they scuttled the Princes Park scheme, fearing future competition.

When the decision was made to add an Olympic Stand at the MCG, Arthur W. Purnell who was still official architect to the Melbourne Cricket Club, got the job without getting out of his chair.

By this time we were elsewhere.

381 LATROBE STREET MELBOURNE

In 1951 Murray was wanting to move, but I think that he was already hoping to go on a European tour the following year.

Travelling by ship would take about a month each way, so he expected to be away for about six months. He thought the only thing to do was to go into partnership with an architect who could look after the business, and then reverse roles the following year to allow the partner to go away.

The first I knew about this was when Murray said he had agreed to form a partnership with Keith Reid. Reid was about Murray's age, not a close friend, but on the Presbyterian Architectural Committee.

Murray chose him because they had most of the Presbyterian work between them and thought this should make the partnership work well.

Murray said he agreed to toss to see whose name would be first in the firm's title because he had always been lucky. Keith won and the name became 'Keith Reid and K. Murray Forster'.

This was only one of the things that did not go well. In practice Keith Reid's clients only wanted to deal with their own architect and Murray's clients felt the same way.

When Murray told Keith he had an 'architectural assistant', Keith said he had one too! Murray was preparing some paperwork for the partnership and before going out, asked me to ring Keith's home and get the name and address of the assistant. I spoke to Mrs Reid and told her what I was after. She seemed hesitant and said she thought Keith would need to speak to Murray.

I met Mrs Reid later and she was a very nice, gentle woman. It turned out Keith didn't have an assistant at all – he just took on a part-time draughtsman when needed.

Murray and Keith must have seen an office advertised in the Institute of Architects magazine. It was in a 2-storey terrace house, one in a row of 1880's houses on the south side of Latrobe Street just behind the Royal Mint building which faced William Street. They took a front upstairs room looking north across Latrobe Street, with access to a cast iron adorned balcony through two tall double-hung windows.

A firm of architect-engineers had the ground floor and Horace Tribe, an architect friend of Murray's had the rear portion upstairs.

Murray arranged for some walls and fittings to be installed in the 20 feet by 15 feet room so that there was a private office with two desks, a reception area with counter and typing desk, and a drawing office with benches, filing cabinets and space for three drawing boards.

Murray and Keith were out on supervision a good deal of the time, so that their office was not normally crowded.

It was soon apparent that the partnership was not working well, because in addition to their clients not wanting to deal with the other man, they were not interested in each other's jobs. I think that Keith was also looking ahead to Murray's planned absence and didn't want to take on the extra work.

The partnership was dissolved.

It was agreed however to continue sharing the office and this worked reasonably well. Keth Reid took on a draughtsman, Ray Godfrey. Ray was a young Englishman who had almost completed his architecture course and was doing the Atelier at night. He used to get upset by the reporting of the cricket Tests in the Melbourne papers. He pointed out that when Australia was doing well, the headlines in large type would shout 'WE WON!' but if England won it would be buried somewhere inside under the heading 'Australia loses'. Of course this still goes on today.

When we were without a receptionist, Ray would normally go to the counter when someone called in. We would have architects' representatives call regularly with information on their products.

One of these was a woman whom we called 'Miss Tip Top'. Tip Top was a progressive paint firm making the relatively new 'plastic paint' in an extensive range of colours.

Ray was a very gentlemanly chap, but had an unfortunate feature. The fine blood vessels in his face were very close to the surface and he would blush easily.

I never took much notice of Miss Tip Top of course. She was 5ft 4 ins tall, a little under 8 stone in weight, and correctly put together. She was no spring chicken – would have been in her thirties – and had short dark wavy hair. She was always impeccably dressed, with tailored black jacket, tight black skirt finishing four inches above the knee and sheer black nylon stockings. Her elegant pointed shoes would be black or occasionally a light red exactly matching the colour of her lipstick.

Whenever she arrived she would say "Hello" to Ray, then sit down on the single chair in the small reception area facing towards him. Perhaps she needed to rest after climbing the stairs.

Then she would carefully cross her legs and be ready to discuss her firm's latest products.

Ray would tell me afterwards how he could feel a hot flush start at his neck and travel up to his forehead. He would go bright red and then fall apart. The man who could normally discuss building products as well as anybody could hardly put two words together.

While this was going on I was generally keeping my head down, inside!

Keith Reid, I think had been in the army and he always looked like a drill sergeant. He was about Murray's height, but heavier, with a bristling moustache, not much hair and small eyes. He would barge into the office, bustle about and mutter to himself.

Most of the people who came to work in the office didn't like Keith and much preferred Murray because of his friendly personality.

A receptionist/typist who worked for us for some time was Moya Watson. She was tall and athletic and played a lot of golf. Keith would often come in at about 4.30, sit down to write a few letters, then expect Moya to send them off that night. She would be hopping mad. Often she would have been filling in time beforehand, but like A. W. Purnell in earlier years, Keith Reid had no consideration for employees. He also treated his builders poorly.

Most of Keith's work at the time was for Presbyterian and Anglican churches. Just before the war he had designed a small Anglican church at Kalorama. It was built of random light-coloured stone and was a beautiful building. It was like a small traditional English village church with the tower over the entrance and timber roof trusses under a steep roof.

This church was so well-known and popular that Keith would have found it hard to adapt to the more modern style that Murray was using. His work in the 1950's was midway between traditional and modern.

After Ray Godfrey had moved on, Keith Reid took on a young architect called Hugh Schroeder. Hugh had been born in Mozart's home town, Salzburg, in Austria and had completed his architectural course there.

When he migrated to Melbourne he found that his qualifications were not acceptable to the Architects' Registration Board. He was a very proud Austrian and said that he would not do any additional schooling here. Eventually, while working for Keith Reid he backed down, did the required single year at the Atelier at night and passed without any trouble.

Hugh was a very good skier and spent a lot of time at Mt Buller. He and his girlfriend Jill, whom he later married took me skiing one Queen's Birthday weekend. It was far too cold for me.

When Hugh and Jill were making arrangements to get married they selected Keith Reid's little church at Kalorama! Jill's father had died, and they asked me to give Jill away. I had been Best Man several times, but that was the first time I was Father of the Bride.

When Murray went overseas in 1952 he left me in charge and I worked of course from the same office.

One of the unusual jobs Murray had taken on just before leaving was at the Presbyterian Sisterhood in McKean Street, North Fitzroy. The Sisterhood was set up to look after young unmarried mothers before and after their babies were born. It had been established for some time, but they were concerned at the embarrassment felt by the girls when they were sent to the Women's Hospital for the baby to be born. Some girls were as young as eleven.

We were asked to design a small maternity hospital to be built beside the big old house where the Sisterhood was based. It finished up about the size of a small house.

The Matron was a wonderful, plump, cheery woman who always seemed to be smiling – an ideal person for the job.

Murray and I just had time to discuss the layout of the new building before he left and from there on it was up to me. I wasn't concerned about the usual business of getting the building built, but we hadn't expected some of the detailed requirements of a consultant gynaecologist who would be working in the place.

