

## Henry Albert & Nellie (Kirk) Neilen

My father, Henry Albert Neilen was born on 25th April 1913, which in 1921 became an annual holiday to commemorate Anzac Day. He was born in Cedar St, Wynnum South and was the second child born to Albert Charles & Jessie Tamzon (Drew) Neilen. He eventually became one of 10. The family later moved to 57 Woolley St. Taringa, which was the family home for many years. When Henry was a toddler, there was a polio (infantile paralysis) epidemic and he contacted the disease. His parents at this time had had 5 children in 6 years and their new born, Ernest Archibald died when he was 14 months old in 1919 from polio.

Henry's aunt, his father's older sister, Blanche, was 34 at the time and she offered to look after Henry. She lived beside (or with ?) her mother Ella Eva (Watkins) Neilen at 214 Kennedy Terrace Bardon and operated a boarding house. Dr Hopkins lived beside them and he offered to "cure" Henry. Henry never returned to the family home to live. He was "adopted" and reared by his Aunty Blanche and Grandma. He had a happy childhood but the family struggled financially.



*Henry (aged 15) with (Aunty) Blanche Neilen & (Grandma) Ella Eva (Watkins) Neilen 28.07.1928*

Henry attended The Normal School or Central Practising School located in Adelaide & Edward Streets for his primary schooling and he went to the Brisbane State High School for his secondary education. Every Saturday he used to walk from Bardon to Taringa to his parents and siblings at Taringa, pulling a cart. He had flowers & vegetables to sell at the markets and he returned home with milk from the Taringa house cow. Henry had very happy memories of the holidays he spent with his Aunty Vi (Neilen) and Uncle Ernie Brewer who had a farm at Balmoral, Maleny, called "Highlands". Henry worked at Patricks Shipping Co as a clerk. He belonged to a church group and it was here that he met my mother, Nellie Kirk. Nellie was a country girl from Gayndah, her mother had died when she was 6 and she endured a very unhappy childhood when her father remarried. After being sent to boarding school in Maryborough for her secondary education, Nellie went to Brisbane to find employment and she lived with her Grandmother, who lived not far from Kennedy Terrace in Bardon. Nellie too had a job with Patrick's as a clerk and she joined the same church group as Henry. They had a very happy courtship within the church group and married in the Albert St Methodist Church in 1936 in Brisbane.

Nellie's father, William Kirk, a grazier from Gayndah, had passed away suddenly in 1934 and left Nellie an inheritance, enough to put a deposit on the farm in Maleny when the Brewer's decided to retire to Maroochydoore. So in 1938 with Bruce Kirk, their first born as a toddler, they shifted to Maleny to start a new life, dairy farming. They drove to Sydney for a holiday before they went to Maleny, their last for many years. Their second son, Ian William, was born in Brisbane in 1939 and I was born in Maleny in 1942. WW2 was on during this time and the Americans were camped near the farm and put in a road from the farm to Landsborough/Maleny Road. Bruce started school at Montville. Henry soon decided that dairy farming wasn't for him, so he bought a small Chev truck and started a carrying business around Maleny. They put a share farmer on the farm and we shifted to a property at Eagle's Nest, Maleny.



*Sisters, Mary & Nellie Kirk at Gayndah*

While living here in 1945, the triplets were born in the Soldier's Memorial Hospital in Maleny. Tom, Dick & Harry. Thomas Geoffrey, Richard

Leigh & Henry Ross. Nellie never forgot how it used to rain in Maleny, it rained for 6 months without letting up in 1946, the year after the triplets were born. A neighbour, Mrs Bowland, was the most treasured helper, as she arrived daily with baskets of clean, dry, nappies & clothes. There was no electricity, we had a wood stove. Just before the arrival of my sister Pauline Janice in 1947, we shifted to the corner of Landsborough/Maleny Rd, which became our family home for over 40 years. We had 7 acres here and over the many years it became a farm, transport depot and was the hub of a very busy business. We got electricity while living here shortly after Pauline was born and I remember getting electric lights, a washing machine with a wringer and an electric stove. My youngest brother Graeme (Ashley Graeme) was born in 1950 making us a family of 8.



