

Preserving Memories

A joint project of the City of West Torrens and the West Torrens Historical Society

Sotirios Neophytou



'I recall my childhood was spent playing a lot in the garden. There was such a vibrant Greek community and at that time the focus was on the garden, and everybody grew their own vegetables. The quarter acre block gardens was their pride and joy'.

From humble backgrounds Sotirios' parents migrated in the early 1950s from Cyprus to Thebarton, then known as Southwark.

He remembers the area being culturally diverse with Greeks, Italians, Polish, Yugoslavs, Croatians and Australians.

The gardens were productive, lawns were not common - the dirt was for growing tomatoes and cucumbers!

Sotirios still lives in Thebarton and has seen many changes in the area over those years.

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Family Background – My Father

My father Yiannis Neophytou (1925-2000) was born in Cyprus in a very, very small village Mononero, outside of Paphos.

His parents were Neofitos Yianni (1894-c1980s) & Aphrodite Charalambous (1899-c1961).



Fathers original house in Mononero



Neofitos Yianni, circa 1957



Yiannis with sister and Mother, after relocating to Achna, circa 1940

At the age of around fifteen, he and his mother and siblings moved from one end of the island through to the other, walking all the way with one donkey and all their worldly possessions.

At Achna, Famagusta, he grew up with his mother on twenty acres of land.

He had little schooling and did not read or write. He became a self-taught baker and farmer.

It was a hard life to make ends meet.

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Family Background – My Mother

My mother was born Paraskevou Yianni Soteriou (1926-1996) in Ergates, Nicosia, Cyprus outside of a main city, but in a very small village.

Her parents were Sotiris Yianni (1900-c1955) and Kilou Theohari (1903-1985).

We are related to many of the people in that village because my grandmother was one of fourteen children, with twelve surviving to adulthood.



Mother's original home in Ergates

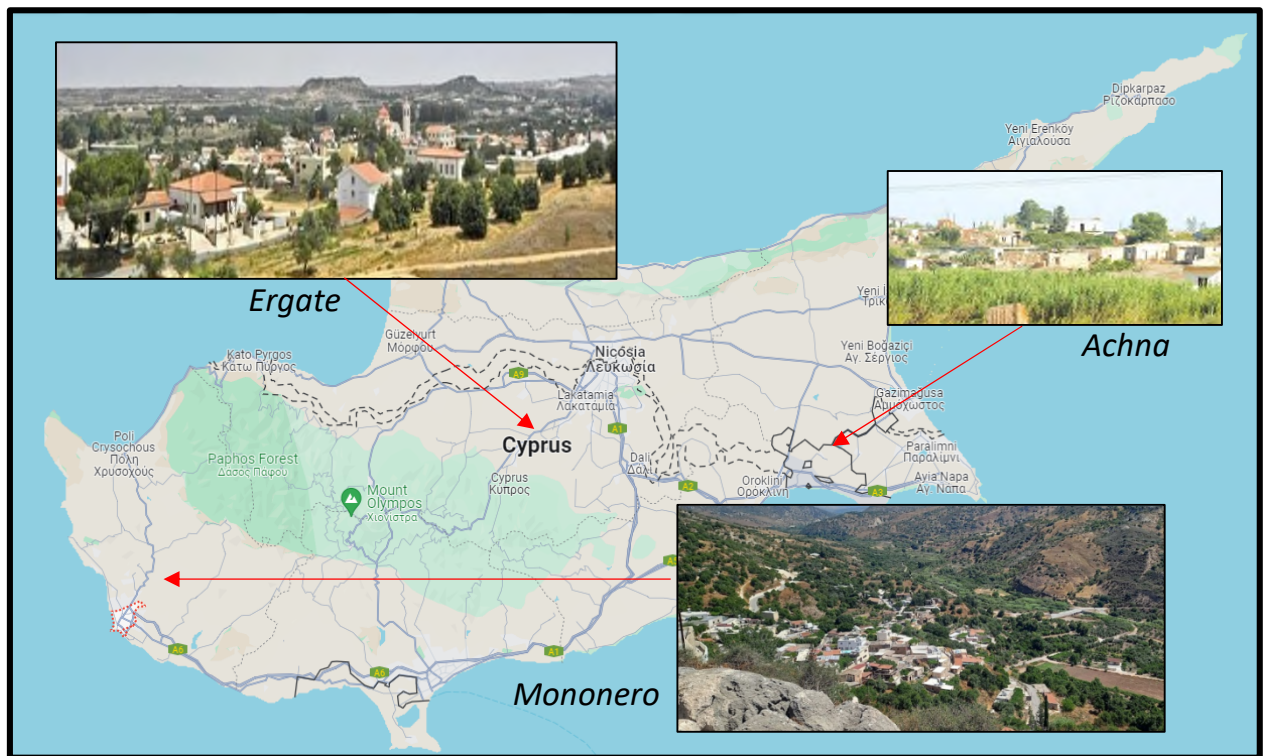


Mother's parents with some of the children (Mother, Paraskevou in centre)

I attended a wedding in 1985 where 2,000 people attended and all were relatives from village of Ergates.

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Family village locations in Cyprus

Parents meeting and migration

My father had been talking to his family about wanting to come to Australia. He thought it was a place where there was a brighter future and if you worked hard, you would receive the rewards, better pay. In Cyprus at the time, the late 1940s, there was very little work and income was very, very low.

The family story was that my father was definitely coming to Australia, and he didn't want to marry anyone that didn't want to come to Australia with him. He met my mother at one of her sister's weddings and once they got to know each other, he asked her if she was interested in going to Australia.



Wedding Day

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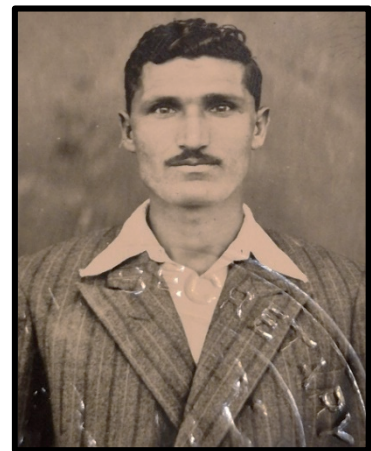
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This was the clinch point, whether they would get married or not. She was interested and so they got married in Cyprus.

| DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.—QUARANTINE SERVICE. | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| PASSENGER LIST. | | | | | | |
| REPORT of Passengers on Board the ss. "RAVELLO" on the 19 at Fremantle from Cyprus | | | | | | |
| Master | | Medical Officer | | Agents | | |
| Capt. Aniello CORDELA | | Doctor P. AMANDOLESE | | J. GABRIOTTO SYDNEY | | |
| No. | NAME. | CLASS. | PORT OF EMBARKATION. | PORT OF INTENDED DEBARKATION. | ADDRESS AT DESTINATION IN AUSTRALIA* | |
| 79 | NEOPHYTOU Paraskevou Yiannis | " | Cyprus | Melbourne | 19 Smith Str. South Warr 2/A. | |
| 80 | NEOPHYTOU Androulla | " | Cyprus | Melbourne | do do do | |

Ravello arrived Fremantle, 9 January 1952

My father migrated first in 1951, travelling by boat to Egypt, and then to Australia. The ships came through Fremantle and then went through to Melbourne.



Yiannis, aged 26, passport photo

He started working in Melbourne but didn't like the environment, he thought it was too industrial.

There were a lot of Greeks on the ship, and through conversations he thought that Adelaide was going to be a better place, so he hopped on the train and ended up in Adelaide.

My mother migrated in 1952 with my older sister Androulla. My mother had caught the boat from Cyprus through Genoa to Australia.

| DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| QUARANTINE SERVICE | | | | | | |
| REPORT of Passengers on board the s.s. "PROTEA" on the 21st March 1951 at Fremantle from GENOA, Italy | | | | | | |
| Master | | Medical Officer | | Agents | | |
| BUSSANI Domenico | | ESPOSITO Alberto | | Dalgety & Co. Ltd. | | |
| No. | NAME | CLASS | PORT OF EMBARKATION | PORT OF INTENDED DEBARKATION | ADDRESS AT DESTINATION IN AUSTRALIA * | |
| 381 | NEOPHYTOU Yannis | " | " | " | Unknown | |

Protea arrived Fremantle 21 March 1951

They were in Bonegilla Migrant Centre in Victoria, where they lived while their paperwork was processed. Immigrants to Australia had to be screened for many illnesses and diseases. The Government only wanted healthy migrants! [See Appendix A]

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Children

My older sister Androulla was born in Cyprus.

