

A descendant of my late uncle Hugh McKenzie, Miss Ann McKenzie, is writing the history of the McKenzie family tree, and has been in contact with my niece, Elizabeth Beth Connor, a daughter of my late brother, Alex. Beth, to whom I am very attached, suggested that I should write anything I know and could recall, of the MacKenzie family, and after a little talk about what I knew of the past, I promised to see what I could do in the matter.

My name is Victor Norman Connor, and at this present day I am very close to my 83rd birthday (3 October). I will just write what I know of my father's family, and the information I have is that they originated in Southern Ireland. My father's grand-parents must have been rather prosperous as they were able to give their family a good education, and two of my father's uncles, at least were graduates of the Dublin University, and became Church of England Clergyman, one of them, George Henry Connor, became a Dean of Windsor during the reign of Queen Victoria. My mother told me of him many years ago when I was quite a young man. At that time I knew that mother's parents came from Scotland but knew very little of my father's people. In my travels of recent years I was able to visit Windsor Castle And St. George's Chapel, and after making inquiries I was told that if my 'August' relative was a Dean of Windsor, his name would be on the side of the grand organ along with Kings and Queens and their Deans which was so. Prior to this appointment, he was vicar of Winchester and Chaplain at the Isle of Wight. (I'm relying on memory for the last two positions.) Sure enough, George Henry Connor was one of Queen V's five Deans. He must have been a man of great ability to obtain that position. I do not know anything more of my father's other uncle, excepting that he was a Clergyman. Whether my father's father was a university don, I do not know, I understand he was well educated. It must have been in the 1840's when he arrived in Australia. My own father died in 1919 at the age of 69 years, which makes his birth about 1850, and as he had a brother 'Tom' older than he, my calculation would be fairly reliable. Father had two brothers, Tom the one mentioned, and a younger brother, Henry. Referring again to Grand-dad Connor, I do not know whether he was married prior to leaving for Australia, but I understand his wife was an English girl. One would imagine that he would be classed as a 'Squatter', and settled on land in the Western District of (Colac) Victoria, not so many miles from Hamilton at an area called Lake Bolac. Not which one would say would be one of the choicest parts of Australia, and which it could be said, droughts are practically unknown. It would be quite understandable that several of the land-owners in those days, to say the least, would not have much education, and as they prospered, they would come under taxation laws of the State. We understand Grand-dad used to travel around and do the book-keeping for several of his neighbours. Apparently, he did not live to become aged, and if my memory holds, he was killed or died after being thrown from a horse. At this juncture, I might mention I do not consider myself a 'scribe' of any consequence, which I may enlarge on when referring to my own family, and as one could say it is a history, I intend to give facts, and also what I have 'gleaned' from others. I do not intend only to write about the 'good qualities only' of people of the past, but just intend to write down the knowledge gained by myself, and what I feel was the truth as told to me otherwise, one could hardly call it 'history'. So, let us hope for a goodly touch of humour, and, naturally, a little sadness.

Referring back to my father's family, there were three brothers, Tom, George my father, and Henry. I feel certain there were no sisters. These boys were brought up on the 'fat of the land' and were sent to Melbourne, apparently, in their teenage years to finish their education. I heard my father say he was nineteen years before he left school. My father was no doubt, quite a scholar and although I was too young to understand, old friends later in my life mentioned he was very interesting to listen to.

All my young life he did gardening for a living and often times worked in nurseries, and one could say he would be most helpful to those who he worked for. He saw that our own gardens and yards were kept tidy, along with a decent fowl yard and house and

a fernery for pot plants, and often times the garden looked a picture with annuals, roses, etc.. Of course there was a large vegetable patch, being very necessary for a big family, and generally speaking he would have been a good father, excepting for his drinking habits. He could hardly visit a hotel that he didn't leave it intoxicated, or had spent all the money he had with him, and consequently, the family had to suffer. This went on through the years. Now that I am old and perhaps, more mellow, my heart has softened towards him when one thinks of the environment in which he was brought up. He must have learnt to 'bend the elbow!' when quite young, seeing in those days tea drinking was rather a luxury, and wine and beer, such as it was, was manufactured locally. One could guess that the "plonk" and the ale brewed would be strong. Grand-mother re-married to a man named Dagleish. At this point of time the brothers apparently left home, and the next news was that Tom and George had bought a brewery at Mooroopna, and it was not long before they went "broke". Also about this time George must have married. Prior to this he must have been very good at spending money, as one of Mother's sisters told me many years later, that someone had asked my father's mother what she was giving George for a wedding present. She replied, "Nothing - he has spent two dowries already". My uncle Tom whom I have never met, found his way to Western Australia, he must have been able to hold his drink, or in other words, did not imbibe as much as George, as he became a police sergeant, and had a family of two, Charles and Mary. I understand he also took up land. Charles retired as postmaster at Bunbury, W.A. He had two sons, to my knowledge, and Mary remained single. I do not know any more of Uncle Tom's descendants, excepting I was on the Brisbane-Sydney express train, and when sitting having some refreshments at the Buffet Counter, a young lady sitting alongside of me said, "My name is Connor". One can imagine my surprise. After asking where she came from, and being told from Western Australia, I said the only people related to me in W.A. were cousins Charles Connor and his sister Mary, and I understood they were both dead now. She said "Charles was my grandfather". In the course of conversation I asked if she had any uncles or aunts Connors. She said she had an uncle Gregory and that I looked like or resembled him. Well, well. I said the question was how did she know my name. She explained that she had to walk at the back of me to get to the seat, which made her inquisitive so she looked at the pin on my lapel and saw my name. I wondered what would happen next on the trip, which was to take me around the world - that was March, 1975.