*Henry & Nellie 1934 at Maroochydoore*

Henry and Nellie worked very hard to ensure the success of their transport business and rearing their family. Nellie was a placid, very hard working dedicated mother - cooking, sewing, knitting, gardening and she helped Henry with the business. We had several housekeepers over the years, they lived in when the triplets were young. We used to go for Sunday drives and at one stage Nellie & Henry bought a block of land at Golden Beach. The highlight of the year was the annual Maleny Show. We saved our pocket money all year. Nellie sewed and knitted new clothes



*Henry with his dog in his Austin 7 at the Balmoral farm. Mid 1930's*



*Henry Albert & Nellie (Kirk) Neilen (on right)  
26 Sept 1936, Brisbane  
Les Neilen & ? Bridesmaid (left couple)*

for us all to wear and she entered and won many knitting, crocheting, embroidery and cooking competitions at the Maleny, Nambour Shows & the Ekka. Henry had display stands for his various agencies, milking machines, pumps etc at the Maleny Shows. He had the COR agency, later the BP. Henry played cricket in his younger days (I never did find the duck he got) and they built a tennis court, we had our own club and nearly everyone enjoyed tennis. Henry worked long hours and gradually bought more trucks, his business expanded and he employed many drivers. He set up a shop and office in Waddell's (Boxsell's) in Maleny and later bought Harry Lyons' bus depot in Maple St Maleny. Nellie set up a successful gift shop here. Henry had a depot in Brisbane for a daily transport run from Maleny to Brisbane (Coronation Drive (Majeau) and later at Windsor) and also bought land and built depots in Woodenbong and Legume for grain.

Henry used to wake early and walk through the house singing "Jimmy Crack Corn", "Clementine" to his own words with "Found a peanut, found a peanut", "Doggie in the Window" and songs by Teresa Brewer. We had a wind up gramophone and a pile of 78 rpm records that bellowed out country and western hits of the time. We had a

piano, an antique piano (Henry inherited this & the billiard table from Aunty Blanch) and our parents had a special 3 pronged key made to lock it! Henry taught us all to drive in a VW Kombi, he owned 4 different models over the years. We chauffeured him around for years, in turn, when we were old enough for a licence, being "tutored" along the way. He used to put his arm along the back seat in ear reach and flicked it whenever he thought his life was in danger. 50 mph was the speed limit and he knew it blindfolded. We graduated from the VW's to Nellie's "Leaping Leena", a Ford Prefix 1940's model that had the habit of flying down the range, but broke down coming up. I'm sure we'll all claim to having it airborne. Harry claims to have got it up to 60mph without it getting the wobbles and Tom later bought one the same, green and black. I know Henry would never have believed it could go so fast!

We remember the habit he had of walking through the house and running his fingers along the furniture checking for dust. Pauline finds herself doing the same today! We had a billiard and ping pong tables under the house and how we kids struggled to beat Henry at pool. There were dozens of kids in the neighbourhood and home was a busy place. We had a well worn track to the Obi, and when the dam was dug down the back, the boys made canoes. Snakes, eels and yabbies to catch. Actually the eels from the Obi were left alive in Nellie's washing tubs for her to cook. I can't ever remember her cooking one, they disappeared. Nellie later used their steel spears for curtain rods in the lounge when Bruce & Ian went to boarding schools. We were forever building cubby houses around the paddocks much to Henry's despair, as when he arrived home in the evenings, half the house as well as dogs, cats and guinea pigs would



*Nellie & Henry, Christmas Day 1960 at Maroochydore*



*Allan O'Connor & Henry beside "Little Thorney". In the 1950's*

be in the cubbies. Guy Fawkes Night was a neighbourhood event as "rubbish" was accumulated all year and burnt in a huge fire along with tyres and whatever else Bruce & Ian could find (when Henry wasn't looking) to make it an even bigger fire. We had crackers and sky rockets galore and somehow we all survived! We were devastated when Guy Fawkes Night was banned.

