

8th July 1981

Mrs Phyllis Mackennal 46 Park Crescent Fairfield is going to speak about her husband's early life.

My husband Jack was born in a small cottage just across the road from where I am living now. They took that cottage at the turn of the century because the home that we are in now wasn't completed and the mother was about to have my husband and they were in this small rented cottage for the time being. Just shortly after he was born the house was completed and they moved into 46. The cottage is still there No. 3 Arthur St, Fairfield. Jack was the eldest son and his brother Geoffrey was born in the home we are now living in, No. 46 Park Cr.

My husband's grandparents lived opposite No. 46 in their original home 'Lamoka'. When they were on a business trip to America "Lamoka" was pulled down and the second "Lamoka" was rebuilt under the supervision of my husband's father. This more modern home was much later demolished making way for the flats that are there today. "Lamoka" comes from the same name of a place in Canada.

My husband's grandfather George Griffeth and his brother Charles were the proprietors of "Two Bays Nurseries and Orchard Co." Moorooduc Victoria, established in 1890. Also the citrus and vine nurseries and orchards at Nyah River Murray Victoria.

Would you like to tell me what sort of trade or profession your husband and your husband's father were in?

My husband was a wool buyer and my husband's father was the Commonwealth Government Architect of Victoria. His brother Geoffrey was an architect following in his father's footsteps.

My husband's father built the main General Post Office on the corner of Bourke St and Spencer St, the Police Hospital in St. Kilda and I think also the old note printing place in Victoria Parade. The old night club "Paul Bibrons" in Collins Place which later became "Ciros" and "The Palms" in the Alexandra Gardens, later to be named "The Dorchester" and the government project at St Marys, NSW were some of Geoff Mackennal's work.

Jack's interest was in cars. He was one of the first members of the original Phillip Island racing circuit. He was navigator on many occasions on bush and country trails and he was a member of the Light Car Club of Australia since its inception in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy and now in Queen's Road, Melbourne.

Jack's mother was Agnes Thomas from Ontario, Canada. She came over here and met Horace Mackennal and they married. Her one and only sister Ida lived on the opposite corner, No. 44 and her husband was Albert Thurgood who was one of Essendon's greats in football. He was an exceptional player and they lived there for many years. They had

two daughters, one of whom is living today, Gwen. Marjorie passed away in the United States, something like ten or fifteen years ago.

McPherson Robertson before he was knighted had a very lovely home in Station Street, Fairfield. He was a great man on health. He had a wonderfully set up gymnasium there, he also had a very nice croquet lawn where they used to play. The ladies would play at the weekends.

He also had a lot of lovely little pet ponies that the children used to ride and little trains going around the garden. It was one of the show places in Fairfield in those days. That is the big home that has given way now to a home for wayward girls. The home next door which is Maristow Private Hospital was built by McPherson Robertson for his one and only daughter when she got married. The McPherson Robertson property ended at the corner of Station Street and Heidelberg Road. The Marriott family who lived in Alphington Street started the Hecla Electrical business. One of their first products was a single cone radiator in the design of a laurel leaf. One was given as a gift to my husband's parents. Their son carried on the business when his father died and their daughter later became a lady companion to the singer Joan Hammond now living at Aireys Inlet.

The Connor family originally came from Sale in Victoria. Mr Connor was a minister and when they moved to Melbourne they lived in the manse of the Presbyterian church which was on the North side of Heidelberg Road between Hanslope Avenue and the Railway line. When the church burnt down in the early 1900's they moved to Alphington Street, Fairfield. There were four girls and three boys. Marjorie was the youngest girl and was a very good hockey player.

At the end of Fairfield Park there was a kiosk where they used to sell afternoon tea. My husband's mother and her sister and friends who would be visiting during the weekends would walk down there and partake of afternoon tea and enjoy the music wafting up the river, provided by a small band.

They said that it was really lovely on a nice day to be drinking a cup of tea or coffee, eating scones jam and cream and to have this lovely music. That was part of the early entertainment. I can remember Jack telling me that going back to the early part of this century they used to have on Friday nights open air pictures. A man used to stand at the side of the projector and hand turn it for the pictures to be shown, and the people would be sitting on very rough forms and seats and pictures were shown on fine nights because there was no cover overhead. This was on the block of land opposite the Grand View Hotel.

My husband told me that if you wanted the train to stop at Fairfield Park Station, all you had to do was to just wave a handkerchief from your gate and seeing the place was all paddocks and a clear view to the station, the train driver would pull up for you.

My husband's grandfather, John Simpson Mackennal born in Ayreshire, Scotland 1832 and coming to Australia in the 1850's and his son Bertram were both sculptors. Bertram left Australia in 1882 to study in London. He entered the Royal Academy Schools, living in London at the time in quarters with Charles Douglas Richardson, Tom Roberts and Furlong. He met and married Agnes Spooner who was also a student of the Royal Academy Schools. When in 1891 he settled in Paris he modeled his "Circe" (the bronze now in the Melbourne National Gallery) which he exhibited in the 1892 Salon and for which he obtained the highest award granted for foreigners by the French "Mention Honorable".

In 1901 while on his last visit to Melbourne to see his family, his father J.S. Mackennal died. He returned to his permanent residence and studio at 38 Marlborough Hill, St John's Wood, London. He was knighted by King George V and died in 1931 at his country residence "Watcombe Hall", Torquay, Devon, England.