Hospital design had always been a special branch of architecture and there were only two or three large firms in Melbourne in the field.

I found that the specialist expected all the equipment he was accustomed to find in the large maternity hospitals to be provided here. He wanted everything from operating theatre lights to autoclaves. I had to admit my ignorance and keep asking questions until I understood what everything was and how it would be used. The building was quite expensive for its size.

When Murray returned from Europe we continued to work at Latrobe Street until his first heart attack, then we had to go back to 29 Canberra Grove. It was during this period at Brighton that I had my bout of pneumonia.

101 PUNT ROAD

In about 1958 Murray was feeling well enough to look for another office. He found this in a large attic-style house at 101 Punt Road, Windsor. We had a room about 18 feet x 14 feet on the ground floor, and Murray said it must previously have been used by an SP bookie as there were about ten telephones left in the room. We put up a glazed screen to make a small office area, but later Murray rented a small adjacent room and formed a doorway in the wall.

Murray must have advertised for a junior typist and took on a young girl who lived in Caulfield. It was her first job and it was soon apparent that she was not able to do the work.

After two days she said she would need to take the following week off to help her mother prepare for the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Murray took her aside and tactfully told her he thought she would be happier elsewhere.

We then found that two middle-aged ladies were running a business in the large front room of the house, under the name 'Reliable Secretarial Service'. We asked them to type a specification for us and they were so good we used them for the next ten years. Janet and I always referred to them as 'The Reliables' because that's what they were.

Our office had two double hung windows, one in the north wall and one in the west, but it always seemed to be cold. We had a kerosene heater that took some of the chill off, but it was a temperamental thing. One day when we were lighting it, it flared up with a flame several feet high. I did not know whether it would explode, but I shouted to Ross Ingram to open the west window, picked the whole thing up and heaved it out onto the grassed area at the back. Luckily there was no explosion and we let it burn itself out. I nearly lost my eyebrows though!

While we were at Punt Road, Janet and Ross Ingram worked with us during various holidays while doing their courses together at Melbourne University, then joined us full time in 1963.

We were soon very busy and Murray asked me if I knew an architect who could join us for a limited time. I was out of touch with all my old mates, but I said that Hugh Schroeder, who was still working with Keith Reid and whom Murray knew, might be persuaded.

Hugh came. Among other work at the time, we were building the 'Kirkbrae' homes for the aged, a village for the Presbyterian Church at Kilsyth.

The homes were mostly double units, single storey, brick veneer with coloured asbestos cement roofs. They were built in two stages of, I think, about 12 and 20 homes, plus an all-purpose Hall/Chapel.

Hugh Schroeder was looking after the second stage in the office while Murray and I were doing the supervision. Hugh was about average size with fair hair and blue eyes. He claimed to be able to speak five languages (I could speak one), was gregarious and loved Australian slang. He thought it was marvellous when he first heard someone refer to beer as 'pig's ear', and he liked a joke.

The only problem was that Hugh sometimes used English expressions in a different way from us.

The head of the Social Services Department of the Presbyterian Church and the person responsible for 'Kirkbrae' at the time was a minister called Harrison. He was old, short, fat and pretty dull.

Hugh had been trying to get him on the phone without success and then the man himself walked in the door. Hugh stepped up to the counter and said "Mr Harrison, I'm after your blood!" Not

the usual way of greeting a client. Harrison took a step backward and looked shocked, but Hugh just followed up by asking the question he had been phoning about.

Not long after this we were expecting the architects' rep for Draffin Bros. the Hot Water specialists, to come in with a quote for HW services to be installed in twenty units at 'Kirkbrae'. The rep was Mr Hunter (we never knew his first name), and Murray and I had been dealing with him for at least fifteen years because Draffins were the best in their field.

Hunter was a strait-laced, serious chap, always well-dressed and in his late forties at that time.

Hugh Schroeder was hyped up this day, and as he went to the counter he said jokingly "Hello Mister Hunter, and have you brought the bribe cheque with you?"

I was sitting to the side of them and I saw Hunter's face go white, then there was silence.

Hugh said afterwards that he felt sick in the stomach as he realised that Mr Hunter thought he was serious. He eventually explained that it was only meant as a joke and managed to smooth it over, but I think he learnt a lesson that day!

As part of the builder's contract he would be required to come back six months after a project was completed to correct any items that needed attention.

On one 'maintenance inspection' at Kirkbrae I was told by the only woman we had found difficult to deal with, that she was not satisfied with the bathroom. She was always in a wheelchair and she had a very obliging husband.

She said she had noticed paint splashes on the floor tiles in the Bathroom and asked her husband to scrape them off. He had spent two full days on the job, but they were still there.
I said I was not surprised. I had prepared all the colour schemes and their Bathroom had a pink bath and basin and plain grey wall tiles. I was very pleased at finding a grey vinyl-asbestos floor tile with pink flecks that picked up the colour of the fittings. These flecks extended the full thickness of the tiles and the husband was very relieved to know he could stop scraping.

Not long before Murray died we built a fine 2-storey block of Flats for the Aged called 'Kirkside' alongside the Ormond Presbyterian Church. About four years later I was asked to look at the tiles in one of the showers.

This shower was in a flat where the lady occupant had recently moved out and into a Nursing Home. The white wall tiles were crazed and discoloured and most of the joints had turned a light green colour. I was shown the showers in two adjoining units and the tiles were as good as new.

The Rev. and Mrs Fred Spencer who were retired and living in one of the flats, appeared to solve the problem when they remembered that the former occupant was renowned for being the only one to regularly dye her hair!

What do they put in those dyes?

After about three years at Punt Road we heard that 'our' building had been sold and might be pulled down. Some buildings to the north of us had been demolished and builders had moved in to start work on a 6-storey building for the Freemasons' Homes.

One day they moved an enormous mobile crane onto the site and started to set it up less than 10 feet away from our northern window. Before they stabilised it, the boom, which was sticking straight up and must have been 60 feet high was waving around in the breeze. I have never felt

unsafe on building sites, but this was different. It was about mid-afternoon and I said to Janet and Ross "We're getting out of here" and we closed down for the rest of the day.

618 ST. KILDA ROAD

By this time 'The Reliables' had moved out of the front of the building and set up their office in a 3-storey block of flats not far away at 618 St Kilda Road. We were taking our typing jobs – especially specifications – across to them. They knew that we could not stay much longer at Punt Road and said there could be office space available in their building.

Many blocks of flats in St Kilda Road were being converted to office use and we eventually moved into a front ground floor 'Studio' style flat at No. 618. This had a Hall, a very large Living/Bedroom, Kitchen and Bathroom.

We built partitions in the big room to form a Reception Area, Private Office and Drawing Office. By this time we had great quantities of drawings and records which had built up over the years. We put a large ex-PWD wooden filing cabinet for drawings over the bath in the Bathroom, which opened off the Drawing Office, and used the many built-in Kitchen cupboards to store all the old files, specifications and smaller items.

The full-width windows in the two main rooms faced east onto St Kilda Road with aluminium Venetian blinds to control the sunlight.