We had great holidays at Pialba where Nana Kirk had a large house "Hazelton" with verandas on two sides in Beach Rd, just beside the primary school. We had a boat and used to go fishing

out to the reef and caught bountiful species of reef fish. We kids used to skate at the rink at Scarness, swim twice a day (which varied because of the tides) and we fished off the Urangan Pier. It was always so hot, we walked from one end of Harvey Bay to the other and Santa never failed to find us. There was a little shop almost at the end of Beach Rd where we could buy lollies and ice creams. There was a movie theatre within walking distance and I remember once when we got home, it was discovered that Dick was missing. He'd fallen asleep and was still asleep on the seats when Henry went back to find him. Henry would buy a new truck and it'd be delivered just before Christmas and "run in" at Pialba. We had our own bathing box on the beach front at the end of Beach Rd, the iceman delivered ice every second day for the ice box which stood in powder containers in the kitchen so the ants couldn't get in, and the yard was alive with cane toads after a shower of rain. Nana wouldn't



*"Hazelton", Pialba 1960*

let Nellie help in the kitchen and I remember her cooking on the wood stove with the hot western sun pounding on the kitchen. (When Nana was young she got pleurisy and her doctor told her to always wear wool next to her skin. She did, she never got pleurisy again.) The smell of burning cypress pine was always in the air from the wood fires. The house was in the middle of two big blocks of land, so we had a huge yard and we got to know many of the local kids who also holidayed annually. By the time we got home at the end of January, the wet season had started and it was time for the new school year.

We all went to the local Maleny School by school bus for our primary education, but Henry was very determined for us all to have private secondary education, so in turn, we were all sent off to boarding schools in Brisbane (Brisbane Boys College), Gatton (Agricultural College) and Toowoomba (Fairholme), except Graeme who went to the Maleny High School. Henry always called boarding school "The Weaning Paddock". Bruce became a qualified plumber, but he never practised his trade. As soon as he could, he & Ian took over a truck each and set up their own interstate carrying business. Both Bruce & Ian received many Million Mile Plaques from Mercedes during their trucking careers which took them all over Australia. Prefabricated huts to Giles to set up the weather station, huts to Port Hedland, delivery of the machinery for the iceworks at Darwin with back loading of tallow from Katherine, yellow cake from Rum Jungle for Sydney, huts to the oil fields at Gidgealpa, machinery from the coal fields for repairs at the workshops in Maryborough and fruit & general everywhere.



*Cliff Leeson, Bruce & Henry at "Eagleton", Dalby*

Henry's first truck was a 3 ton Chev and then he got another, the same. Then a Ford which he never liked, a couple of Thorneycrofts, (Big Thorney & Little Thorney), then another three, two 5 ton Chevs and a 3 ton Chev. Then they bought an Austin 9 ton, a Bedford for the egg run to Brisbane. He branched into buying, carting & selling grain and bought a Mercedes, "Herdie", an L400 which later became Bruce's truck. Bruce & Ian were anxious to extend interstate so they started long distance hauling. Ian had a 1418 Mercedes and Bruce a Mercedes 1918. They put on other drivers to do the local carrying, plus interstate drivers and bought two 413

Mercedes trucks. Dick drove one of these. They also had a "Commer Knocker" and a Commer petrol for local business. The business grew and home became an even busier place. They bought a lot of grain home which they hammered in a mill that Henry set up in the shed, then sold the hammered grain in bags to the local dairy farmers for animal food. They carted livestock, molasses, fuel, furniture, water - in fact everything and anything that needed to be taken. We had a street parade in Maleny once and Doug Griffin (Aunty Dorrie's husband) painted a large sign for one of the trucks - "We deliver everything - except". The painted picture was that of a stork with a baby. Henry had an office under the house where he spent hours keeping daily log books of each truck, he was meticulous.

