

ROD: So you went to the Corporation school ?

EDITH: No I went to the Bendigo High school, but the Corporate High School was the original and that was incorporated in that school. Mr Muir was the headmaster of the Corporate High school, and I think in the Annals of Bendigo, 1914, there's a write up and a list of all the different teachers that were there. The Annals of Bendigo is a very important source of information, and I've got all mine here. In 1914, the year the first world war started, there was a write up of the Bendigo High School being opened and the names of all the masters that were there, like George Freeman, Oliphant, he was the early principal there. And I think where the James... what's the main hall there ? Jame's King hall, there was a small residence in the land on the side of the school where there was a garden and cherry plum trees grew there. That was the Oliphant's home and I understand that Mrs. Oliphant used to sometimes board some of the country students. Don't forget this is back before 1920, even before my time. I didn't know Mr Oliphant, he was a very well known man and my parents used to talk about him.

ROD: They were certainly characters, weren't they ? And who was the principal when you were at school ?

EDITH: Mr King, Josh King.

ROD: When did you start school ?

EDITH: 1921, I only stayed there till 1922. I wasn't very enamored of school. I was what they would call "a slow learner" ... I was always frightened of making mistakes.

ROD: What would they do if you did make a mistake ?

EDITH: Oh well, when I say make a mistake one of the teachers, the history teacher, used to sometimes come in the room, as soon as he came in the room for his history lesson, he'd point his finger at some student and ask them a question and if you answered it wrong he'd make you feel like you'd like to crawl underneath the floor - you know, I was sensitive like that. Oh we had good times there, with sport of course, where all the other buildings are now, that was all the sports fields. Tennis, tennis courts, cricket, football I think and hockey, hockey fields and basketball.

ROD: Did you play sport ?

EDITH: Oh well, I was never much good at sport I just, I was an also-ran for sport and an also-ran for academics.

ROD: Yet you've still succeeded, and you're still alive, that's great, no that's really good. What other subjects did you do when you were at school ?

EDITH: Well we had the usual, arithmetic and algebra and I think we had some trigonometry. I know which I didn't even get one mark for on the exam we had for that.

ROD: I think a lot of students would sympathise with you on that one.

EDITH: Geography is my favourite subject because I used to like learning about places around the world and that sort of thing. We had history, we had French, swimming, drawing classes in the art room there.

ROD: Where did you go swimming ?

EDITH: Down the lady's baths, which have long since gone.

ROD: Where were they ?

EDITH: In Bath Lane, that's how Bath Lane got its name.

ROD: That's appropriate isn't it!

EDITH: Well if you look in that book of Mrs Bolford's you're sure to see a picture, I think, of some of the girls there. Miss Broughton was the swimming teacher, she also taught French and we used to go down and have our swimming classes and learn how to swim and to dive, pick up a brick off the bottom of the floor of the swimming pool. Go for our proficiency certificate, but I mean I was an also-ran as far as sports was concerned. I wasn't in any teams, but I did play in - hockey I liked and sometimes we'd have excursions away to compete with other schools. Go to Kerang say and play hockey against the Kerang High School.

ROD: How did you get up there ?

EDITH: Well we'd have to go by train, I don't know how it was arranged, I mean we were only the kids. But I know the headmistress at the time, Miss Taylor, she was very much against ... the boys and the girls were not allowed to mingle. You went away on a train trip, you wouldn't be allowed to get in the same carriage as the boys. That sort of thing.

ROD: And yet it was a co educational school, you had girls and boys ?

EDITH: Oh yes there were boys and girls, that's were we made all our friends. How old was I then ? Sixteen, seventeen, we were beginning to grow up and even Miss Taylor didn't really approve of us going around with the boys out of hours. Oh we had some good times, I can't specify anything really remarkable. We had other schools visit us, they competed in hockey and basketball, I think the boys must have probably played the football at the QEO.

ROD: Or the Upper Reserve as it was known.