I was born on the 7th of March 1953, in Rose Park at the Queen Victoria Hospital. Sotirios Yiannis Neophytou - in the Cypriot culture, children can take on the parent's Christian name as a surname, however we were now in Australia and surnames followed surnames.

I had three other sisters, Aphrodite, Demitra and Maria.



My Father and Mother with Androulla

Androulla finished high school and became a banking officer, which was quite a prominent position in the 1960s. She went on to do her own studies in allied health and changed her career path. She passed away in early 2022.



Aphrodite, Mother, Demitra, Father, Mary (front), Sotirios and Androulla

Aphrodite completed a degree in education as a primary school teacher retiring in 2022.

Demitra finished high school and worked in a bank. She ran training programs in various government departments. She rose to CEO of the Air Conditioning Association, and she also has just retired.

Maria finished high school and worked managing catering and functions.

I completed university with a degree in Building Science and after working for 15 years, went on to do an MBA.

At one stage we were spread around Australia and overseas, but now we're all in Adelaide. My mother was always the one who brought us all together and now everyone has their own families.

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Home in Southwark (Thebarton)



23 and 23a Smith Street
[realestate.com.au]

Our house at 23 Smith Street was a semi-detached dwelling. We lived in one home, and we rented out the other to itinerant migrants. It had 2 bedrooms; they were renting by the room or the bed, depending on the individuals. We were raised with a lot of foreigners and immigrants coming through the house.

Whilst there were Italians, Polish, Yugoslavs, Croatians and Australians living in the area, the boarders were mainly Greek not necessarily from Cyprus, they were from all different parts of Greece. It was like a small village atmosphere.

As part of the rent my mother used to cook breakfast for the tenants. That's how in the early days they survived and eventually paid off the house.

In the house we didn't have a lot of furniture. There was a practical, small table in kitchen where all meals were had. The living room had wooden chairs with doilies on them and small coffee table.

Beds were spring mesh on a wooden frame - which we used for jumping like a trampoline which of course ruined the spring mesh! We could not afford to replace these, so we slept in the hollow in the middle where the springs were stretched.

Decorations in the house were few, mainly family photos from Cyprus and some crochet or needlework. Mum sewed the curtains. The floor covering was vinyl and we mopped and polished this every two weeks.

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Harris Scarfe's or Cox Foy's was the place to buy things in the 1950s. Layby was a popular method of purchase by lots of migrants.

Refrigeration was by placing a huge block of ice in lower section of refrigerator. The ice was sold by street merchants who roamed in horse and cart.



Bathing time was in a metal tub only about a meter long. Water was boiled on the gas stove and each child took in turns.

The toilet was an outside building far from the house. There was no soft paper to wipe one's behind like that we have today, it was either butcher's paper or newspaper.

This wastepaper wasn't disposed in the toilet but in a waste basket which was then burned at end of week in an incinerator in the backyard.

The house had no air conditioning or fans. To cool the house, we just opened windows and the front door, or we would go outside and sit under a tree.

We had a kerosene heater for winter. A vendor would come around the streets selling kerosene. We would fill a glass bottle that was turned upside down and put in the burner and then light the fire.



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Street Vendors



Every week the rabbit man would come down the street with his horse and cart selling fresh killed rabbits. However, they were not skinned so when you bought one, he skinned it and cut its head off there on his cart.

A bottle man would go up and down the streets calling out "Bottle-ohs, bottle-ohs." He collected beer bottles because South Australia started a deposit scheme for beer bottles in the 1950s. You could be paid a penny for two bottles. As children we scouted and collected any bottle that had a deposit on it. Of course, that became our source of income over a period of time, and this paid for our movies and sweets.

Bonython Park

There were also Aboriginals living in the street and we would always talk to them and give them vegetables. There used to be a lot of Aboriginals living in the parklands and as children when we'd go to Bonython Park it was normal to see a lot of different nationalities, including the Aboriginals.

We had mudslides everywhere and we used to just love to go swimming, yabbing and catching small fish and frogs.

Bonython Park wasn't the manicured lawn that you see today.

Adelaide, West Parklands from Bonython Park, 1964 [SLSA PRG 1562/4/143]



Bonython Park area, 1959 [Westmaps public]



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The Neighbourhood - Gardens and Food Production

Any communications with the neighbours would be over a Greek coffee, and would be, "How's the garden's going and how are you fertilizing, or are you pruning today?" They would all grow something different and exchange produce.

I recall my childhood was spent playing a lot in our garden and the neighbours' gardens. There was such a vibrant Greek community and at that time the focus was on the garden, and everybody grew their own vegetables. The quarter acre block gardens were their pride and joy. The crops were so huge, we used to run through the corn, play hide and seek in the tomatoes, eggplant and taro plants.

Some plants that we used to grow were specific to Cyprus like taro and long Armenian cucumbers. The taro leaves were huge like elephant ears and the root ball was the edible part. I didn't know this was a traditional food of islanders until later in life.



Taro and Armenian cucumber plants

Historically some of these areas in Southwark were farmland before the residential community got established so the soil was very fertile.

We had a huge apricot tree next to the water tank. This tree provided us with excellent fruit and shade during summer.

Other trees in the garden were, lemon, peach, nectarine, fig, pomegranate, loquat and of course olives. In the vacant block behind, my father had planted every vegetable you could imagine.

The Greeks didn't believe in planting lawn. It was a patch of dirt for growing something productive, like tomatoes and cucumbers.

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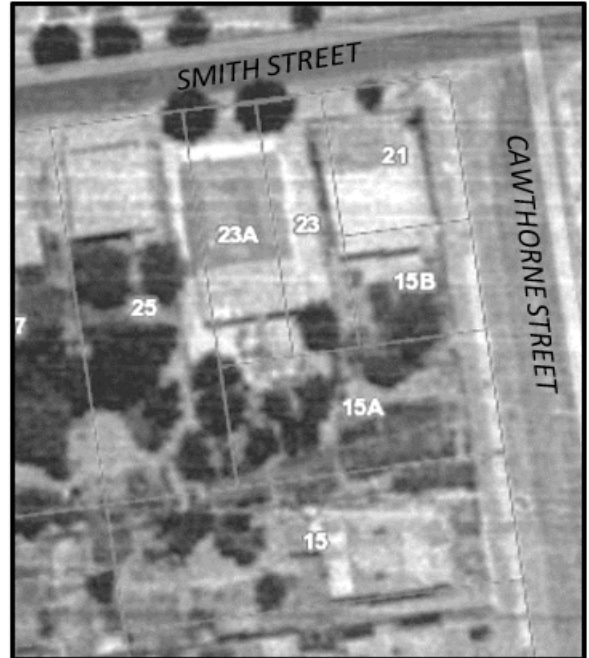
We even had a goat for milk, raised chickens for meat and eggs, and pigeons for meat.

Immediately next door lived an elderly spinster. She had a huge almond tree that bore lots of fruit.

In summer when it was time to harvest the almonds, she would knock off the tree with a long piece of bamboo. We kids would run along and pick them up and she wasn't happy when we did that!

Due to the number of ethnic people living in close proximity, a vendor with van would come and sell ethnic produce.

At that time chickpeas, coriander, olives, lentils were not available in markets except special ethnic grocers. They would sell the round loaves of bread and many cheeses.



Smith Street / Cawthorne Street West Maps Public 1959

Most mothers made yogurt at home. Garden produce would be dried or preserved for the winter months.

Making tomato sauce was a neighbourhood event. We all gathered at the chosen house bringing all the home-grown tomatoes for the boil and puree. The event was followed by fresh bread dipped in tomato sauce, and wine, celebrating the conclusion of the bottling.

| SMITH ST—S side off 53 Port rd | SMITH ST—N side off 53 Port rd |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Brooks H & Son ptrn mkr | 2 Patsakios J |
| 1aMaloney L | 4 Rogers H A strkpr |
| 3 Ferguson Mrs F M E | 6 Keane K N strmn Walsh st |
| 5 Roach E Walsh st | 8 Chapman A L bimkr |
| 7 Couch H | 8aHalliday W P |
| 9 Pabjan T trmmr | 10 Spurling C E |
| 11 Chandler F | 12 McGrath C detv |
| 13 Politi M | 14 Virant R ftrr |
| 17 Dallwitz T E | 16 Deura B |
| 19 Lambert F H Cawthorne st | 18 Phillips W J |
| 21 Attalotis M | 18 Phillips R J |
| 23 Neofitou J | 18aRaw W H mtr mchnc Cawthorne st |
| 23aConstantinou C | 20 Hutton R P & G J dictsn |
| 25 O'Loughlin W V | 20 Palantonos A |
| 25aVerna Green tlt sln | 22 Mousis G |
| 27 Ryan T F | 24 Chant W H ptr |
| 29 Priest L R clrk | 26 Parkinson A B |
| 31 Jacovides O | 28 Cafasso A |
| 31aWalsh Miss M H clrk | 30 Stewart H J cpnr |
| 33 Johnstone Mrs M P Holland st | |

Sands & McDougall directory 1959

The bottles we used were washed out large beer bottles as glass was hard to come by.