We bought some new furniture so that Murray and I each had a desk in the office and we were fairly comfortable. There were drawing boards for up to four draughtsmen in the Drawing Office, and occasionally we used them all.

The self-contained nature of this office allowed it to work very well, and it was the best we had experienced. We were also close to 'The Reliables' who were at the rear of the building and they continued to do our specifications.

While we were at St Kilda Road Kirsty came in at times to do typing for us.

Then we took on the first of our Chinese draughtsmen, Wun Yew Ling. Wun was from Malaysia, a charming earnest little chap who had done his course at Melbourne University and this was his first job. While with us Wun married his girlfriend, a tiny Chinese nurse named Foongy.

Steve Wong was another Chinese Malaysian we took on later, also straight from the University. He was very serious and quiet, and like Wun, improved a great deal in his draughting while with us.

Murray also engaged a young chap who answered our advertisement for a draughtsman. He was Bruce Davies, who was a trained draughtsman and had worked with another architect for a couple of years. Bruce was young and energetic and his best friend when growing up was Normie Rowe, the pop singer who served in the army in Vietnam and was proud of doing so.

Ross Ingram and Janet were also there at various times, but Ross did a Landscape Architecture course and Janet worked at home between babies.

One morning Ross and I arrived at the office at the same time and as we went into the Drawing Office we could hear running water. We opened the Bathroom door and water was running down the walls from the flat above. This former flat had been occupied for some time by women running a Massage Parlour.

Ross and I were concerned for the hundreds of drawings stored flat in the large filing cabinet suspended over our bath and I could see us being put out of business.

We knew the place above did not open until 10 o'clock, so I charged out to my car in the street, grabbed a hammer and attacked their door. It was a solid core timber door and it took several minutes of full-strength blows to make a hole large enough for us to reach in and open the door. Inside we found that their shower had been left running lightly all night; it had filled the bath, and the overflowing water had finished up in our bathroom immediately below. I don't know how it missed flooding our filing cabinet, but we fortunately got out of it with a minimum of damage.

After Murray died in 1967, we stayed at the St Kilda Road office until 1984 when Janet and I moved to 82 Bridport Street, Albert Park, a large shop right on the street, which we fitted out fully for use as an office.

In accordance with Murray's will and our partnership agreement, Edna had retained an interest in the business until 1972.

MURRAY'S ILLNESSES

I finished the Melbourne Technical College portion of my Diploma of Architecture course at the end of 1945. I had worked during the September holidays at 29 Canberra Grove and I hoped to have a short holiday in January before starting full-time with Murray in 1946.

The holiday idea went west when Murray told me in December that he needed help urgently and asked whether I could start straight after Christmas.

I could soon see why I was needed as there was a house under construction at Sassafras, two others due to be started immediately at North Balwyn and two yet to be designed. In addition Murray was due to go to Orbost to discuss the building of a new church and to go on other country visits to look at church work. He was still supervising Lawrences Dry Cleaning works, which was nearly finished.

I soon settled in. Murray knew what I could do, and his style of designing agreed with my tastes. He would roughly sketch out a house plan that he had been giving thought to, then ask me to turn it into a sketch plan and elevation drawn to the standard scale of 1/8 inch to 1 foot. Murray's method of designing was to get all the requirements from the client, inspect the site, then wait for 24 hours while mulling solutions over in the mind before putting them on paper. I used the same system myself very successfully for the next 48 years until I retired in 1994.

Murray was always on the go, but in talking with clients, builders or friends he gave the impression that he had all the time in the world and would stop for a talk any time.

After I had been working for less than three months Murray started to get stomach pains. His father had died only a year earlier – after months of severe pain – with stomach cancer, and I think Murray would have been concerned that he might have the same.

Murray's doctor, 'Tommy' Sayle, diagnosed the problem as a stomach ulcer and as the pain increased, put him to bed at home. He was in bed for some time.

I always felt that the ulcer was caused by the pressure he was under – he always appeared relaxed and cheerful, but I think his stomach was churning away all the time. His optimism would lead him to confidently say he would have something done in a matter of days, but if it was not ready by the promised time, he would then be pestered by a client.

In addition to bed, Dr Sayle prescribed milk for the patient – I thought to put a lining on the stomach. The milk led to an increase of nearly two stone in weight and Murray was never thin again.

Later the doctor suggested Murray have a small glass of whisky at night, to relax him. I doubt whether Murray had drunk alcohol before this.

While Murray was in bed, Edna and I were looking after the office business and I would go upstairs to pass on phone messages or to take instructions.

In the first week of his illness we realised that Murray would not be able to take his daytime Builder's Quantities and Estimating class at Melbourne Tech. Murray solved this by saying that I could take it! Me? I had done the subject for a year, finishing the Christmas before last, but that didn't mean I could teach it. Murray said he was confident I could do it, and there appeared to be no alternative.

I was 18, and as I went into the classroom in the Architecture School, I could see that these were not the type of students I had expected. There were at least 40 of them, and their average age was close to 30. They were all returned servicemen who were doing the subject as part of a rehabilitation course for builders.

I took a deep breath and started to explain how to calculate the number of bricks in a wall. This was fairly straightforward – you multiply the wall length in feet x height in feet x thickness of brickwork in inches, deducting the area of openings as you go. This gives the number of bricks.

I had not got very far when a chap seated near the middle of the room interrupted in a challenging voice, saying "What about 'rods'?" I knew that measuring brickwork in 'rods' was a method used for generations up to the time of WW2, but I didn't know how to do it because Murray had taught us only the newer system.

The only teaching experience I'd had was with boys in Sunday School, but I knew that if you hesitated or got involved in an argument with a student, you were gone.

I dived in as quickly as possible in a voice more confident than I felt, and said that the 'rod' method of measuring had been superseded and that the only method now recognised in the course was the one I was teaching. Fortunately the questioner seemed to accept my answer and I had no more trouble.

Murray would have been in bed for two or three weeks, but then gradually got better, but I don't think he was able to eat strawberries or fresh bread again without getting stomach pains.

With his recovery, Murray got back into his non-stop life as before. He was an Elder at Hampton Presbyterian Church, a representative on the Presbytery of Melbourne South, School Council member at St Leonard's Presbyterian Girls' College, and later, Haileybury College, and a member of the Presbyterian Church Architectural Committee.

In 1953 Murray had organised the moving of St Leonard's College to the new site in South Road, and there was hectic activity in preparing the property to allow school to open in 1954. Murray took part in a Working Bee one weekend in his usual flat-out style and he told me later that as he was lifting a large slab of concrete paving he felt some sort of pain.

It was a few days later as he was leaving the office in Latrobe Street that he had his first heart attack, which was diagnosed as a coronary occlusion. He was saved with the assistance of Ron Churches at the Peter McCallum Institute.