EDITH: Well that wasn't called the QEO until after the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York when she became Queen Elizabeth. What else can I think of ?

ROD: Who was your teacher for geography ?

EDITH: Oh, I can't remember all their names, it's an awfully long time ago.

ROD: I was just curious that you may have remembered your geography teacher.

EDITH: No Miss Burns, I think she was a maths teacher and a Mr Jeffrey was the history teacher and Miss Broughton was the French teacher and swimming teacher. I can't remember the geography teacher.

ROD: No no no, that's fine. Gee wiz, just to remember those is sufficient. I must admit when you stop and think about the teachers that you had, there was a heck of a lot.

EDITH: I have got them written down, I've been writing the story of my life from the days of early childhood days to the days of my growing up days, before marriage. And I think I've got the list there, but I couldn't pull everything out. But if you looked up the Old Gold from 1921 to 1922, I mean you are sure to find out who the teachers were.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERLUDE #1 ON DVD

ROD: So who was the history teacher ?

EDITH: Mr Jeffrey, we used to call him 'Judge Jeffreys' - he was the history teacher.

ROD: Why did you call him 'Judge Jeffreys' ?

EDITH: He used to point his finger at you when he walked in the room and asked you a question. He did it to me once and I couldn't answer it and I felt like crawling under the floor.

ROD: So what did Mr Wilcox teach ?

EDITH: Oh look, well he wasn't in my time. He was earlier than me.

ROD: So which school did you come from to go to...

EDITH: Violet Street State School.

ROD: Gosh, that's got a long history then too.

EDITH: Oh yes that's got a long history. We used to live in Rowan Street. Of course there were mines everywhere. We used to live in Rowan street and walked up to Violet Street school everyday. 1914 I was there, I remember the day the first world war started, I was there 1914 because we had a horrific hailstorm while I was there. Shocking hail storm. That was good, we had a teacher there called Miss Nance and she used to play the violin while the kids walked into school. Monday morning it was a ritual for the school to assemble out on the road way, I think it was near the house, and we had to salute the flag and say, "I love God and my country, I will honour the flag, I will serve the Queen and King, and cheerfully obey my parents, teachers and the law."

ROD: Yep, I remember doing that too. That lasted a long while that one. To go to the high school, you walked or did you ride a bike ?

EDITH: Oh yes, we lived in Wattle street then. Well I don't think we ever had a bike, but we walked, it was walking distance of our home. Well everybody walked everywhere in those days.

ROD: So you walked past the old police barracks ?

EDITH: Well that's another thing, the police barracks was active when we were there because the police were in residence and as we looked out of the windows it flanked that walk. You know that walk that goes between the two schools ? Well as we looked out of the class window we could see the police coming and going from their beat. They'd go down to the town and do their beat for so many hours, by just walking around the town and seeing everything was alright and coming back again, with their bobby's helmets on. And the back of that was the stables where they had some horses, the mounted police. That was in operations as a barracks, police barracks, and you could see the foundations of an old mine on that corner. I don't know whether you still can. Don't they call that 'Barracks Walk' ?

ROD: Yes, and I think you may have had a hand in suggesting that name.

EDITH: Well they were going to call it 'Lane', and I said a 'Lane' is used, not only for walking but for vehicles and I thought 'Walk' would be more appropriate, as it was leading down into a park.

ROD: So that was an active police station then ?

EDITH: Oh yes, for a long time.

ROD: Camp Hill Primary School, was that a primary school then ?

EDITH: Oh yes, that's been there, that's a beautiful piece of architecture that school. I don't know how they apply them now to modern day teaching, cos I mean double storey places they built to last really. The back and front of that school is very attractive architecturally. Well I went there for a short time, but I didn't like it because my best friend didn't go there so I cried and said I wanted to go to Violet Street.

ROD: Did your best friend go to high school with you ?