As well as Bruce, Ian, Dick & Graeme, Henry & Nellie employed many other drivers and office staff over almost 30 years of their business operating. Some of these drivers included Allan O'Connor, Harry Friske, Kevin Bailey, Bill Penney, Ron Hankinson, Keith Humber, Ken Beckman, Wayne Keleher, Trevor Waters, Tony Figg, Barry O'Leary (Barry's father worked for the Main Roads and used to let them know where the portable scales were), Laurie Benecke, ? O'Brien, Peter Knight, Syd Dennine, Billy Shaw and Tom Malone. Some of these drivers drove locally, others interstate. Graeme & Ron remember Trevor Waters drove Herdie over to Perth, when he got there he phoned Henry and told him that he was lonely and flew home. Herdie was in Perth for some months before Henry was able to organise another load with 2 drivers to bring it back. The office and shop in Maleny were staffed by various employees including Frank Burnett, Reg Egan, Faye Klibbie, Verna Anderson, Elaine Martin, Maureen Keleher, Denise McDonald. Share farmers on the farm included Keith Boxsell and Frank Irvine. (Tom & I employed Wally Francis as a driver and Beryl Walker & Jean Larney in the shop/office.)

Henry enjoyed golf, his favourite course was at Woodford and he played regularly with his mates Dick Gowen from Glasshouse & Joe Spooner, the local policeman. He won many tournaments and often came home with trophies. They bought a "Murrumba Star" caravan to try to get away from it all occasionally, but a truck would break down, Dick or someone would be stranded at Kynuna, Holbrook or Deep Water and Henry was needed to rescue them.

By the middle of the 1960's, the government introduced road tax and permit fees to stop road transport taking over the rail business. This was a big imposition on transport operators and became a very difficult era. Henry's business had operated on credit and farmers and many businesses paid when they could. Some farmers paid by a pig, (that's how we got Puggy our pet pig),



*Henry & Nell setting off to Brisbane for the day. Dec 1957*

furniture, or produce. Henry would arrive home with all sorts of things in payment for his services. Over the many years in business, this had never troubled Henry, as he knew that somehow and sometime he'd be paid. Many farmers were share farmers and had big families, so money was scarce between the monthly cream cheques. But the government had to be paid on time, permit fees were paid daily and road taxes monthly. They tried to sell assets, but the economy had slumped and real estate was really tight. With accumulating debt and increasing worry, they decided to take a holiday to New Zealand in 1969, to Pauline, where she was then living. Bruce & Ian took over their trucks, Dick's truck was sold and he found a job with Qld



*Frank Irvine at the farm in one of Henry's first Chev's*

Mines, Tom & Harry found employment elsewhere and Tom (Malone) & I took over their local transport business, employing Graeme and other local drivers. We moved into the family home and I continued to teach.

In New Zealand, Henry got a job working for a stationery business and Nellie bought a busy news agency in central Wellington, not far from Parliament House. Their house overlooked the Wellington Harbour with splendid views. They hated the cold, this was a very unhappy time away from family. Tom & I were able to pay off this government debt and they returned from Wellington in 1972 and decided to live down the Gold Coast.



*Front yard, 1960s*

Nellie got a job at the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary managing the Rock Shop which she really enjoyed and Henry worked for "Tim the Toyman" from a well appointed display Bedford 4 ton truck, travelling throughout the countryside of S Qld and N NSW selling merchandise and toys. They sold assets including the farm at Balmoral & properties at Woodenbong & Legume and bought a house at 16 Woodgee St. Currumbin. The house was actually 3 flats, they rented one, lived in the other and they later extended their home and enlarged the flat underneath for family and friends to visit. This was a very happy era in their lives and we all had memorable holidays at Currumbin. Nellie had her tapestries framed at Southport, charcoal to pot the plants came from Coolangatta - they travelled the length of the Gold Coast to shop. The only shopping centre at the coast in the mid 1970's was at Southport.



