

The Reflections continue....

We continue our selection of interviews with long standing members of our community. This month our reflection focuses on Sue and Brian McCreery.

Remember, if you think you know of someone we should chat with and who may share their story with us please contact Deb at the Shire. You can email ea@dalwallinu.wa.gov.au with your suggestions and your contact details. All suggestions are welcomed. Our aim is to capture the history from our residents while they can still share it.



Sue and Brian McCreery

Sue is a third-generation descendant of the Hazlett family who were pioneers of the district. Sue was born in Perth and grew up with two older sisters and one younger brother. Sadly, her brother is now deceased. She grew up on a farm on the famous Struggle Street, Xantippe near Kalannie from the age of 12, but initially attended Dalwallinu Primary School when they farmed near Wilgie Hills near Dalwallinu, where her father had a War Service Loan to farm, until the family moved from the Dalwallinu farm back to the Struggle Street farm at Xantippe in 1959. His older brother, her uncle Dave and his wife Ivy shifting to Perth for health reasons. She rode her bike to catch the school bus into Dalwallinu but always wore a hat for protection from the crows. Sue then completed her senior education for five years as a boarder at MLC

in Perth. As a boarder, she only managed to get home to Kalannie about three times a year. It was very hard on Sundays at boarding school as the boarders were made to sit outside on the lawn after Church and letter writing, to wait to meet their visitors and since it was too far for her family to visit, they never came! Thank goodness for a transiter radio and the top 20 Hit tunes broadcast on Sunday afternoons.

Initially Sue and another friend decided to apply to be an Air hostess with TAA, but on application they found out they had to be 21. When they asked staff at TAA, what qualifications were needed they were told a First AID Certificate. The man told them not to worry about applying as Sue was too thin and her friend too fat and they should get a big bag and jump into it together so the fat might rub off onto Sue!



They friends decided to do a nursing course to fill in time and moved to Geraldton to train as nurses where

Sue topped my class. Nursing was her calling; she just loved it and never went back to TAA. It also stood her in good stead for the rest of her life.

Sue's first job after school was working at the Kalannie shop. This was when she and Brian first started dating but when he started to get a bit serious, Sue decided she wanted to see the world first, so she headed off.

During her nursing career Sue nursed at Geraldton, Shenton Park, Royal Perth, Fremantle, Royal South Sydney mainly working in orthopedic wards. She recalls on her last day as a Ward Sister at Royal South Sydney orthopedics all her patients presented her with a red rose.

Thomas (Brian) McCreery was also born in Perth and his parents farmed on McCreery Road in Kalannie. He grew up with his three younger brothers on the farm although sadly both Brian and one of his brothers Alan, have now passed away. Brian's grandfather Thomas McCreery, whilst farming at Kalannie also owned the grocery shop in Dalwallinu (now Wallis Computer Solutions). When the land east of the Rabbit Proof Fence was opened up about 1923 they took up the current McCreery locations and shifted there after the home was built. Five generations

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of McCreery's have lived on, or are still living there.

Brian did all his primary schooling in Kalannie. He had a bit of a hike to get to primary school which involved riding his pushbike two miles to catch the school bus on the Dalwallinu-Kalannie Road. After primary school he moved to Perth to board at Scotch College where he remained for only three years. He left and went home to work on the farm where he remained until he became ill with Blood Cancer and sadly passed away in March 2021.



Even though Sue and Brian knew of each other all their lives they didn't really get together until Sue moved back to Kalannie in her twenty's. They married in 1970 and moved onto the farm in McCreery Road where they raised their four children. Two of their sons Rowan and Jordan remain in Kalannie with their families, another son Dustin and family live in Tammin and their daughter Verdell and family are in Geraldton. Brian and Sue have 7 grandsons, 5 granddaughters but no great grandchildren (as yet!).

Sue nursed in Dalwallinu from 1970 to 1975 and as happens in the country when there is no Doctor close, her home became the local nursing post. Sue says that she regularly received medical stock from the Dalwallinu Hospital. She was an Ambulance Officer for

52 years and is a Serving Sister of Jerusalem (SSOJ) which is the second highest honour at St John, awarded to Volunteer personnel.

There wasn't an ambulance in Kalannie and during one football game two opposing players had a collision resulting in a suspected fracture of the leg to one and possible concussion to the other. They were being transported from Kalannie to Dally in the back of a station wagon with Sue administering medical assistance in the back. They men were too tall to be able to close the rear tail gate of the wagon and she recalls after a particularly big bump that all three of them almost ended up on the road.

Even whilst farming fulltime the couple still managed to be very active in the community. They hosted concerts on the farm in an Amphitheatre they built in their gravel pit, which included a flying circus, with people coming from miles away and camping all weekend. Brian would often remark "What idea do you have now?". Over the years there were many other fundraisers such as Mock Deb Balls with everyone cross dressing and one particularly memorable Mock Christening with a very animated man-child crawling around the room with a dummy.

Sue also ran her own business for six years from the farm where she employed many girls to work with her. She had a wool micron testing business and worked for a lot of local farmers in the district and surrounds. Brian enclosed the verandahs around the house to form an office space for her to run the business from.

Her participation in community

events and groups extended to becoming the Secretary of the Kalannie P&C and as Librarian, she automated the library and ran Book Fairs every year for the community.

Sue wrote the grant to obtain Government funding to build the Kalannie CRC (which was built before the Dalwallinu CRC). Community involvement also extended to the community physically helping with the building and painting.

Sue went back to the school and lectured in computers for TAFE. She is proud of her achievements in providing workshops courses covering many topics to over twenty four young wheatbelt women.



Her community involvement also resulted in her working for the Shire for 2 – 3 years for three days a week as a consultant to assist with interviews, compilation and proofreading the Shire of Dalwallinu produced book "Dalwallinu 1910 – 2010 A Century of Memories". She was involved with the Kalannie 50 Year celebration, and then the 75 year celebration as well as the Dalwallinu Centenary celebrations.

Sue retains her love of books and reading and is still a librarian at the retirement village where she currently lives in Perth.

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Place of wheat and wattle....

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relays that she grew up on Struggle Street, Xantippe which is the only rural location in Australia called "Street" as most are "Roads" and that Xantippe's claim to fame is that it is the only locality in Australia starting with an X.



Some of her memories of her childhood include seeing Gran cleaning the working of the old eggbeaters with a bobby pin with her feet in a bowl of cold water due to the summer heat.

She also fondly recounts remembering her Dad sitting on the harvester holding reins attached to the tractor gears in front to steer it around the paddocks. She also has great memories of attending the open-air picture theatre in Dalwallinu, behind the pub before the drive-in was built. Dad used to wear his 'pyjamas' under his clothes to warm them up for bedtime after the movie's.

Her ambition now is to get on and write her own life story. I thank her for being so generous with her time and sitting down for a chat.