EDITH: Oh yes, I had several friends, I knew all my life. School was a great place to make friends, one of the girls in that picture was Ailsa McGilvray and she came from Bald Rock, small place near Pyramid Hill, a one teacher school. She was very clever and she came down to Bendigo and boarded and that's where you made your friends and I knew her and another friend all my life. They both died, they all lived till their nineties. They were all teachers.

ROD: Were they? You weren't a teacher though were you ?

EDITH: No, I worked at the Bendigo Building Society, well that was my final job but I started off working at a produce store in Mitchell street, the buildings still there on the corner of Mollison street. We used to supply things to country stores, you know bags of wheat and sugar and flour and tins of biscuits, you name it. Anything the country stores wanted and I went there as a clerk for about six months, no three months I might have been there. That was my first job, then I became a librarian. The lending library was at the back of a book shop in Pall Mall. It's on the corner of what's Allen's Walk now, you couldn't go through Allen's Walk in those days. Well it only opened up when Allen's music people bought the old mining exchange, that walk and opened it right up to Hargraves Street and then Woolworths built behind that. I worked at Mr Wickings as a librarian for a while and then a friend of mine who got a job at the Bendigo Building Society, one of my school friends, we went to business college together she told me of a job coming up at the Bendigo Building Society in Bull Street and why didn't I apply, so I did. I went down there and applied and they brought out some great big ledgers for me to add up all these figures with my head, with my brain, great big columns, pounds, shillings and pence, but I got it right and got the job and stayed there for twelve years. I was an assistant to the accountant or a clerk.

ROD: And getting back to when you were at school, who was the principal at the time ?

EDITH: Mr King

ROD: And would he preside at assemblies ?

EDITH: As far as I remember he, I don't know whether we had an assembly every day, but we certainly had one every Monday morning. From memory, I mean this is all from memory, I'm not guaranteeing that it's correct. Well that was the focal point of the school. The girl's locker rooms were downstairs and beyond that, of course, in my day there were remnants of the garden where Mr Oliphant lived. And there was sort of garden beyond those steps and rose trees and things. Yes it was quite nice.

ROD: What about the mines, they reckon that the batteries would have created a heck of a noise ?

EDITH: Well the mines were all working till about 1954, the Central Deborah was the final one, but they were everywhere, I mean even where we lived in Rowan Street there was a mine on the corner and there was a mine where Spotlight is now and Mc Govers, that was a great big mine built on a sand heap. Well the old story goes, see all the lines didn't have their own batteries, Garden Gully Hill, there was a Garden Gully mine they had a very big battery with a lot of stampers, well of course they made quite a rhythmic noise and the crushing of ore - people sort of got used to it in the background. And then on Saturday nights when they ceased operating people said they couldn't sleep because they were so used to having the batteries to go to sleep to. But they were very big mines, I remember going there when I was a child. A little girl I was friendly with, her father used to work there. Used to take his 'crib' over - his lunch - during our play time. We used to walk through the mines to go to Violet Street School some winter mornings, we'd ask if we could walk through the engine shed, I can still smell the hot oily smell, see the big pistons going like this. Yes it was warm, and there were mines where the old Ironbark tennis court is, they were thick all around that area and houses built on the land were built on the same crown land as the mines were, see they were on crown land. And houses that were built on crown land, the people didn't own the land their houses were built on, but they owned the house. So you got a miner's right title instead of a freehold, but they could be converted later on of course. I don't know what else I can tell you.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERLUDE #2 ON DVD

ROD: How big were the classes in your day, can you remember how big they were ?

EDITH: Well I think they were bigger than you have now, what do you have as an average class now ?

ROD: Oh round about 25.

EDITH: Oh I think they might have been quite a bit more, 40 something, the rooms were always full and two at a desk, the old time desks. You had the inkwells.

ROD: So you lifted up the lid ?

EDITH: Yes you lifted up the lid and one of us filled up the ink wells every Monday morning or whenever

ROD: No that was a good job. I remember doing that myself. And somebody who had run out of ink on a Thursday, that was a disaster because you had to wait until you could fill it up again on Friday or Monday.