Across the road in Smith Street was the Mousis family. They were remembered for their huge garden and their grand feasting with a lamb on the spit on any occasion.

They became my sisters' godparents.

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Next door to them was the Galantomos family. They had older children, sons who had formed a band and they would practice regularly on the verandah with drums and guitars. It was the Elvis Presley and Johnny O'Keefe era. The boys and young men wore slicked back hair, black jeans, white t-shirts and ripple sole shoes. The music was loud, and we'd be across the road listening and dancing.

Next to the Galantomos' was the corner deli.

Here we spent a deal of idle time standing in front of the aircon in summer, looking at the juke box and trying out on game machines, pin ball mainly.

We did odd jobs for the owner who rewarded us with sweets, such as spuds (coconut balls dusted with chocolate), chocolate marshmallows, ice cream, Cherry Ripes and luncheon bars.



Corner Store, 20 Smith Street, 2007 [Streetview]

Further along was the Vassos family in Walsh Street. I spent a lot of time here as their son had many toys. We enjoyed hours playing together, with small cars and tractors mimicking war games with miniature soldiers and making slingshots then having target practice.

It didn't matter whose house we were in at midday – the mother of that house would always feed the children, so we never went hungry. And we enjoyed a variety of cuisine!

Celebrations and Events

I remember one Guy Fawkes Day I got some money, two shillings or something, and I was in the street with this big bag of fireworks. I was about 10 or 11 and the other kids in the street thought I was too young to fire them off and they took them lit up all my fireworks and I had to just sit there and watch.

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Growing up in the Southwark/Thebarton area, we were exposed to the Greek culture, attending a lot of the Greek and Cypriot picnics.

Every nationality had a picnic day, which could be once a month or every two months. They would all get on a bus and go somewhere, like Mount Lofty Ranges or the beach. The January long weekend was an annual trip to Victor Harbor.

We were very much entrenched in the Greek traditions. We weren't really exposed to a lot of 'Australian' traditions.

We did not have television until 1965. We had a radio and my dad's Greek music.

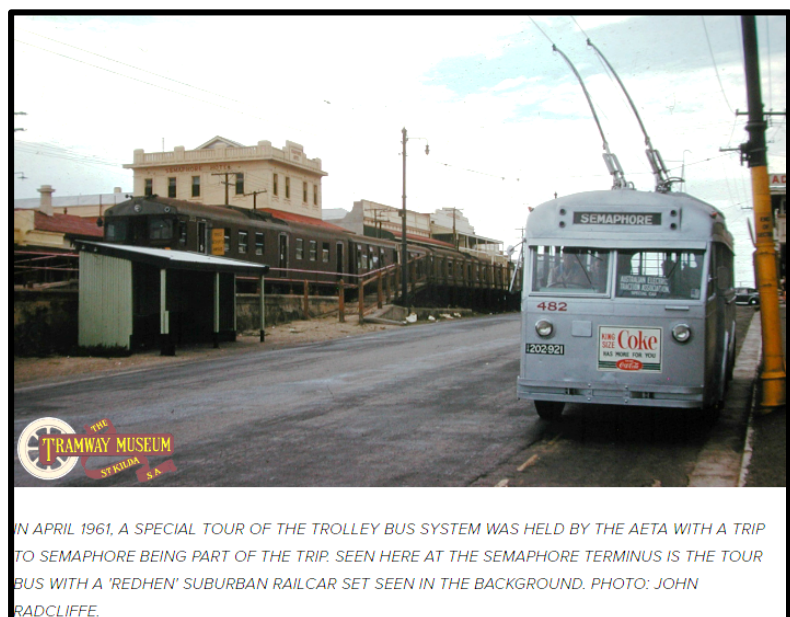
We got to know people in the immediate area where we lived and in the surrounding streets. Some of them I am still friends with today. The Australians there interestingly embraced our culture and food.

Differences

It wasn't until primary school that I experienced racism. We couldn't understand why other people would be so vindictive against us for just going to school or just walking down the street to buy groceries.

Even though I was born in Adelaide I was still seen as a migrant, so the ethnic kids stuck together at school and after.

By year 6 primary we had a diverse selection of friends including Australian kids that lived nearby. We enjoyed the beach a lot so when we could, we would catch the electric trolley bus on Port Road and go to Semaphore beach. I remember that seeing palm trees and Norfolk pines meant we were getting close to the sea.



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Sundays

Sunday was a day of rest. No work was allowed on Sundays. Retail shops and factories were not open. Buses did not start operating till 11am, after church had concluded and Pubs opened from 11am till 5pm.

We would go to church in George Street, St Nicholas, walking through the streets greeting many people along the way. Church concluded by 11.30 or 12pm.



St Nicholas Orthodox Church George Street Thebarton

Some days my dad stayed home from church, and he would prepare a wood fire and cook meat over the charcoal. Now, when I close my eyes, I can still taste the meat—salty, slightly charred, flavoured by wood from fruit trees, with lemon juice squeezed over the meat. Salad was heavy with tomato, coriander, cucumbers, shallots or onion drizzled with olive oil and lemon juice.

Then we would hear the music of the Salvation Army Band. Off we went to the corner of Holland Street and Smith Street where they would stop and play a few songs then move on to the next corner. We would sing along if we knew the words or follow the band imitating the players.

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Music

My father wasn't a sporting person. We didn't go to soccer, football or cricket, and he didn't go fishing.

Music was definitely one of his favorite things. He saved his money and bought one of the record players for 78s. I've still got it, it's a portable record player that you wind up. He had a good collection of Greek 78s. He played it every chance he had. The house was filled with music when he was home. Needless to say, we memorized a lot of the songs.

He bought a reel-to-reel tape recorder in 1964. He spent hours recording and playing and singing to that.

I think he wanted one of my sisters to be a singer. He sent us off to learn music. My older sister learned to play the accordion.

I got sent off to play the banjo mandolin. I destroyed it thinking it was a drum!

A few smacks later, and after it was repaired, I was back in school learning how to play the banjo mandolin.



Banjo mandolin [collection.powerhouse.com.au]

I attended the Adelaide College of Music, located on Currie Street and then King William Street in the early 1960s. All the students performed their recital for their respective classes, banjo, guitar, violin etc. on stage at the Adelaide Town Hall. The show was called 'ON PARADE.'

This led on to learning how to play the guitar. I joined a band and played for a couple of years. I also learned to play the bouzouki. I still have several musical instruments.

Even though playing an instrument was forced upon us, it grew on us as well.

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Thebarton Neighbourhood Revisited

Going to Greece and Cyprus in 1978 reminded me of the neighbourhood of Thebarton back in the 1950s and early 1960s. It explained why my parents behaved in a particular way, why the other Greeks were who they are, and what they were doing, because Thebarton was like a Greek village for us as kids.

I could go from one end of the street to the other and I could eat at anybody's house. It was like being in your friends or family's house. I could go and play with their kids. Everyone would know where everybody was.

In those days, if somebody was having a christening, or a name day, which we don't celebrate as much these days, there'd be a huge party with the whole neighbourhood invited.

When we walked out the gate, we didn't walk out into a foreign street, the neighbours knew you and you would never get lost. Today you really don't know your neighbours.

In the later years of the last century there has been an evolution of Thebarton and Mile End cultures. When I was a youngster there were Greeks and migrants everywhere. As they got wealthier and the children grew up, they went out to Unley and Millswood.

Then another influx of migrants arrived and then they started to move out and now there is a third wave of migrants coming through.

Now the younger Australians and children of the children of the migrants want to buy back into the Thebarton and Mile End area with its close proximity to the city. The blocks have been subdivided into smaller cottage sizes which is creating a new way of living on smaller blocks.