Heart attacks were often fatal in those days, and I learned quite a bit about them from Murray and from my own observation. Apparently patients often started to feel better only a few weeks after the first attack, would often return to work, and then die from another. This happened to Rev. Alan McMillan who followed Karl Forster at St Cuthbert's Church, and had taken over as Chairman of the College Council at St. Leonard's after Murray had relinquished the position. He died late in 1954 at the age of about 48. There were other acquaintances of Murray who also died in middle-age at about that time.

Murray's life changed after that first heart attack. He told me much later that he was disappointed that people from the church had not helped Edna more while he was in bed and later, recuperating. His attitude towards people seemed to me to harden just a little and he was not quite so generous with his time to all and sundry as before.

Murray may have always had a hankering to own a farm. Certainly he always loved to go to Murray Clement's place at Springfield.

I think he must have been wondering what would happen to his family if he did not survive another heart attack. I have never been sure, but this could have been one of his reasons for buying the farm at Longwarry North, near Drouin. If he could establish a productive farm it would be an asset for Edna in the future.

The property he bought was an existing dairy farm on the south side of the Princes Highway just east of Snowball(s) Road and it was later extended south to the main Longwarry-Drouin Road. At one time David Macfarlane and Murraie managed the farm and later a Dutchman share-farmed it.

Murray took every opportunity of visiting the farm, sometimes just a rushed day trip, sometimes a weekend or longer. He was a fan of Louis Bromfield, the American writer who bought a worn-out farm in Ohio and turned it into a productive farm, using methods considered radical at the time.

I was only one of Murray's many friends who were taken on visits to the farm.

One year Murray planted a paddock of turnips to feed the cows. He was as surprised as everyone else to see the size of those turnips - great purple and white things nearly the size of footballs. The cows loved them but the butter factory didn't – several deliveries of milk were rejected because the milk was tainted by the turnips.

In the 1960's after the farm was extended, Murray had a horse on the property. I don't think he rode much, but one day on the bitumen road to the south he was riding when the horse took fright and ran into the path of a car. Murray was thrown off but only suffered a few bruises. I believe the horse and car were undamaged.

As Murray recovered from his first heart attack, Edna would drive him everywhere. They had the blue Chev at first and Edna had to sit on a cushion to see over the dashboard. Later he would drive around Melbourne but Edna or I usually drove him on the many country trips.

Over the following years Murray was working most of the time but would try to ease off a bit whenever he thought there was a danger of another attack. Murray was looking more like an invalid in 1967 and eventually died in July of that year.

ST LEONARD'S SCHOOL

According to a writer on history, Brian Carroll, in 1914 a Miss Rebecca Cullen opened a private girls' school on the stage of St Leonard's Presbyterian Hall, adjacent to the church in Were Street, Brighton Beach.

Miss Cullen took on Miss Florence Munro as a teacher and the two ladies ran the school with little extra help until numbers increased, when they moved east along Were Street near to Cavendish Place.

In 1937 Miss Cullen retired and sold the school to Miss Munro. This was the Miss Munro I mentioned in the earlier pages. She was a younger sister of David Munro, our minister at St. David's church in West Brunswick and they had grown up as children in Park House on the Esplanade, Brighton.

Murray Forster and Bruce Kemp were personal friends of Miss Munro and helped with the building of small weatherboard classroms when numbers grew.

Bruce Kemp was an architect and was the nephew of one of Melbourne's most prolific architects, H. H. Kemp. Murray said that Henry Kemp claimed to have built 36 buildings in Collins Street.

Murray was 'articled' to Bruce Kemp in the office of H. H. and F. B. Kemp, 30 Queen Street, Melbourne in the 1920's.

'Uncle Henry' rode a bicycle into the city from his home in Kew and lived to the age of 96. Bruce Kemp was in the army during the first World war and I think he was 98 when he died. Bruce was tall and thin and always gentlemanly. He was married to Win Stamp of the Stampco washing machine family and they lived in a house with large grounds at 2 Sussex Street, Brighton.

As she was approaching retiring age, Miss Munro in 1946 decided to try to get the Presbyterian Church of Victoria to buy the school so that it would have a secure future. At first the church showed little interest but Murray Forster and David Munro worked hard to drum up support in the Presbyterian Assembly and in 1947 the school became St Leonard's Presbyterian Girls' College.

The school needed a new badge now, so Murray roughed out an idea on the back of an envelope, and asked me to develop it. The main feature was a shield with many fluers de lis and the Chi Rho symbol (X superimposed on P) on the left. This was an ancient symbol for Christ. Across the top was a chain representing St. Leonard, who was the patron saint of prisoners. The school motto (unchanged) was on a scroll across the bottom – Nulla Dies Sine Linea (Not a day without writing a line).

Miss Munro had sold the school as a going concern for £3,400 – less than the value of the land. She stayed on as Headmistress until her retirement in 1949, when she moved to West Brunswick manse to look after her brother and our minister, David Munro.

Mrs Thelma Woolhouse was then appointed to run the school as Principal. Murray said she quipped that she didn't want the title 'Headmistress' because, she said, "I'll be a mistress to nobody". Mrs Woolhouse was a very active woman with sharp features and a fast way of speaking. She seemed to me to be lacking in polish – a bit 'rough' – but she must have satisfied the school Council because the school developed greatly under her leadership and she remained until 1970.

Although adjacent small properties were bought and additional cheap timber buildings were added to the Were St site, the school quickly outgrew the land and Murray (as Chairman of the School Council now) was looking for a much larger site.

There was a property of eleven and a half acres on the north side of South Road, directly opposite Haileybury College, called 'Merton', which had been owned and run for many years as a private mental hospital by a Mrs. Mirams.

Murray called to see Mrs Mirams and although initially unsuccessful, after many visits spread over several months, she agreed to consider selling the property for use as a school. She was already in her eighties and wanted to see the site remain largely intact, rather than be cut up by developers.

Murray then had first to get approval of the school Council, and later the Presbyterian Church of Victoria to the buying of 'Merton'. The Council was supportive, but he knew it would be difficult to get the Presbyterian Assembly to commit resources to a church school which only a limited number of Presbyterians could afford to send their daughters to.

One of the influential members of the Church Finance Committee was Arthur W. Coles, one of four brothers who had founded G. J. Coles and Co., and who had headed the Olympic Games Organising Committee. Murray went to see Coles and took with him a Site Plan showing how a strip of land along the west boundary large enough for ten house blocks could be sold off to recoup some of the purchase cost. Murray and I were the only ones who knew of this plan.

Arthur Coles said he would back the idea of buying the Merton property, but told Murray to forget about selling off land, because "You will need all the land you can get."

The Presbyterian Assembly eventually agreed to buy the site and the school took possession in October 1953.

It was necessary to have the school in operation at South Road for the start of 1954. Normally it would be impossible to prepare working drawings and specifications of the necessary alterations to buildings and to get building permits from the Public Health Department and Brighton City Council within that time, without allowing for the actual building work.

Murray arranged to meet the Senior Building Surveyor at the Public Health department and then the Building Surveyor at Brighton Council, both of whom knew him. After explaining the predicament the school was in, both gave him permission to carry out the work on condition that he provide detailed plans later! I have never heard of this arrangement before or since, but they must have known they could trust Murray to comply with all the relevant regulations.