EDITH: Mr Freeman I think he was still teaching there when I went there, cos his son Ross Freeman he was there later and we had a high school ex students' association of course, that was formed. We used to go and have little dances down there in Room 10 I think.

ROD: So they had a numbering system, instead of a letter system for the rooms ?

EDITH: Yes Room 10 was the art room, it went right along and overlooked the park. Number 6 was a science room that was on the far side of the quadrangle from memory.

ROD: I remember when I first got to Bendigo High it was called Room 6 then still.

EDITH: Yes, there were science rooms and physics rooms. We moved around from room to room according to the classes, to a certain extent, we didn't stay in the same room all day for all of our lessons.

ROD: Not like primary school. That was great fun moving from class to class wasn't it, 'cause you had a little bit of a break and you could talk to your friends...

EDITH: I don't suppose there'd be many people alive that went to the school way back that far ?

ROD: Probably not, but there certainly would be a lot of people who remember the names of the rooms and what they were because they didn't change very often in those days because although there were a lot of students going, they generally built more classrooms. Certainly since then, we've changed a lot and it's interesting to have people come back and point out what that room was ...

EDITH: I can't recall whether we had an assembly room or whether assemblies were outside in the quadrangle or whether we went in to the art room. Later on they added on the James King Hall, didn't they?

ROD: When did that go up, can you remember ?

EDITH: Well it wasn't in my time, and then they built the memorial steps that go right up the front. There was all garden down there ... there was a huge piece of rock which had some geographical significance, I can't quite remember.

ROD: One arm of what we call an 'anticline'.

EDITH: I think we had a geography excursion out to some place, must have been in the Eppalock area.

ROD: Barfold was it? Golly, how did you get out to there ?

EDITH: I know we went on a geography excursion, but I'm afraid I can't be explicit about where we went and what we saw but on some excursion I went we saw this big piece of glacial rock.

ROD: That was out at Derenall

EDITH: Derenall, that's it, nearer Lake Eppalock. How we got there, whether we went by bus, or we couldn't have gone by train, there would be no train unless you went to Axedale. Axedale probably. Yes well that would be how we got there to see it. I dimly remember that.

(Rod now tells Edith a personal anecdote about taking friends and family on geology expeditions during long, hot summer days)

EDITH: It's part of learning about things isn't it. I think Lily Sanders was a teacher there - old doctor Sander's daughter, sister to Eugene and Hugo, she was a teacher because I know she went to Paris and came back, and we thought that was absolutely marvelous because she had some pretty dresses on when she came back. Something a bit different we hadn't seen, I suppose they were Parisian dresses, I don't know.

ROD: Oh well, that would have been great – that would've been great! That would've been great to see, all of those new dresses...

EDITH: I don't think Miss Mc Gilvray was teaching when I was there, she was an English teacher and she was Doctor Paul Mc Gilvray's daughter. I can't remember... you'll have to look back ... your Old Gold should be a fount of information,

ROD: But by the same token they can't talk like you and I are talking.

EDITH: That may be so, but I can't pin-point dates and people because I only had two - one and a bit years there because coming up the time I had to sit my intermediate exams I got the jitters and didn't want to go for the exams because I thought - I was frightened I'd fail. And I begged my parents to allow me to leave, which they did and I went to a small business college in View Street, run by Miss Hoskins. And that's where I learned the typing and shorthand, and later went to the School of Mines at night to do book keeping. But I was always frightened I was going to fail, I was a cringey little person.

ROD: That's fine...you certainly give it an extra dimension, being able to talk about your favourite subjects and so on like that...

EDITH: Well, I've got photos of some of us girls down at the girl's baths, some from my era like Joyce Long and Isabel Blake and Elly Coatly, oh, I can't remember all... Emily Mc Gowan from up Coondrook way ... all standing in our, more or less, neck-to-knee bathers... in the water. I didn't like the baths much, I was very sensitive about bathing where other people had bathed. I don't know whether there's a picture of that in Mrs Bomford's book, but there's a few pictures of the hockey team, sport's teams. I don't think I've been very helpful...I just waffle on!