Rose Street still has many of the original homes with the quarter acre blocks.

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Communication

My parents didn't read or write in Greek or English, so that was a bit of a problem for them. Their information was coming through what they heard on the radio or through communication with the neighbours. My father had no problem assimilating with people.

My father wanted us to speak Greek at home. We didn't learn to read or write in English until we went to infant school. The whole neighbourhood spoke Greek so there was no need for English in the immediate environment.

None of the households we knew had a phone. Phone booths (red glass boxes) were available in certain streets, that's where you went to make a call. They were called sweat boxes as they had no ventilation so in summer you sweltered and in winter you froze. We would always check these out for forgotten change.

Phone calls were very expensive. In Cyprus many didn't have a phone so if you wanted to call anyone, you called the village post office. They have to pass on the message, or you would prearrange for them to be at the post office to receive your call.

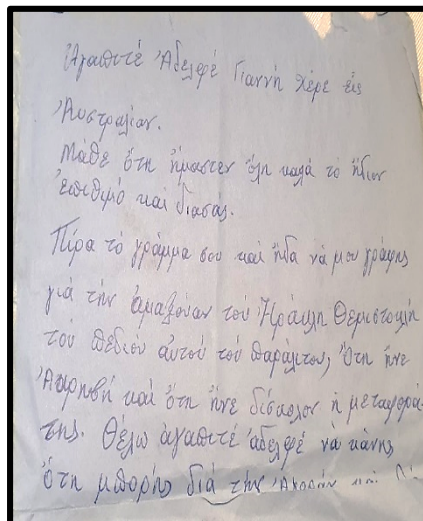


PMG Phone Box [cool386.com]

Consequently, most of our communication was through letters. It was a big moment when a letter arrived.

For me the stamps were of great interest, for my parents it was the news of their home country and relatives.

I still have some of those letters received from the family in Cyprus.



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During the colder months we used to huddle around the heater or wood fire and read letters and tell stories of the past.

My father told many stories of the past. Some would be myths and the others true. We were all mesmerized by some of the adventure stories and comedy parody.

We used to go to Greek school at the Salvation Army Hall on Light Terrace. With the other children we used the time to play, and cause grief for the teacher, but we did learn to read and write in Greek.

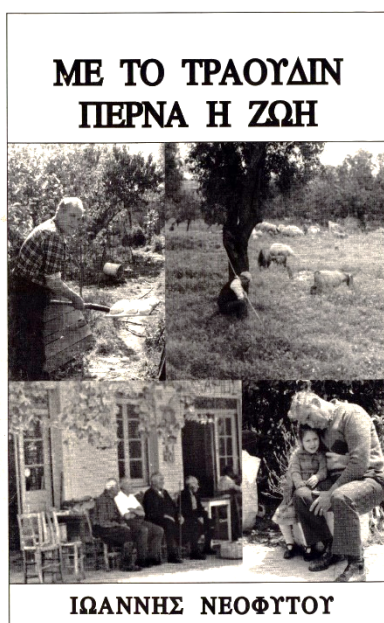


Salvation Army Citadel, 46 Light Street, Thebarton

We used to read the letters and then write back in Greek to the family in Cyprus.

Some families didn't have children, or we were the oldest, so we used to read and write letters for them too. That's how the community got together.

When we moved to Rose Street we went to St George Church Greek School. The centre of attraction for the boys was the huge plum tree that we climbed and stayed up in the branches until our class was called.



My mother really never got the grasp of speaking English as most of her circle of friends were Greek. She learnt a few words to be able to go out, to catch a taxi or a bus so she could get into town. She memorized the signs of Thebarton or Mile end or wherever she was going so she could catch the bus.

My father learnt a little bit of English through his work. His fellow workmates would teach him words like 'shovel, bag and shoes.' He eventually started to put them together.

He had a good memory and was a poet. All his poems he kept in his memory. We eventually produced a book in 1998.

With song passes time, Yiannis Neophytou's poetry

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He won several awards and was regularly asked to recite his poetry at Greek functions. Neither of them became really fluent but we did try to teach them how to sign their name.

As kids we were interpreters not only for my parents, but a lot of the neighbourhood. If there were any letters or forms in English that had to be filled in, we became the administrative department! We even got to complete tax forms later in life.

Some of the other Greeks went out to work in shops because they had the language skills. Mum had minimal English so she would help other families out by cleaning or washing and ironing. Mostly Mum was always cooking!

My father probably learnt more than my mother, but again, it wasn't fluent, it was broken English. He was able to make himself understood.

A lot of other Cypriot families had businesses because they were more educated, so they spoke fluently. My parents mixed with them and learnt a bit by infusion, but it still wasn't sufficient to conduct a long conversation. Needless to say, school parent-teacher interviews were not a success for us.

1964 almost returning to Cyprus

In late 1963, my father sold everything that we had, which was two properties at the time, and we packed our bags, and we were ready to go back to Cyprus. His British passport was endorsed for the four older children.



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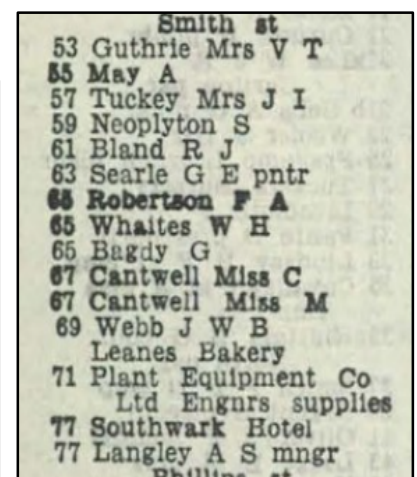
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In 1964, the war broke out in Cyprus, Cyprus got invaded and consequently that put a halt to us migrating back to Cyprus.

Since he had sold everything, he then struggled to find a place to stay. He rented a place at 59 Port Road, Thebarton. They were terrace houses, opposite the Bonython Park.



Daily Mirror 11 Aug 1964



Port Road, Thebarton [S & M 1964]
<1959 [Westmaps Public]

(These homes were demolished in the early 1970s and the site is now a tool warehouse.)

We loved being opposite Bonython Park—what a huge playground! The house had a bamboo forest along the side, old sheds that had leftover equipment such as a big grindstone and rabbit traps. Next door to us lived a single Australian man who drove transport trucks. My mother often invited him over for dinner.

He gave me his inherited air rifle. I thought all my Christmases had come at once! The spring was removed so I could not use it but was still fun to have. When we moved to Rose Street, we unfortunately never saw him again.

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After the war in Cyprus my father started to think about bringing his brothers to Australia. He began collecting the necessary paperwork, made embassy visits, gathered photos etc. Alas they never came for many reasons.

My father went back to Cyprus with two of my sisters in 1974 and this was the time of the Turkish invasion and they had to be uplifted out to London. I think this was when he saw that if we had returned to Cyprus in 1964 as he planned, it would have been very disruptive for his childrens' upbringing, and we would never had received the same level of education there.

If I had been in Cyprus, I would have served in the military and probably would have gone into a trade. My sisters would not have ventured into the areas that they did. We did feel privileged that we stayed in Australia.

Working in the 1960s

In the 1960s, when my father first worked here in Australia, he got a job as a baker. He didn't like the way they used to bake their breads, didn't like the bread itself. He didn't like the conditions and it wasn't paying enough to feed the family, so he left for another job.

He ended up getting a job in Port Adelaide unloading cargo ships by hand. He used to unload 240-pound bags of sugar and put them on his shoulder and carry them in. He worked shift work there and worked extra shifts if he could.

He suffered a hernia from this job in the sugar factory. One day a pallet of sugar bags fell on him, so he was lucky to be alive.

The Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR) complex was constructed in 1891 on the Glanville side of the Port River, immediately opposite Port Adelaide. During a century of operation, it manufactured refined sugar, treacle and golden syrup, primarily for markets in South Australia and Western Australia.



Glanville refinery's 'Sugar Wharf' early 1980s

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After that he worked at the Pope factory in Beverly where they made whitegoods like refrigerators and washing machines, and garden hose parts and sprinklers.

