

NO I DON'T THINK I WOULD

Because we had moved from London to West Sussex in 1966. My mother had died in September 1965 four weeks before our daughter Eve was born. I did not have a very good relationship with my father.

Our roots were disturbed, and we were looking for something else. Something we Hazel and I did not think we could find in Angmering on Sea.

We were shown an advertisement in the Worthing Gazette, The Rotary Club was looking for migrants who wished to go to Australia, sponsor ship was on offer by a sister club in Victoria.

We applied and after a couple of interviews, were accepted and put in touch with Ted Shaw, international chair at Rotary Box Hill. The scheme was called Bring out a Briton. They were looking forward to our arrival.

Eventually we sold our house packed it all up, and spent the last Christmas with my father and younger brother farewelled our family, and left London for Southampton, where the Canberra awaited us. The whole of London and the southern counties were white with snow.

The voyage was eventful.

We arrived at Station Pier at 9.am on a Tuesday morning, I can recall my feelings as we steamed up the bay, in early morning light. Everything was to my still English eyes colourless and flat.

I soon learned that Melbourne was in the grip of drought.

Ted Shaw and Frank Moore, another member of the Rotary Club met us. Since our application another Rotary year had passed and Ted was now club secretary, Frank was now International service chair. We were taken to Teds home in Blackburn, for afternoon tea, and later to what was to be our home for the next few months, a house in Middleborough Road Box Hill, which the club had arranged for us to rent.

We managed to find a house, which we could afford, in Milton Street Nunawading. It needed a lot of work, but had everything we needed, close to Blackburn Lake Primary School. Easy walking distance to Forest Hill Shops. Not too far from a station. Made roads and it had a sewer connection.....

We started to settle in. The building industry was very different to U.K. much more ad hoc, many sub-contractors. In the last few years in England I had worked in the shop fitting industry, it paid better, and was more satisfying. At that time it was no so here. So I had many different jobs in the first few months. Eventually I found a position with a firm, which was re-fitting pubs. After the end of the six-o-clock swill pubs were upgraded and made more family friendly.

By 1972 I was running my own show, I was building spec homes and carrying out maintenance work at several factories in the Nunawading area. In 1974 we went back to England for our first trip. We stayed for almost 10 weeks. I found that my relationship with Dad had improved. We had travelled then because at that time children under twelve travelled half price, Eve turned thirteen in October. Before we left we bought a block of land in Somers.

We had already joined Somers Yacht club, an ambitious title if ever there was one. We had a Franklin caravan and parked on our block and set about building a house in my spare time.

In 1976 I was invited to join The Rotary Club of Nunawading.

I got a phone call from a person called David Holmes, it was vague. He just asked to come and see me. At that time I was building a new sailing dinghy, I thought it might have something to do with that.

He arrived with another gent named Ken Ince, and told me that they were from the Rotary club. They asked that Hazel be present during the conversation. In short they wanted to know if I was interested, it appeared that I needed Hazel's permission. I said that I would think about it and let them know. I phoned Ted Shaw, and said I need to know more. Ted explained to me the benefits and responsibilities of joining Rotary. I decided to say yes. We told Eve and Richard now 11 and 13 their first response was "Does this mean we could have an exchange student?"

After attending a couple of meetings, agreeing to a credit check and having my name published throughout the membership, I was inducted in August that year.

Now my life changed again. The club had 70 members. Captains of Industry. CEO's of international companies, Shopkeepers, Printers, Doctors, a real cross section of the local community. The president at the time was a Superintendent of Police and head of the traffic branch in Dawson Street. I was an equal in that group, and could hold my own. It did so much for my confidence. I learned at my own pace, but did have the advantage of the knowledge of what Rotary could do.

I was president of that club in 1984/85. I left in 1996 to transfer to Essendon North. For the first time I was in a club which included women. Nunawading had not yet managed to induct a female Rotarian. I stayed until 2012. Had a two year break before being inducted here.

During that time I led two teams to PNG meeting Keith Walter in 1981 He was chair of the FAIM committee. Nunawading was part of district 980 at that time. I was to join Keith on the interplast committee later. I also visited India in 1981 to visit our exchange student Vidya who was here over Christmas. She was our first student and came to us in 1977.

Looking back I would say I am very content. A good way to be at this age. Next week I celebrate my 83rd birthday. With no regrets.

We have had our ups and downs, but I think that we are all in a good place.

To close I would like to quote something I often hark back to from Royce Abbey. Past world president, a personal friend, and also a great role model He was a champion of women in Rotary.

Rotary takes ordinary men, and gives them extraordinary opportunities, to do more with their lives than they had ever dreamed possible.