Work started almost immediately, and Murray practically lived on the job during the ensuing weeks. He arranged for a small builder with about three carpenters to join him full-time and he gave instructions on the quite substantial alterations directly to the workers.

The main requirements at the start were classrooms and toilets. Toilet blocks were built as new timber framed buildings, but the classrooms were formed from existing buildings.

Murray told me that some of the substantial brick buildings on the property contained small rooms or cells with walls lined with sheet iron all smoothly finished so that the mental patients could not hurt themselves. Many classrooms were made by knocking down the dividing walls to these cells to form rooms about 20 feet square.

Murray and his team of workers did not stop for any holidays and St Leonard's Presbyterian Girls' College moved in and started operating in February, 1954.

It was just after this, following a Working Bee at the school, that Murray had his first heart attack. Is it any wonder?

As part of the Conditions of Sale of her property, Mrs Mirams, who was 86 in 1954, was allowed to live in a large house right in the middle of the property for the rest of her life. For the next ten years Mrs Mirams, in her chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce would sweep in and out along the curved driveway while school life went on around her.

Murray remained on the school Council with Bruce Kemp and they continued to work as the school's architects 'in conjunction'. While they probably did lots of work for St Leonard's without charge in the early days, later they made the same arrangements as for Haileybury – Murray would do the designing and all documentation (drawings and specifications) and Bruce would look after the supervision.

The main building work we did for St Leonard's at South Road was the long Classroom and Science Building along the north boundary. This was built in several stages starting at the eastern end.

The last stage was the 3-storey section at the western end and this was finished in 1966, not long before Murray died. Before the official opening, Murray asked me to look after the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church who was to perform the ceremony.

The Moderator had to change into his 'costume' for the event – knee length stockings, buckled shoes, lace collar and cuffs, etc. and Murray showed us into a front room at 'Merton'. I pulled down the blinds to the big front windows because not far away on the lawn and facing us were hundreds of chairs in rows, quickly filling with guests.

When the Mod. was half-way through, one of the blinds suddenly shot up with a clatter. I made a dash to pull it down again, but the man himself didn't seem as concerned as I was.

BIALIK HEBREW SCHOOL

In the early 1960's we got a telephone call from a solicitor who had an office in Queen Street. Murray asked me to see him. The Solicitor explained that he had got our name from the Public Health Department as 'experts' in school design, and he was involved with the building committee for the Bialik Hebrew School.

He was of course careful about establishing the fees to be paid for architectural services. Something must have warned me to be cautious, because for the first time I followed the recommendations of the Institute of Architects in regard to fees, and confirmed them in writing.

The work involved alterations and additions to a big 2-storied house in Shakespeare Grove, Hawthorn to enable it to be used as a school.

Janet and I went to measure up the building and were shown around by another representative of the Bialik school. We were told that the house was once occupied by W. A. Brahe, who had been German Consul in Victoria before Federation. The building was in very good condition and I particularly remember an enormous gilt-framed mirror above the marble fireplace in the main front room.

The job went ahead and finished without any problems.

On completion, Murray submitted an account for fees in accordance with our letter of confirmation. A few days later I got a phone call from the solicitor saying "If you reduce your fees by ten per cent, we will pay the account immediately, but if you hold out for the full amount, it will cost you much more".

I was outraged. We had done everything that they wanted and there had been no complaints from the school. I talked it over with Murray and said that I thought it was blackmail and that we should not give in.

Murray, with longer experience in the world of business than I had, said it would be better in the long run to take the ninety per cent now than get involved in legal proceedings. I reluctantly agreed, but I have never forgiven that solicitor.

Later I was told by Steve Earp, the Senior Building Surveyor at the Health Department (we called him 'Wyatt' of course in the office) that he had been pestered by the solicitor to give him the names of architects experienced in school design. Earp said that as public servants they were not supposed to do this, but eventually he gave in and recommended us.

Years later Janet and I were involved in designing blocks of flats in conjunction with an estate agent friend, Geoff Dixon. Geoff was mainly involved in managing rental properties. He would ask us to design flats for certain sites and then arrange for one of his many clients to take over the project and have it constructed.

We designed a block of fifteen flats to go on a large site in Kew and Geoff brought along a man interested in having them built. He was a Jewish gentleman – the first we had come across in business since the Bialik school more than ten years earlier. The flats were built and we submitted our account for fees, wondering what his response might be.

He not only paid the account in full, but rang and invited me to come to the showroom at his clothing factory in Richmond and select any three shirts for myself!

There's a lesson there, somewhere.

CAIRNMILLAR INSTITUTE

In the 1950's Murray was introduced to a young Presbyterian minister who had recently returned from Scotland.

His name was Dr Francis Macnab and he had studied Psychotherapy at Aberdeen University. He was wanting to set up an Institute in Melbourne providing Psychotherapy Services and had obtained the backing of the Presbyterian Church. He was not a medical doctor.

He had been appointed minister of the Prahran Parish and would operate his 'Cairnmillar Institute' from there. The name Cairnmillar was derived from two professors who had taught him – Prof. Cairns and Prof. Millar.

He wanted us to design a manse for him beside the Prahran Presbyterian Church in Cromwell road, South Yarra.

At first Murray was quite impressed by Macnab, but that changed over the years.

The manse was built by one of our good regular builders, John Madsen. Dr Macnab was to use his manse Study for consultations, but was concerned that people waiting in the Hall to see him could overhear what was being said inside. Because the construction was brick-veneer it was impossible to make the dividing wall completely sound-proof even though it had two sheets of plaster on both sides. John Madsen said he had a fish tank at home which made a quiet gurgling sound as the water was recirculated, and if a tank was put in the hall the sound would be sufficient to obscure any voices in the Study. A fish tank was bought and it worked beautifully!

Francis Macnab was a master of self-promotion and within a couple of years his Institute was booming.

He decided to pull down the 70 year-old red brick church which would have seated 600, and replace it with a suite of buildings. The old church was called 'The Rolland Memorial Church'. A number of Rollands had been Presbyterian Ministers and Murray said the Rolland family was outraged.

This didn't stop Macnab, and he got us to design a complex which included an Institute containing several rooms, a new smaller Church and a large church Hall. The buildings were designed to surround a secluded garden Courtyard.

The successful tenderer was W. A. Bruce and Mal Osborne was foreman. When the old church was demolished and excavations started, an underground creek was discovered – it had apparently always flowed under the big church. We had to get our structural engineers to re-design the footings, with a combination of reinforced concrete and steel beams below the walls and floors, spanning the creek.

Mal and his men spent a great deal of time preparing for and pouring the concrete footings, often working in mud and water above their knees for days at a time. Instead of sympathising with the workers, Macnab was critical and complained about the extra time the job was taking.

Two days before the official opening, I asked Mal to pick up and install a signboard which I had ordered from a signwriter. Mal had just finished setting it in place when Dr Macnab, passing by, said sarcastically "are we spelling Prahran a new way now?"

The signwriter had left the 'h' out of Prahran, but the mistake had nothing to do with Mal.