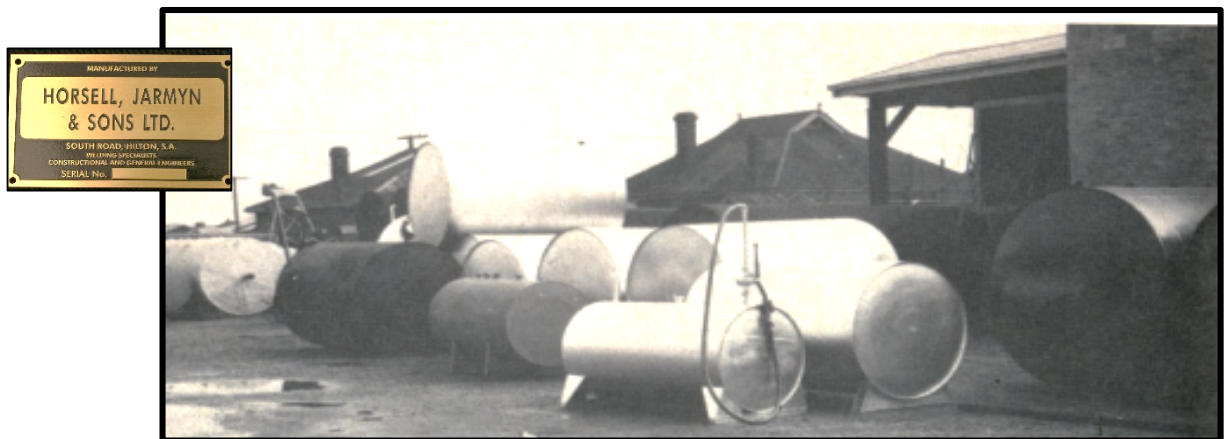
My father operated the machinery that punched out the parts for sprinklers and washing machines. He was a fast worker and enjoyed the work. We had lots of sprinklers at home!

He was there for quite a long time, but I can't remember why he moved from there. I'm not sure if it was because the factory was closing down or something else.



*Sprinkler manufacturing
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Products]*

He worked with Horsell and Jarmyn's and they were on South Road in the Hilton area. His job there wasn't very nice as he was basically the odd job man.



Horsell and Jarmyn Ltd manufactured petrol pumps and storage equipment

He taught himself how to paint and spray paint, which he started when he was working at Pope. At Horsell and Jarmyn's they would have him seal spray the inside of tankers they manufactured for petrol, oil etc. They didn't provide a lot of safety gear in those times and unfortunately that affected his lungs and eventually contributed to his demise in his later years when he developed lung problems.

We hardly saw my father throughout the day because he was always working. We'd only see him in the evenings when he'd come home for dinner.

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Mum's work... well, she seemed to be cooking 24 hours! I do recall that she did some house cleaning for various people and sometimes picked fruit in the Adelaide Hills. She did a lot of sewing. She made all our immediate clothing needs or adjusted hand-me-downs. She mended socks, trousers and shirts. She did all the washing and cooking for whole family.

In my parents' generation 'You worked, you got paid. If you didn't work, you didn't get paid.' There was no unemployment scheme when they first came to Australia. It didn't matter whether it was raining or whether it was cold, whether it was dusty, dirty - they worked whatever the conditions.

I will always appreciate the challenges that people face when they come here as migrants, like my parents did. We learned to survive, and that hard work paid off. They would thankfully take any opportunity open to them and this allowed them to make ends meet.

Transport

My father didn't drive or have a car. We got around by taxi or by public transport bus. The only time we got into a car was when we were invited by friends. Other Greeks that did drive would invite us to join them, or they would take us to go to certain places where it was difficult to catch a taxi or a bus. If you had a station wagon in the 1960s you were popular!

As a young child we had a tricycle that we used for the local area. When I was about twelve, I learnt to ride a bicycle. I remember one day, one of the neighbours had a nice-looking bike left up against the fence. I took it and chuffed off around the streets. There was some string on the parcel carrier at the back and that got caught in the back wheel. I had to walk the bike back and confess to what had happened.

I eventually got my own pushbike, and it was a lot safer to ride back then, although I still ride a bike now.

I got my driver's licence at the age of 17. My father bought a 1954 Volkswagen Kombi van which was predominantly used for weekend painting work but also for taking the family somewhere for picnics. I became the family driver until my sisters got their licences.



1954 Volkswagen Kombi [carsales.com.au]

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Torrensville Infant School (1957-1958)



Torrensville Infant School, 1957

The Greeks were very smart. They all signed their kids up to start school at four years of age instead of five. We went to the Torrensville Infant School, which used to be separate to the primary school.

To get there, we used to walk to the Thebarton Primary School and take a school bus down Henley Beach Road.



Torrensville Infant School, 1958

At lunch time mats were rolled out and we sat on these until all food was consumed then it was playtime until we were called into class. Reading lesson was a one on one with the teacher.

We would do our day there and then get driven in the bus back to the Thebarton Primary to walk home from there.

One day we missed the bus, so we started to walk home. When we hadn't made it home at the usual time our parents came looking for us and we missed each other.

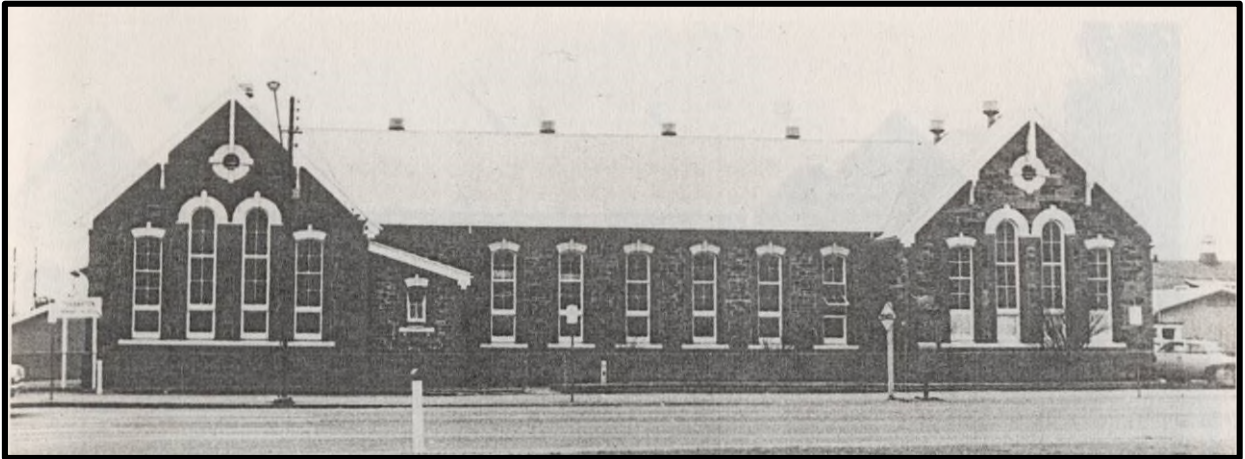
Crossing South Road today is horrendous but back then, there weren't that many cars, but it was still a bit of a challenge for children of five!

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Thebarton Primary School (1956-1964)

I attended the Thebarton Primary School on the corner of Rose Street and South Road. They were very memorable years. The brick buildings are still there, but there were quite a few transportable buildings that were used as classrooms.



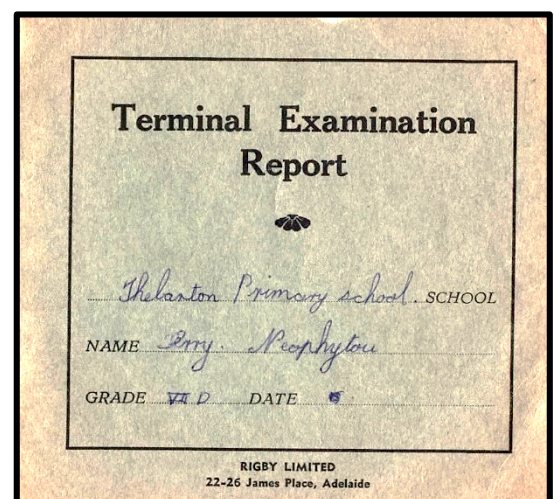
There were 30 plus students in each class.

We integrated reasonably well in primary school other than a lot of the racist comments. We used to give it back as well ... we used to gang up with the Italians and all the other ethnics against the Australians and Brits!

The school tried to integrate all nationalities by having International Day where you came dressed up from your home country and prizes were issued.

The teachers gave a lot of the ethnic students nicknames because they couldn't say their names.

I was unfortunately named Terry! I was able to revert to Sotirios in High School but for some kids the names stuck with them until their adult life.



We used to walk every day regardless of weather. I remember that the streets were lined with Cedar trees. We played marbles in the gutters till we reached school. If it was raining, we would make boats from seed pods or paper and sail them in the gutters with rainwater.