ROD: No, which is good because it gives us a sense of what was happening in those days...

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERLUDE #3 ON DVD

EDITH: Yes, well... I can't tell you a great deal else. Of course all the land is built on now, they built that

great extension that went right across to the old Supreme Court building. I don't know that we had the Supreme Court building as part of our school in those days, they did when it became the girl's school.

ROD: It did become the girl's school ... I remember a number of reunions that I attended back in the 90s, they always talked about the girls school.

EDITH: Then of course they bought the Congregational Church building in Olinda Street, that was the domestic arts school that was and that I think became amalgamated in the Bendigo Girl's School. But again, don't quote me as being accurate.

ROD: So after school, you'd go down to Pall Mall and walk home that way or would you

EDITH: No we walked up through the upper reserve because we lived in Wattle Street, we went up Rowan Street, home that way. No we didn't go down into the town, cos we didn't use the park for recreation of any kind because we had the playing fields and we had plenty of outdoor areas to sit. The girls used to sit in those gardens that you can see in the picture of the school at that early stage, 1914. We'd sit in the gardens and the girls who brought their lunch would sit there and eat their lunch.

ROD: And separated from the boys ?

EDITH: Oh yes, I think it was always segregated. Yes, it would make you laugh wouldn't it.

ROD: Oh, no, they thought that was the right thing in those days.

EDITH: Well we weren't supposed to hob-nob with the boys unnecessarily. I mean I know we went on an excursion to Kerang – a hockey match or something like that and the girls and the boys tried to mingle in the different carriages coming home. Don't think they got up to any hanky-panky, but it was just that they all got together, it was more or less a natural thing.

ROD: Absolutely. Particularly when you're coming back from such a long way away and you're talking about whether you won or lost ...

EDITH: Yes, oh well, those things were highlights in our lives because some of us didn't go away regularly for holidays days every year, like some people did, we didn't in our family. But a lot of children a trip like that would be a highlight, if their parents could afford to send them. There'd probably be a cheap rate of fare from the railways. Like they had for the Sunday school picnics.

ROD: And so were the trains subsidised then were they?

EDITH: I wouldn't know... I was only a child and we paid our 1s & 6d for our ticket...

ROD: ... and had a great day!

EDITH: You got your first coating of sunburn if it was a hot day...probably saw a snake - that's another story. I don't know if there's anything else you want to ask me?

ROD: They had socials at the school did they?

EDITH: Well there were school socials, as far as I can remember, we had the school social, but don't forget eighty years is a long while. As we were growing up, perhaps left school and got a job we all used to go to Saturday night dances and the pictures and played tennis.

ROD: Where were the dances ?

EDITH: In View street, the ANA Hall which is gone now, there were several dance venues round Bendigo.

ROD: I think the ANA Hall is now Loddon -Mallee housing isn't it? The ANA Hall is still there.

EDITH: No! It's long gone. Whelan the Wrecker came and put up his notice.

ROD: Oh, right!

EDITH: Oh well, we were just normal kids. Churches too played a big role in our lives, because that was where a lot of the social night emanated from. They had cricket clubs and tennis courts at our church, we played inter-church matches. And they were all the same people. They went to church or even if they didn't, they went to these tennis clubs on Saturday afternoons, as that was our recreation. Tennis and perhaps later on we used to play cards at night, play Bridge or something like that at night. Go to the dances... the YMCA had a big dance in the Oddfellows hall. Well in my daughter's growing up days, and she's in 60s now, she went as a young person to the dances at the YMCA, it used to be packed out.

ROD: Yes, a lot of people tell me it used to be packed out at the YMCA.

EDITH: There were several dance places ... St. Killian's had one. We mostly went to Vrepoko which was a small club run by a man and his wife. All the boys that we used to dance with were the high school boys that we knew and got to know by those who went to work at different shops or offices, as the case may be.