The buildings were officially opened by the Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe and as usual, Murray, Edna, Janet and I were there.

Macnab did most of the talking and was at his self-congratulatory best.

Afterwards Murray was introduced to the Gov. who said he would like to meet and congratulate the builder, Bill Bruce. I have said elsewhere that Bill was our only builder who had worked for Murray before the War. He was a short, solid bloke with a face like a friendly bulldog. He was a staunch Methodist and didn't like sub-contractors bringing beer onto his building sites. He once said "They claim they drink it in summer to cool them down, and in winter to warm them up!"

The Governor spoke with Bill for several minutes and afterwards Bill said to us "Now there's a gentleman, not like that so-and-so over there", nodding towards the Reverend Doctor.

In the office on Monday morning, Murray turned up the date of the Opening in our Office Diary, slashed a diagonal across it and scribbled 'WASH-OUT'.

About three years later I got a phone call from Dr Macnab, asking me to call in.

There had been a violent wind storm during the night and the flat roof of a large block of flats facing a street at the rear had been lifted up, flipped completely over and landed on the roof of the church Hall. Amazingly there was little structural damage and after a few weeks of work the Hall was restored by a builder specialising in insurance work.

Dr Macnab only seemed to stay at Prahran for a further five years or so, then we read he had taken his Institute to an eastern suburb – Hawthorn I think. After a spell there he suddenly popped up as minister of the Collins Street Independent (Congregational) church, emulating the transfer of another Presbyterian minister, Rev Gordon Powell, to the same church more than a generation earlier.

Macnab has continued running his Cairnmillar Institute at the Independent Church which he re-named St. Michael's, and is now part of the Uniting Church.

My sister Nancy has a grand-daughter, Amanda, who has been working in recent years as assistant to Dr Macnab in his office, but Janet and I have never let on what we knew of him years ago.

HAILEYBURY

Haileybury College began life in 1892 on the south-west corner of South Road and New Street, Brighton Beach.

The school's founder and headmaster Charles Rendall, had, with partners Mr and Mrs H. W. Mills, bought a former Coffee Palace building which had originally been built as a house by James Balfour and had later been owned by the stockbroker, J. B. Were.

In 1932 under owner/headmaster S. R. Dickinson, Haileybury commenced operations at 'Castlefield', a property on the south side of South Road, east of Hampton Street. There were about eleven acres of land containing a substantial single-storey homestead with tower, which had been built for a Melbourne solicitor, J. M. Smith in the 1860's.

The Rev. Karl Forster was chairman of 'The Haileybury College Transfer Trust Committee' which arranged for the ownership of the school to be transferred to the Presbyterian Church in 1938.

In 1939 The Prime Minister, R. G. Menzies, opened a new Classroom Block which had been designed by Old Haileyburian architects C. P. Smart and R. Le Poer Terry. This building was in the traditional English college style with arched cloisters on the south side.

Total enrolment in 1940 was 115 students, including 10 boarders.

Sholto Black replaced Dickinson as Headmaster in 1942.

I think Black was the most influential headmaster in Haileybury's history although he was only in the post for twelve years. He took over the school in wartime when student numbers were falling, but when he left, numbers were steadily increasing and the school never looked back.

Black was a New Zealander whose mother was a Maori. He was small, balding, and wore large horn-rimmed glasses.

It was his manner that was distinctive.

Unlike nearly all other Haileybury headmasters, he was not a disciplinarian. He was a humanitarian and took a personal interest in all his boys while retaining their respect. I only met him a few times, but he had an enthusiasm that was contagious.

When he took over at 'Castlefield', Black inherited a lot of poor quality or run-down buildings with the exception of the 1939 block. He was always short of money, not only for necessary building work, but even for simple items of equipment for the school office.

Murray Forster was approached by Haileybury College in 1946. He was told they wanted to appoint him as their architect to join Bruce Kemp who already held that position. Murray told me he immediately contacted Bruce, who said "I didn't think you would do this to me".

Murray had been articled to Bruce when he was a young man and they had sometimes worked together on jobs, including St. Leonard's school.

Murray told Bruce that the school was determined to appoint someone else and he replied, "If that's the case, then I would rather work with you!" It was agreed that Murray would do the designing and Bruce, who was a very thorough man, would look after the supervision.

Murray always strongly supported the Code of Ethics of the Institute of Architects which stated that an architect 'must not attempt to supplant another architect' and it cost us dearly. In about 1950 Murray was contacted by Carey Baptist Grammar School and was told that they wanted to appoint him as their architect for a big building programme which they were about to start. Murray knew Carey's architect (I think he was the son of the school's first headmaster), and telephoned him to find out what was going on. This chap said he did not know of any dissatisfaction with his work at the school and he was still their architect.

Murray told the Carey representative that he would not accept the offer. Within a year we heard that Carey was going ahead with a number of buildings without an architect. The work was to be done by a firm of builders, Paynter and Dixon, using the 'Design and Construct' method – and no architect would be employed.

One of the buildings they built was a large Assembly Hall. Robin Boyd, who was an outstanding writer on architecture, often used this Hall as an example of how <u>not</u> to design a building.

At Haileybury Murray consulted with the school and in particular with Sholto Black, the Headmaster, then started work on a Master Plan for the 'Castlefield' property. Black had said he thought the focal point should be the school Chapel.

The Master Plan was carefully developed by Murray and then passed over to me to draw up to scale. We made up a 'book' consisting of about ten large sheets bound together on the left hand side.

Sholto Black described this design for the future Haileybury as his 'Vision Splendid', the term being taken from 'Clancy of the Overflow'. The proposal went to the school Council and was accepted.

I was then asked by Murray to draw perspective sketches in pencil to be used in the preparation of a special brochure to help in launching a fund-raising campaign.

The sketches were –

An aerial view of the future school.
The new Chapel
An interior view of the proposed Assembly Hall.

Later the school Council thought it would be a good idea to have a model of the project made so that it could be used for fund-raising. Murray was authorised to ask me to do the job and suggested a fee of £40. One of my hobbies had been model aeroplane making and I readily agreed. The scale was to be one-sixteenth of an inch to a foot – the same scale as the sketch plans.

When Murray reported back to the Council, the Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, Mr R. A. H. Clements, said he thought the model would not be big enough and offered to pay another £40 if I would double the scale.

I reluctantly agreed, but I knew it would be a very big job – far more than double the work because much more detail would need to be shown.

Before any model making could be started I had to draw all the buildings out at the larger scale, and design all the elevations of the buildings, as we had only prepared sketch plans in the office.

I was working at home of course, and the only place I could find to draw out the total site where it would be undisturbed for several months was a side wall of our Lounge Room.

The baseboard would be nearly 9 feet x 7 feet.

At the larger scale I needed to show windows and doorways recessed, so I made up the bulk of each building in balsa for rigidity, then glued on the finished walls of thick card with the openings cut out.

I thought that plain black windows would look too dead so I got together all the used camera negatives I could find, ruled the glazing bars in white poster colour and fixed the negatives over a dark blue background.