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Thebarton Primary School, Grade Four, 1961

The school had a separate building with a lot of equipment all laid out for wood working. Other school's students would come to use the facility. I nearly lost a finger when I missed the clip when I was hanging up a chisel. I had put my hand underneath to catch it and luckily still have my finger, but I do have a good scar.

One of the things that I recall we did, and they wouldn't do it today...the gates didn't open until 8am, and we used to line up at the gate to get in. As soon as it was opened all the boys used to race off to the wood yard. I don't know who supplied the wood, but this was an area near the toilets where there were axes left there to split the wood. There were only 3 or 4 axes, so it was a race for whoever got there first to get an axe and start chopping. We had to split all the wood and fill up a basket to take that into the classroom for our wood fires.

Recess and lunch times were full of games such as Red Rover, Chasey and ball games.

Marching class by class and having assembly once a week was routine. All reciting 'God Save the Queen' and singing the national anthem.

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The school didn't have a tuck shop. It was serviced by a shop in Rose Street. We called the owner Pa. At recess he would push his trolley across the yard and wait for the kids. My favorites were flavoured straws, spiders (coke with ice cream), cream buns and frozen coke. When we were given two shillings for recess and lunch, we would tie it into our handkerchief, so we did not lose it. This was a treat.

Summers were very hot; the asphalt would melt so we cooled our feet by putting them in the drinking troughs.

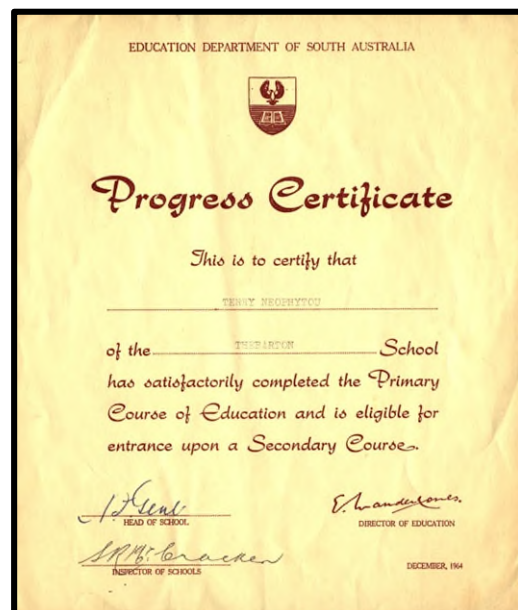
We learnt to swim at the Henley Beach swimming pool. A bus used to take us there all year (summer or winter).

The best thing was having a 'Bush Biscuit' afterwards.



Kids from the area would also go to the Daisy Dell shop after school. This was next to the Thebarton Town Hall on the corner of Henley Beach Road and South Road.

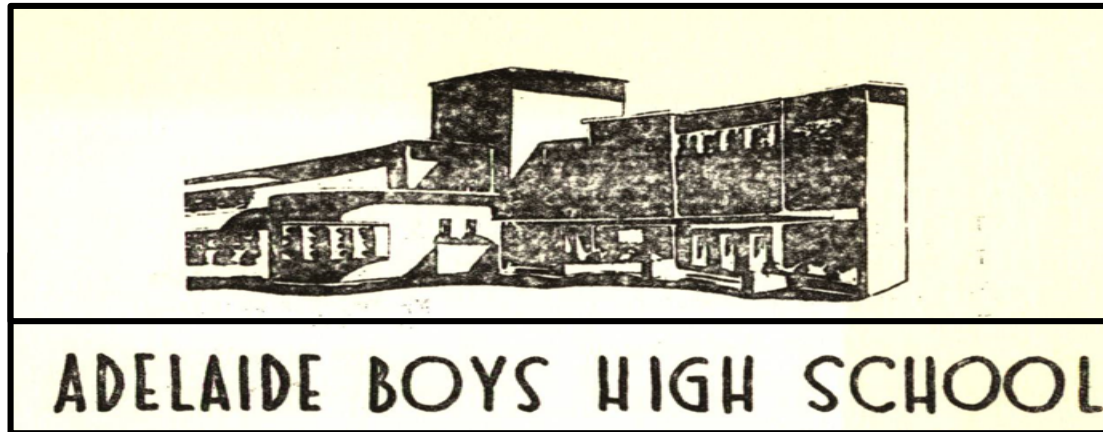
When you completed grade seven, graduation from primary school, you received a Progress Certificate.



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Adelaide Boys High School (1965-1971)



I could have gone to Thebbie Tech, but I ended up at Adelaide High.

The racism here was even worse than when I started at Primary School.



It wasn't just that though - the older kids were always chasing around the younger kids and doing all sorts of things to them as an initiation.

By second year there were at least sixty percent Greeks at the school and at least ten percent other ethnicities, so the 'locals' were the minority!

Sports days were great, it was 'Which nationality would beat the others.' Afterwards there was always a good camaraderie between us all. I made some lifelong friends and memories.

Adelaide Boys High School competed against other colleges, so sports events were held at Adelaide Oval. It was like the Olympics for us! When we won an event, the whole stadium erupted with a cheer. The students spent weeks practicing the war cry which would be shouted spontaneously at any achievement.

My parents were strict. Even in high school I wasn't allowed to attend the year twelve end of year ball, because 'Who knows what was going to happen' and all that carry on. Other friends said it was the same. Their parents were still also pretty strict in that arena. I didn't retaliate, I adhered to what my parents wanted.

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In 1965 and 1966 you could leave high school after third year (year ten). If you continued it was classified as senior years - fourth year Leaving, and fifth year Leaving Honours.

| SUBJECTS | | FIRST TERM | SECOND TERM | THIRD TERM |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | % * Rel. Postn. Comment | % * Rel. Postn. Comment | % * Rel. Postn. Comment |
| 1. English | | | | |
| 2. Latin | | | | |
| 3. French or German | | | | |
| 4. History (Mod. or Ec.) | | D | D | |
| 5. Economics | | | | |
| 6. Geography | | | | |
| 7. Social Studies | | | | |
| 8. Arithmetic | | | | |
| 9. Mathematics I | | B | A | |
| 10. Mathematics II | | B | A | |
| 11. Physics or Gen. Science I | | B | B | |
| 12. Chemistry or Gen. Sel. II | | B | B | |
| 13. Geology | | | | |
| 14. Botany or Physiology | | | | |
| 15. Agric. Science | | | | |
| 16. Bookkeeping | | | | |
| 17. Shorthand | | | | |
| 18. Typewriting | | | | |
| 19. Drawing | | | | |
| 20. Domestic Arts | | | | |
| 21. Woodwork | | | | |
| 22. | | | | |
| 23. | | | | |
| 24. | | | | |
| 1. Class | | 4/11 | 4/11 | 4/11 |
| 2. Number in Class | | 3/7 | 3/1 | 3/0 |
| 3. Position in Class | | | | Class Dup |
| 4. Average percentage of marks | | | | |
| 5. Days Absent | | 2 | 2 | 1 1/2 |
| 6. Homework | | Good | Good | Adequate |
| 7. REVISIONS | | Stamp Club | | |
| 8. | | | | |
| 9. | | | | |

* If the number of children doing a subject differs from the number in class (i.e. shown under 2) the relative position will be shown as a fraction, e.g., 3/17.

