



THE PICK OF THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

Pick Volume 3.10

Those are the Breaks

Del Bridge (nee Farrell)

After my father died, my mother, brother and I went to live with Mum's parents, my grandparents, Harry and Mary Griffith. They lived in Sawyer's Gully where their fence line was part of the Great North Road. The School was across the other side of the road. Times were hard, but we were proud of our new window – it was the only one that had glass in it.

Bushfires came through regularly. On three sides of the house there were orchards so naturally when the fires came through the snakes and goannas would head towards the orchards or our house. At times we were terrified, especially when a death adder was found behind the dressing table.

My grandmother had her own way of dealing with snakes. She would play music on an old windup gramophone and place a bowl of milk on the ground to entice the snakes out from under the house. Once they were out, she killed them. She always told us if we saw a snake on the way home from school we were to throw our hat in front of them. When we arrived home and informed her of a snake sighting, she would retrace our steps to the hat. She would gently lift the hat with the barrel of the gun and shoot the snake curled up underneath. All dead snakes were placed on ants nests (the old people always said that snakes did not die until sundown).

One particular morning I was rolling a lemonade bottle under my feet on the brick paved area outside the back door. The bottle burst and cut my feet badly. I was ten then and I still have the scars today. Our neighbour, Adie Wyndham (who lived on the former site of Murray's Wine Shop and Post Office) came over and applied Venus Turps and bandages. I was lying on the back bed when I heard a noise. Mum went outside and saw a six-foot goanna climbing up the chimney. Mum was not a great shot – I don't think she had hit anything in her life. However she raced inside to get the double barrel shotgun. She aimed and fired (instead of pulling one trigger she pulled both). She landed flat on her back on the ground. When she recovered and sat up she viewed the results – she had missed the goanna but shattered every pane of glass in our new window.

This story was supplied by Abermain Heritage Preservation Society.