*Nellie & Henry, Maroochydore with lots of grandkids 1972*

When they retired, they bought a VW



*Pauline, Henry & Nellie in New Zealand*

Kombi camper van and started selling agate rocks from Brazil, painted with Australian scenes. Henry had to lacquer the rocks after they were painted, several coats, which was very time consuming. They travelled a vast area of NSW and Qld selling these rocks and Nellie also manufactured and sold jewellery. Nellie gardened with great enthusiasm and sold everything that had a flower. Her speciality was African violets. They'd load up chock-a-block with rocks, plants & jewellery and come home at the end of the week completely sold out. They took a trip around Australia one year, selling on the way and when they'd sold out, they came home via Perth. In 1981 they had a trip to N America, taking a cruise along the W Coast of Canada to Alaska and travelling though the USA.

By the early 1980's, Henry started to have a few health problems, including cataracts. He rarely went to a doctor and it was with great reluctance that he had both eyes operated on, separately. This wasn't entirely successful and his failing eyesight was of great concern, as he still drove with Nellie telling him where the white line was. They realised their days of driving were numbered and started scaling down their business. In 1983, when Henry & Nellie celebrated their 70th birthdays with a party at Tom & Harry's at Newmarket, I gave them a Sydney Silky, "Cleo". What pleasure they had from that little dog! Sadly 5 months later, Henry suffered a heart attack on 2 Sept 1983. He was looking forward to going home after being hospitalised for a week, but the evening before being discharged, he suffered a second heart attack and passed away surrounded by his family in the Southport Hospital in the early hours of 9th Sept. He was 70.



*Nellie & Henry in Central Park, New York 1981*

A year later, Nellie sold the house at Currumbin and moved into the Domain, a retirement village at Nerang where she never settled. She regained her driver's licence.

She took a trip to Europe with Aunty Miriam (Kirk), they travelled throughout the UK. Miriam's son Murray met them in London and hired a car and took them to Scotland where they found places where ancestors had lived. Later Nellie took a bus trip around New Zealand and another time she went around Australia by bus and plane, remembering times and places she'd spent with Henry. Increasingly more time was spent with her family. She decided to sell her Domain unit and Tom & Harry renovated their home at Newmarket, enabling her to move in with them. This was a happy time for Nellie as Tom & Harry always had an endless supply of visitors, the tea pot was never cold and Nellie continued to stitch tapestries for her increasing family. She used to go antiquing with Tom & Harry with trepidation as they continued to fill their home with treasures. She was always coming and going



*Nellie & Henry with Peter & Andrea at Currumbin, Feb 1983*



*Henry & Nellie's Commodore, Currumbin 1983*

between Newmarket & Maleny, visiting family along the way. The car would be full of pot plants for gifts and Cleo would be jumping around, yapping at the motor bikes as Nellie drove along, admiring her precious pup. Cleo was replaced with April, then Tootsie.....

In 1990 Nellie suffered a mild stroke from which she never fully recovered. She was no longer able to drive herself, so we drove her between Maleny & Newmarket, regularly. She was with us in Maleny on 12 Sept in 1991, eight years to the day of Henry's funeral. She

became unwell in the early evening as we were preparing for Tom's (Malone) birthday dinner and as a precaution, we took her to the Maleny Hospital. Unexpectedly, she suffered a heart attack and passed away. Nellie was buried at the Witta Cemetery with Henry's ashes, on 15th Sept 1991, aged 78.

Nellie & Henry were a great team. They had 8 children, 21 grandchildren and today have 40 Great-Grandchildren and 4 Great-Great-Grandchildren. Their hearts would be bursting with pride!

*Desley with reminiscences from Tom, Harry Pauline & Graeme*



*Nellie's 74th birthday 1987 in Maleny*

*The farm house can be found today at 644 Balmoral Rd Maleny at Balmoral Ridge, behind the Balmoral Lookout. It's called "Vue de Lumiers" and offers luxury holiday accommodation for couples.*



*Henry & Nellie boarding the Statendam for their Alaskan Cruise in 1981*