Year, 19 70

Student's Name Lotinus Neophyton

GENERAL REMARKS

FIRST TERM: Lotinus has completed a pleasing first term of work. He has good manners, is reliable and his approach to study has been cheerful and pain-taking. It has been a pleasure to have him in the class.
 L. Schwartz, Class Teacher
 Signature of Parent J. NEOPHYTON

SECOND TERM: Lotinus has continued to work well in most subjects and, as a result, there has been a general improvement in his grades. However, he must not become complacent and much effort is still required of him. History needs his special attention.
 L. Schwartz, Class Teacher
 Signature of Parent J. NEOPHYTON

THIRD TERM: We are pleased that Lotinus heeded the advice given him last term and hope that his dedicated efforts in history will have been successful. In all other subjects, his work has been most commendable and he will do very well in all of them. His efforts to help others make him a most interesting individual. This Student will not be promoted.
 L. Schwartz, Class Teacher
 Signature of Parent J. NEOPHYTON

SECOND

| SUBJECTS | | FIRST TERM | SECOND TERM | THIRD TERM |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | % * Rel. Postn. Comment | % * Rel. Postn. Comment | % * Rel. Postn. Comment |
| 1. English | | | | |
| 2. Latin | | | | |
| 3. French or German | | | | |
| 4. History (Mod. or Ec.) | | U | U | |
| 5. Economics | | | | |
| 6. Geography | | | | |
| 7. Social Studies | | | | |
| 8. Arithmetic | | B | C | |
| 9. Mathematics I | | D | B | |
| 10. Mathematics II | | C | D | |
| 11. Physics or Gen. Science I | | D | C | |
| 12. Chemistry or Gen. Sel. II | | | | |
| 13. Geology | | | | |
| 14. Botany or Physiology | | | | |
| 15. Agric. Science | | | | |
| 16. Bookkeeping | | | | |
| 17. Shorthand | | | | |
| 18. Typewriting | | | | |
| 19. Drawing | | | | |
| 20. Domestic Arts | | | | |
| 21. Woodwork | | | | |
| 22. | | | | |
| 23. | | | | |
| 24. | | | | |
| 1. Class | | 50/1 | 50/1 | 50/1 |
| 2. Number in Class | | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| 3. Position in Class | | | | |
| 4. Average percentage of marks | | | | |
| 5. Days Absent | | | 3 | |
| 6. Homework | | Very good | Good | |
| 7. | | | | |
| 8. | | | | |
| 9. | | | | |

* If the number of children doing a subject differs from the number in class (i.e. shown under 2) the relative position will be shown as a fraction, e.g., 3/17.

Year, 19 71

Student's Name Lotinus Neophyton

GENERAL REMARKS

FIRST TERM: Lotinus is a very steady and reliable student who is friendly and not over-ambitious. Although he is experiencing difficulty in history, we feel that this is only of a temporary nature.
 J. Malloff, Class Teacher
 Signature of Parent J. NEOPHYTON

SECOND TERM: Lotinus has experienced difficulty in keeping up with the pace of this term's work. He is a most conscientious and reliable student who makes every effort. Lotinus will benefit from practice in self-expression and written English.
 J. Malloff, Class Teacher
 Signature of Parent J. NEOPHYTON

THIRD TERM: Lotinus is to be commended for his tireless efforts. He has worked very hard throughout the year, and we wish him every success in the future.
 J. Malloff, Class Teacher
 Signature of Parent J. NEOPHYTON

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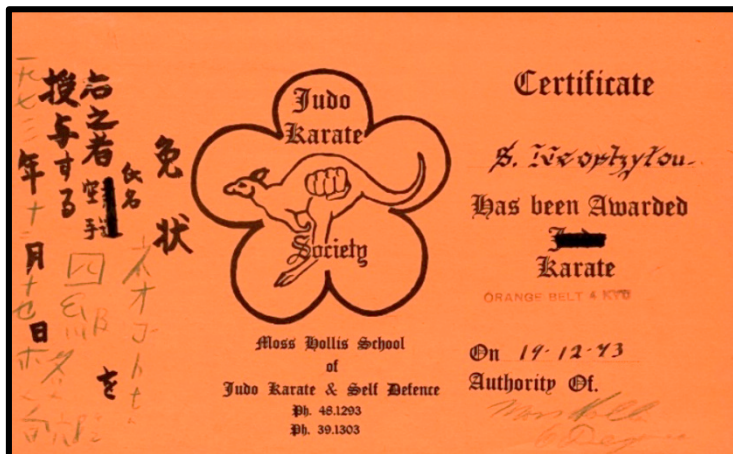
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Sport

I learnt to play Aussie rules football at primary school, and I remember kicking the ball down the streets with friends from high school and the neighbourhood. I tried out for cricket, had a few games of that until I got hit in the face with a cricket ball and my mother said, "That's it, you're not playing cricket."

I tried out and played a bit of basketball, and then I somehow got into tennis (I found a tennis racket!) From second year high, I played a lot of tennis. I was pretty good at it and continued that through fourth and fifth year.

After high school I took up running and that has stayed with me ever since. I ran in many 'City to Bay' races.



Some of my friends had started Karate, so I joined the Moss Hollis school of Karate, for a couple years. When Bruce Lee came on to the scene, Wing Chun was the latest thing. I stayed with this for several years and eventually started teaching at several locations until around 1982.

I also learnt to box. This was in a musty semi-light gym. The centre point was the boxing ring with other equipment around the perimeter. We learned to skip rope, speedball, joust in the ring and how to punch a bag.

I was lucky to have good hand-eye coordination and enjoyed target shooting and hunting.

I mentioned earlier that I had an air rifle, but I also bought my own when I was 14 - legal age to own a gun! I walked down the street with the gun in my hand, along South Road to the police station on corner of George Street and South Road to register it and I paid for hunting licence. Later I would own other guns.

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With mates, I would drive to Meninge or Broken Hill and come back with rabbits, goat or wild pig. My mother and the neighbours were always excited at the game we would bring back. This added different food to our normal regime. Farmers were glad to see us in the 1970s as we helped reduce the rabbit population. Unfortunately, some hunters did not respect the farmers' stock, so once you made friends with a farmer you stayed with them.



Young Greek dancers, Sotirios on left

I was involved in a lot of cultural things, the Glendi Festival and Greek dancing. The dancing allowed us to travel around the state and showcase ethnic dancing.

It was the era 1970s when the Dunstan Government was focusing on culture and enrichment. The Glendi Festivals were started and that was a big thing at the time. We danced there many times.

Multicultural festivals began to bloom in 1978. I helped out with the organisation of shows. Now there are many ethnic cultural festivals around the state.

I remember dancing in Rundle Mall by invitation of the Adelaide City Council.

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Early working life

In about my second year of high school, my dad thought I was old enough to start working. I worked on Fridays and Saturdays at a greengrocer on Hutt Street who was a friend of my dad's. My dad also was started doing private work in painting, so I started painting with him.

From about 14 years old, I was basically working most of my weekend life. The money that I earned went back into the family to support them, I'd get an allowance from that.

When I got to third and fourth year high school, I met some other Greeks who were developers. They were buying houses in Unley and Mitcham and Millswood for unbelievable prices of about \$8,000 at the time and subdividing them or doing major extensions. I then moved into doing that which sparked my interest in building and doing something in that field.

After third year we could drop English, but you had to maintain one art subject, which was history. The qualifications for architecture were quite high in points, but you needed chemistry, physics and maths 1 and 2. I did this in fifth year and biology as an extra subject because I thought it was pretty easy.

By the time I got to fifth year of high school I had decided to do Architecture.

University

I enrolled to do Architecture, however after 2 years I realized that this wasn't the path for me, so I left and switched to a Bachelor of Science in Technology course at Institute of Technology (now Uni of SA).

I graduated in 1975 with a specialty in Project Management. I did many short courses and then in 1990 I completed an MBA. Life at Uni was hectic. It was from 9am until 10.30pm. I was juggling assignments with movies on campus, dancing, squash, gym and organizing Greek events.

Preserving Memories

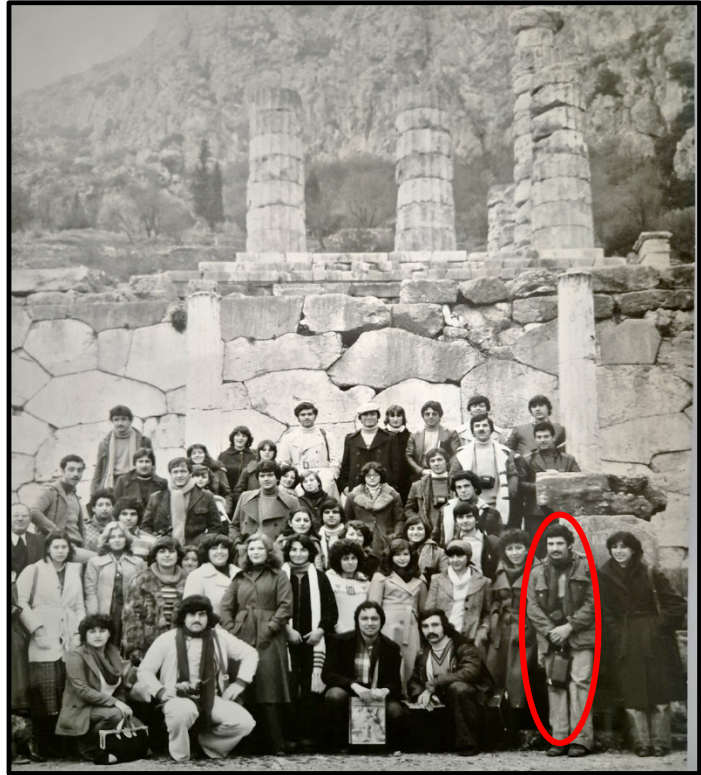
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NUGAS, 1978

In December 1978, I was fortunate to be part of what's called NUGAS, which is the National Union of Greek Australian Students.