The lights and darks of the negatives gave a realism to the windows.

I needed a tall cone to represent the ventilating fleche mounted on the roof of the Chapel, and the father of one of my mates turned it up from timber on his lathe.

Particle board had not been invented and I needed a rigid board-like base. We were using veneered timber panels called 'Corestock' for cupboard doors and by joining three sheets together I had my base.

I went shopping with mum for grass for the ovals and we found a light green velveteen which gave the right texture and colour.

Goal posts were made from tapering aluminium alloy knitting needles.

Trees were a problem because although small-scale trees were available at model shops, I needed them larger and in great quantities. Beachcombing was the answer. I spent several late afternoons in semi-darkness roaming the beaches of Sandringham and Black Rock collecting sponges. The sponges were dyed various shades of green and yellow and glued to twigs set in holes drilled in the baseboard.

As weeks dragged into months the job became hard work rather than a pleasure. Eventually, after two days and nights without sleep I helped load the 'Vision Splendid' into a furniture van for delivery to the school – then climbed into bed.

Mr Black and the school were very excited by the model and had it on display for some time. However, it was far too big to easily handle and store – particularly when there was not enough accommodation for boys – and the model gradually got damaged and eventually disappeared.

The first stage of building at Brighton was a 2-storey eight-Classroom Block which was opened in 1949.

Although the school was always short of money in the early days, it had a policy of trying to build one project a year. I was still being asked to do minor jobs at Brighton 40 years later.

David Bradshaw (1954-72) took over as Headmaster when Sholto Black retired.

Bradshaw had been at Scotch College as a boy with Murray, and before going to Haileybury had been Head of the Junior School at Scotch. He had a different style from Black, being more of a disciplinarian, but he had a twinkle in his eye at times as though smiling to himself.

The Headmaster's house was built in the grounds at Brighton soon after Bradshaw arrived. Tight restrictions on the area of domestic buildings still applied, and although the house was 2-storeyed, the rooms were relatively small. Pollard Bros. the builders were the successful tenderers and when Frank Hill, one of the partners, brought their tender in to the Sunroom at Canberra Grove he said with a grin "I couldn't see any mention of a staircase in the specifications, but I allowed for one anyway. I blushed, and thanked him. I was the one who had forgotten to put the stair in the spec!

Not long after Murray returned from overseas he was asked to start thinking about the design of the Assembly Hall, which was to be named 'The War Memorial Hall'. The term War Memorial would allow donations to be tax-exempt.

Murray's design for the Hall differed from the Master Plan mainly because he raised it to form an Undercroft below. The Hall had a gallery at the rear and right-hand side, and additional seating for boys on bleachers behind the stage. The Undercroft allowed access between the courtyards on each side and could be used at lunch time for meals. It later housed the Tuckshop and Refectory.

While Murray was designing the Hall he ran across an old architect friend who was working for the well-known architectural firm 'Bates, Smart and McCutcheon'. This chap said he was wrestling with the problem of designing the new Wilson Hall at Melbourne University where he had to seat 1400 in a building to cost £200,000. Murray pointed out that his Hall had to seat 800 at a cost of £30,000.

At the official opening of the Hall Murray was congratulated on the design by Leighton Irwin, the former Director of the Architectural Atelier, who was an old boy of the school.

At about this time we were involved in preparing a Master Plan for Essendon Grammar School. They had bought a large new site on a wind-swept plain just on the Melbourne side of Keilor and for the first stage we had to transfer some Classrooms from Essendon and add some more cheap timber Classrooms and Toilets. All done on a shoe-string budget.

The Essendon Headmaster was Dr. Shann, a member of an academic family. Shann was in his thirties, a scrawny scholarly-looking chap who was the first of the 'trendies' we met in the schools.

Murray said that when he walked around with Bradshaw at Haileybury the boys would invariably say "Good morning (or afternoon) Sir", to the Head as they passed, but at Essendon Grammar they just ignored Shann.

One day Dr Shann decided to show the students how he could be 'one of the boys' by joining in a game of football. They rewarded him by breaking his arm!

While Bradshaw was still at Brighton, his Junior School head, Richard Cornish, was given permission to consult with us in the building of four Sub-Primary Classrooms in the East Wing. These Classrooms were elaborately fitted out with cupboards, benches, pigeonholes and drawers along both sides, all to suit the requirements of Mr. Cornish.

Not long after this we were doing the drawings for the first Classrooms at Keysborough and I showed cupboards and benches right along one side wall of each room. When Mr Bradshaw saw the drawings he deleted nearly two-thirds of the cupboards, saying to Murray "A good teacher should be able to teach in a bare Classroom". These Classrooms became the pattern for all those in the Senior School, and they always looked incomplete.

After Bradshaw went to Keysborough, Cornish twice asked me to see him at Brighton. He wanted to discuss improvements to the Junior School and expected me to draw up his ideas. I was deliberately non-committal and gave him no encouragement at all. At the time I was attending all the meetings of the Property Committee and knew that their policy was to spend nothing at Brighton at that time and to concentrate on building at Keysborough. I didn't think it was my job to tell Cornish this – he should have got permission from his Headmaster before discussing anything with me.

KEYSBOROUGH

During the 1950's when Haileybury enrolments were increasing, it was apparent to Murray that the school would need to find a larger site. He told me he suggested to the school Council that they consider buying land for the future at the end of South Road, on the east side of Warrigal Road. The Council didn't seem to be interested at the time, but in 1961 they bought 49 acres of land away out at Keysborough, in an area unknown to most Melburnians. In later years the acreage was more than doubled.

Haileybury decided to establish a Senior School on the new site.

Murray at this time must have been told that the school was going to reconsider the appointment of architects for the Keysborough project. He was more upset than I had ever seen him. He told me that if they were going to treat him like that after all he had done for them, then he would resign immediately.

Over the years of course, the school Council membership had changed and the newer members would not necessarily know what he had done for the school in the bad times, but there were still many who should have known.

I shared his disgust, but urged him to wait until an appointment was made before pulling the plug.

We were re-appointed. I never had much respect for Haileybury after that.

We were asked to prepare a Master Plan for Keysborough early in 1962.

Janet, who had recently started working in the office, accompanied Murray on his first visit to the site. They walked over the sandy ground which had once been a market garden, marking the location of an old brick single-storey house and a number of horse sheds which were spread around. Murray decided that the buildings should go on 'a grassy knoll' as he called it, near the northern end.

We knew from experience at Brighton that the school would have to be built in stages over a number of years.

It seemed to us that it would be logical to build self-contained Classroom Blocks complete with locker areas, cloakrooms and toilets and link these to a Covered Way forming a spine running the length of the school.

The Master Plan was adopted and it formed the basis for all building at the Senior School for nearly thirty years. We built a smaller, more manageable model of the school this time.

The first 8-Classroom Block to be built was the 'Weatherly Building', named for Lionel Weatherly who had donated £25,000 to cover the cost. Lionel Weatherly was a pastoralist with a property near Mortlake, who also owned 'Billila' in Halifax Street, Brighton.