ROD: And so your network of friends expanded by that ?

EDITH: Well school started your network of friends , this is where you made your friends, and I mean like some of my friends , I've got a picture up there of me and two friends .I knew one of them from practically the time I was born, and she only died a couple of years ago. And we were friends all our lives , basically school started off the friendship. School can be the best time of your life, but the life of schools now is totally different to what we had. We had to behave and there were certain rules you had to follow and I don't know what you do to control your children these days ?

ROD: A whole range of things but certainly

EDITH: You have more problems to contend with than they did in our day.

ROD: I don't know, I suspect it was probably just the same , it's just that we deal with them differently now and

EDITH: There's more things that children get to know about. You see when we went to Vrepoko on a Saturday night , there was no alcohol. I mean you couldn't take it there, but I don't say for a minute that some of the boys might have, kids didn't have cars of their own to start off with. You walked or you went on the tram or you rode your bike or something like that or your father drove you and came and picked you up after. But I mean a policeman perhaps would come and stand in the doorway and watch what was going on and if everything was right, he walked away again.

ROD: So the trams ran on a Saturday night ?

EDITH: Oh yes, trams ran on a Saturday , we had the two routes from the cemetery to Eaglehawk and from the terminus at Golden Square right round to the lake. Until the second world war they extended it round , because the Ordinance factory was built. The trams all left the fountain at 11 o'clock at night and more or less nothing went on on a Sunday from that point of view, and the last trams would all be at the fountain at 11 o'clock to go in either direction. And then when the Princes theatre in View street came out the tram would stop outside the theatre and people would get on as best they could and cling on to them until they went out to Eaglehawk.

ROD: And you hoped it wasn't raining!

EDITH: Well if you didn't have a car or anybody to get you , you either got on a tram or you walked.

ROD: Did they have many horses and gigs around in your time ?

EDITH: Oh well, it was all horses and gigs. When my father was an estate agent , this was in 1914 onwards, we lived next door to Mr Watts who was T.C. Watts & Son who my father worked for, we had horses and gigs and they had to be got ready each day to take clients out to inspect houses .That's how you took them out in those days. Cars didn't become very common until before 1920 perhaps there were a few early Fords and some of the English models coming out, but they weren't sedans and sheltered from the weather ,well you've seen pictures of early motor cars. They were the most popular car because Ford manufactured them like mad and went all over the world with them. I learnt to drive a car when I was in my... when I was at the building society ... in my twenties I suppose. The first cars you had to crank the handle , crank it up, you know. And then later on they brought in a self-starter , press the button on the floor , and they had the ignition on the wheel and a lever. When my father would go out to crank the car at the front, I'd sit in the seat and he'd crank it and when you could hear the spark , it would start to roar. You would have to retard the spark , but not let it stop, cos you'd have to start cranking all over again. We learnt after they came in as self-starters , my sister and I learnt to drive. Later on we'd have to ask dad if we could have a loan of the car. See children have a car the minute they're eighteen now.

ROD: They seem to anyway... and a mobile phone long before they're 18.

EDITH: Well we didn't even have a phone to start with .Well when I was a child, at the time of the first world war and I can remember the day it started, our next door neighbour who was Mr Watts who my father worked for, he had a telephone , he had the business that dad worked with, an estate agent. He called out to me over the fence, I was in the yard , he said he wanted to speak to my father. And I called dad out and Mr Watts informed my father that the first world war had started. He had a phone, he somehow or other learned the news. I think our phone number was 179 .You look back in the early records and you can see , very early phone numbers but things have gone so chaotic, technology has gone so far I don't even embrace computers. I could have if I'd started a few years younger ,but too late now.

ROD: Ah dear, you've done well by gosh! You really really have and we really do appreciate the input that you've given this morning. It's been marvelous! I've read about some of these things but to listen to you talking about it makes it all much clearer.

EDITH: Has he turned his things off?

ROD: No.

EDITH: Oh, I think it's about time you stopped taking pictures of me!

END