We used to have conferences in each year in a different state but in 1978, the Greek government invited about 50 students to go to Greece.

I was one of the first 50 registered, so I was honoured with the opportunity to go to Greece where the Greek government housed us and fed us for 30 days and showed us around Greece.



NUGAS group in Greece, 1979

It was also my opportunity to leave Australia and I packed enough bags to probably not come back. That was my intention anyway!

I remember those were the days when you were allowed to smoke on the planes, which was a torment for me as I didn't smoke. You could ask for non-smoking; it was just a section of the plane but the smokers would be just at the rear of plane but there was no physical barrier!

After I finished the Greek trip, I went to Cyprus and spent about four months in Cyprus, meeting the relatives that we'd been writing to over the years. My maternal grandmother was still alive and so was my paternal grandfather. I met my parents' siblings and their children, my cousins, who were very young at the time.

Since 1978, I've kept visiting those relatives and watched those young kids get married, have children of their own and their children are now getting married.

In 2023 I spent four months in Cyprus. I could spend weeks just travelling all around the island because my relatives are spread over so many regions.

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Working Opportunities

After I graduated, I worked for 2 years locally. I then went overseas and spent one year travelling and working. I returned and worked for 10 years in Australia.

Over the next seventeen years I worked overseas for different employers. When opportunities came along, I took them up. I was in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s for a couple of years.



Camp quarters in Saudi



Market in Saudi

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Weekend market in Damman, Saudi



Competing in a 10km road race in Saudi

I went to Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand for about six years.

I returned to Australian for a while and then went to the Philippines for a couple more years, before spending seven years in Dubai in Abu Dhabi.

Fortunately, with the work I was doing, I was able to travel around Australia. I had work in Melbourne, in Sydney, north of Sydney, in Perth and in country South Australia.

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Personal life

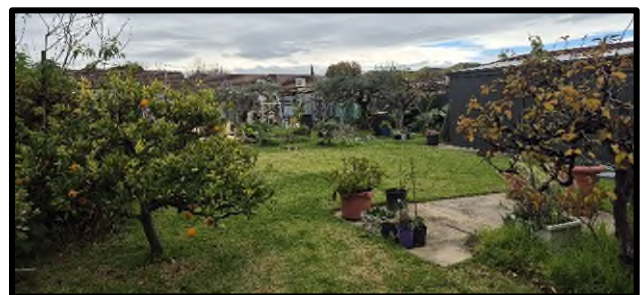
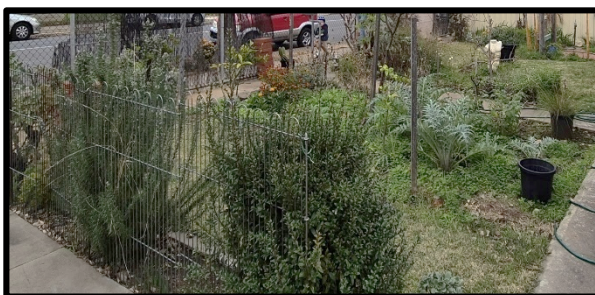
I was married for 18 years and divorced in 1999. I have twin girls, Cloe and Jasmin who were born in 1990. We have travelled together overseas and locally doing road trips or camping. Lots of fun times.

Socially, with friends we travelled around South Australia in vans, and we camped in many different places. I renovated a van and drove it to Perth in 1972 across the Nullabor on the dirt road before it was bitumen! I still like to travel and every year we have a boy's get away. Our last trip was to Flinders Ranges where we stayed in shearers' quarters. Next trip planned is Kangaroo Island!

Cloe is a personal trainer in Pilates and allied health. In 2023 she returned from eight years in France and Cyprus. Jasmin studied graphic design and works for an Adelaide company. Cloe's son is eight years old with a determination already to play golf. He's been playing for two and a half years and has played tournaments here at North Adelaide, Kooyonga and Thaxton and overseas in Portugal and Spain.



After 47 years of working, I retired a couple of years ago and am now doing a lot more gardening and house maintenance work. When you are working you just do what you have to do to get by, now I can spend more time. I think I see more things that need doing because I am constantly around the house more!



Winter garden at Rose Street

I still live in the family home on Rose Street and have a quarter acre block and so still have a lot of fruit trees. At certain times of the year, like in the fruiting season I can be fully engaged for four or five months. I have been brought up growing fruit trees. I learnt how to prune and did other courses at Urrbrae.

My father did grow flowers, mainly dahlias and zinnias. I got interested in different flowers and so I have a mixed bag of things in the front garden at the moment.

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Cultural and traditions

I see myself as an Australian Greek Cypriot. I have the Greek Cypriot cultural aspects, but my mentality, the way I've grown up and my affiliations, would be more Australian. The Greek protocols, rules and regulations are different to the English system.

The Greek mentality in those early days was different. If we were on a painting job the client would say, "Oh, why are you here, can you paint this door? and can you paint this window? and can you paint that?"

Whilst my mentality would say, "Yes, but it's going to cost you an extra," my father would say, "Okay, we're here, we'll just do it." Consequently, I held some resentment to this, as it was my weekend and my time was spent painting for a set amount of money, which wasn't a lot. It was an education of patience and humbleness that I learnt the hard way.

I still cook a lot of the traditional foods. A lot of my childhood was in the kitchen learning the smell, the taste and the feel of things that my mother used to cook.

The other ceremonies from marriage to christenings are still celebrated, although in today's terms they've become a very expensive commodity. Especially if you're getting married in Cyprus, you have no choice, you are going to spend lots of money.

From that perspective, I'm glad that we're in Australia! You're not getting forced down a path that you don't want to go down. I quite enjoy it, but when you've got to follow a tradition and it's going to cost you a lot of money when you may not have it, then it can be a problem.

Cypriot Immigration in the Current Climate

If someone from Cyprus was planning to migrate to Australia for work, in today's environment they'd have to learn to speak English otherwise they will struggle. If they are coming to retire it's a different story.

Having visited Cyprus every year or two years since 1978, I can see there are not a lot of opportunities there for teenagers and for graduates.

Jobs are very hard to find in Cyprus, however they have a simpler life and enjoy family life more. There are greater opportunities in Australia and yes, I would encourage them to come if they are willing to work and progress. I would talk about which city that they'd want to migrate to. I've made a lot of contacts over the years which would help in the process.

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Appendix A

Bonegilla Migrant Reception and Training Centre

Between 1947 and 1971, a wave of migrants came to Australia from war-torn Europe. Around 300,000 migrants from more than 50 countries arrived, hoping for a better life. For some, their first home was the Migrant Reception and Training Centre in Bonegilla, northern Victoria. The centre at Bonegilla opened in December 1947 on the repurposed site of a former military camp.

Life at Bonegilla

Around 170,000 displaced persons came to Australia immediately after World War Two. Nearly half lived at Bonegilla when they arrived in Australia. Some stayed for weeks, others for months.

Migrants at the centre were taught English and learnt about life in Australia. They were then employed in areas where there were labour shortages, boosting Australia's population and economy.

From the 1950s until 1971, Bonegilla was home to people who had come to Australia as part of Australian Government-assisted employment and migration schemes.



Bonegilla [alburycity.nsw.gov.au]

Preserving Memories

A joint project of the City of West Torrens and the West Torrens Historical Society

The Preserving Memories project aim is to interview people who have lived in or had extensive connections to the West Torrens area. The West Torrens Historical Society in conjunction with the City of West Torrens invite them to share their memories and talk about the events and experiences which helped to make up their life's story. It allows us all the chance to reflect on the past and to preserve those memories into the future.

This interview was conducted 7 August 2023 by Graham Parry, member of the West Torrens Historical Society. The opinions and views expressed in this interview, and documented in this transcript, are not necessarily the views and opinions of the interviewer, the West Torrens Historical Society, nor the City of West Torrens Council, and therefore neither the Society nor Council accepts responsibility for any comments or opinions expressed by the person being interviewed.

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Thank you, Sotirios, for participating and sharing your life story and experiences.