Other Classroom Blocks soon followed at Keysborough together with a Science Building, Sports Pavilion and a temporary Assembly Hall seating 400.

At the same time the first sections of sealed roads with concrete gutters and drainage, and three sports ovals were built, all to our design and under the direction of Murray Forster who was constantly on site.

We even designed a scoreboard for the Main Oval, based on the world-famous one at the MCG. A second-cousin of mine, Alec Gillon, was President of the Victorian Football Association at the time and he took me to see the inner workings of the MCG scoreboard. We were told that a small engineering firm run by a chap called Stan Palmer was responsible for the mechanical operation of the board.
I knew Stan as he was a fellow member of the Northern Golf Club, and we arranged for him to supply all the mechanical equipment for the Haileybury scoreboard. We heard later that other schools were wanting to copy Haileybury's board.

The firm had been named 'K. Murray Forster and Walsh' since I had been made a partner when Janet and I were married in February 1963. Murray had asked me how I wanted my name expressed. I said I thought 'Allen Walsh' added to his name would be too much of a mouthful and opted for my surname only.

When Murray died in 1967 the large Administration Building and Science Laboratories were in the planning stage and these were opened in the following year.

After Murray's death I wrote to the Chairman of the Haileybury School Council, Mr H. G. Myers, reminding him that I had been with Murray from the time of his appointment as Haileybury's architect, stating that the practice would continue as before, and asking to be allowed to continue working for the school.

I received a very generous letter in reply from Mr Myers, saying that the Council thought we should continue as the school architects.

Work continued on the Senior School at Keysborough under David Bradshaw as Headmaster until his retirement in 1973. Bradshaw was still a very active man, and after studying additional subjects at the Theological Hall, became a Presbyterian minister.

WES PERRY

Haileybury's first full-time bursar, W. K. Perry, was appointed in 1960. Janet remembers Murray saying that Wes Perry "made a job for himself" – seeing Wes as just another bureaucrat.

Wes once sent back for correction a contract that Murray had prepared with the builder's name shown as 'William Alfred Bruce'. Bill Bruce had been building for Murray since before the war, but Wes Perry picked up the fact (correctly) that he had changed his business name to 'W. A. Bruce Pty. Ltd.', and this could have led to legal problems.

Wes Perry and I called each other 'Mister' for the first 15 years, but then it became Christian names.

Wes won the DFC as a pilot flying Lancasters over Germany in the war. His navigator was Ray Berg, an architect who was dux of Brunswick Tech a few years before I was. Ray was later one of Janet's instructors in Building Construction at the University.

It was a pity Murray didn't live long enough to get to know Wes Perry properly, as I think he would have realised that Haileybury had grown so large that it needed an organiser of Wes's ability and subtle humour.

MICHAEL AIKMAN

Michael Aikman (1974-1992) became Principal (not Headmaster) on the retirement of David Bradshaw.

Aikman was a big man physically, over 6 ft tall and 15 stone, but was lacking in personality. Like me, he didn't know how to make 'small talk', so although I worked with him for twenty years we never really got to know each other. It was only the friendships that I had with the Bursar, Wes Perry, and his successor, Brian Hardy (from 1985) that made my regular visits to Keysborough a pleasure. I must have gone to Keysborough two or three times a week for more than twenty-five years.

During 1974 I was asked by Mr Aikman to design a Junior School at Keysborough. This was to be built on about 20 acres of land which had been added to the south of the school property.

We gave this a lot of thought in the office and developed a Master Plan. This was adopted by the school Council and we built and completed the Junior School known as 'Newlands' , in stages over ten years.

At the same time we were still doing work at the Senior School, at 'Castlefield' and at Camp Pelican on the Gippsland Lakes.

In 1994, when Janet and I were ready to retire and move to Bradvale, I made my last visit to Keysborough. I took with me several large bundles of Haileybury drawings, including all our originals of Working Drawings extending back to the 1940's, to be kept in their archives.

It was 48 years after I had, under Murray Forster, drawn up the Master Plan of Sholto Black's 'Vision Splendid'.

STRATHCONA

In 1977 I took a phone call from Roy Johnston.

Roy was one of the partners in Irwin, Johnston & Partners, Consulting Engineers. The firm had been formed at the time of the Melbourne Olympics when Bill Irwin had come up with the innovative structural design for the Olympic Swimming Pool. He later did the structural design for the Myer Music Bowl.

Not long after Murray's death we thought we should appoint a firm of consulting engineers to do all our larger jobs – one that could provide structural, mechanical (air conditioning etc.) and electrical design services.

Ross Ingram introduced me to Irwin, Johnston through an engineer friend of his, Matt Anderson, who was a junior partner in the firm. Irwin, Johnston & Partners were still our engineers until Janet and I retired.

When Roy Johnston phoned he said he was impressed with the work we were doing for 'Claremont Home for the Aged' in Albert Road, South Melbourne and at 'Newlands' at Keysborough. He said he was on the school Council at Strathcona Baptist Girls' Grammar School at Canterbury.

Their school architect had died at a relatively young age and he asked whether he could put our name forward as architects. I said "Certainly", but thought there would be other candidates. Next thing we were told that the school had appointed us.

So began our relationship with a wonderful group of people.

The Principal, Ken Lyall was a cheery, ruddy-faced man with fair curly hair (in those days). He was like a younger combination of David Munro, our minister at West Brunswick, and Sholto Black. He seemed to be interested in every girl in the school and every person he came into contact with. He would talk to people on the site of a building and would ask them numerous questions about their jobs as though to educate himself. He had earlier been head of the Junior School at Carey Grammar.

When Ken led a prayer at Assembly or Speech Night it seemed that he was speaking to a personal friend.

Like the Remington man, we were so impressed with everything we saw at Strathcona that we sent our elder daughter, Lindy, to the school.

Strathcona had passed through all the years of poverty and scrimping that we had known at St Leonard's and Haileybury, and was ready to embark on a series of large building programmes that continued until the day we retired.

Some of the more impressive buildings we designed for them were –

A Gymnasium with a 25 metre Indoor Pool below.
Reconstruction of the Assembly Hall.
A Creative Arts Centre incorporating several different departments.
An Administration Building with large Lecture Theatre in the basement, three levels above ground and a roof deck covering the whole area of the building, to be used by the older girls. A Chapel was included at 2nd Floor level.

The Administration Building kept us in Melbourne for three years. We had prepared Sketch Plans earlier, but the building did not go ahead immediately because they had used the funds set aside, to buy neighbouring properties which had come onto the market unexpectedly.

Janet and I had arranged for the building of a house linked to the old church at Bradvale, and this was finished in 1991. Then we got word that Strathcona wanted to go ahead with the 'Admin Building'. We had done so much preliminary work on this large project that we were reluctant to just walk away. So we stayed. The building was finished in 1994.

When we left Melbourne we were given a Dinner at Strathcona by the School Council, attended by all the friends we had made.

The former Principal, Ken Lyall, and the former Administrator, Bob Reaby, have remained our very good friends to this day.