The youngest of the three brothers, Henry, apparently decided to stay on the land, and obtained a tidy 8000 acres. How he obtained this country I do not have a clue, but no doubt, could have been helped by his parents. He married but did not have any children. I only remember his wife as Aunt Ann. Unfortunately, she became an invalid quite early in their married life, and as long as I can remember back, they lived at Ballarat. It must have been on account of his wife that Uncle retired to that city. When I was very young my father and mother travelled from Geelong and they took their eight children with them. The only incident I can remember is having a ride on a steam boat on Lake Windaree and finding myself parted from my parents when getting off the boat, and very soon starting to cry. The tears soon stopped when my father found me. Uncle Henry leased his property until he died in the early 1930's. Although we had little to do with him, we were pleased and surprised when he left his estate to the Connor family. I never remember Grandma Connor. She must have passed away some years before 1900, but her second husband, Dagleish, carried on as late as 1910. He used to come down to Geelong each year when his wool was being sold, and I well remember him coming to see my mother several times, and in my hearing he said to my mother, "Never mind, Bessie, I'll remember you in my will". At that time my father decided to leave the home as he could not get on with his elder sons who, by then, were young men. Mother never received a penny from him - that is from her father-in-law as he had a niece and nephew who probably saw or directed who his estate would be left to. I am a little unsure of the size of the property, but understood it to be about 29000 acres. I also understand he was the foreman or manager of the estate after Grandfather's death, and apparently 'married the Rich Widow'. However, he was surely a wealthy man.

Now for a short history of our own family. The marriage of George Connor and

Elizabeth (Bessie) McKenzie must have taken place in the early 1880's and could have been at either Echuca or Mooroopna, and they had ten children. I shall be writing of the McKenzie family later on, but would like to say something of Mother at the commencement. The tears well into my old eyes when I think of what my mother had to put us through during her married life, coming from a home wanting for nothing and not knowing what hardship meant, and then raising ten children and putting up with a husband who too often came home the worse for liquor, and perhaps worst of all, often times not knowing where the money was coming from to buy food. And our "Dad" would stop in bed for a day or two suffering a recovery. Mother had great faith in God, and one can say truly that this faith carried her on life's way, and enabling her to rear her large family, which in the latter years of her life, she must have felt justly proud - even the writer could hardly be called a "black sheep". One could say she was born a lady and remained so all her days.

I must write a little of each of my brothers and sisters, and it will be the truth, I hope, for I have pulled no punches previously of people whom I have mentioned, and yours truly himself, will have to come in for criticism. My eldest sister, the oldest of the family, was born in the Goulburn Valley, possibly at Mooroopna, where Jack, Lena and Adrian were also born. I guess those were the halcyon days of the family. Florrie grew up to be a fine woman, and to her of strength in helping the family and a great help in keeping the younger members of the family on the "straight and narrow way". Jack, I did not like in my boyhood days as he was inclined to get down on me, he was unfortunate in that he developed some form of indigestion. He was really good as a landscape gardener. He died of wounds in France during the 1st World War, at the age of 34 years. Lena, who is still living and must be about 93 years, our second oldest sister, and, like Florrie, was a wonderful help in those rather far-off days, going off to service soon after leaving school. She was quite a bible student and kept close to her Lord through the years and taught in Sunday School throughout her long life, until about 10 years ago when she was laid up with a broken hip, and since then she has been unable to walk much. We younger members of the family have to thank our two eldest sisters for a lot for the way in which they guided and helped us through the years. Then came Adrian 'Mac'; he was a remarkable character, although having to work hard all his young life and only having a primary education like most of the family, he became one of the stalwarts of the Geelong Presbyterian Guild, which prior to World War 1, had a membership of 500. He excelled in the literary section, and along with three other members of the section, were the champion debaters of Geelong, competing against several other teams. In this literary and debating society, he won several trophies. He also was one of the foundation members of the Harriers Section which was formed in the early part of the century, and of which he was captain for some time. In the harriers he met with marked success in long distance running and became a marathon runner, his greatest attainments at such he came second twice and another time, third, against the best in Australia, performing in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. Needless to say, he won many fine trophies. How this fine Guild originated was through "Mac" and several other young fellows forming a club at Wilson Memorial, which if memory holds, is on the corner of Parkinton and Fyans streets, Chilwell. As they proceeded along they invited a well known Solicitor to come and adjudicate. This man, whom I'm almost sure was Mr. David Griffiths (the surname is correct), could see great potential, and I believe, through his great help, they grew to 500 members prior to the 1st World War, and they built a fine hall in Mier Street, close to Gheringhap Street. While mentioning Churches, Mac was secretary of the St. George's Presbyterian Sunday School during the Rev. John Forrest's ministry, who was the father of the Rev. Fairlee Forrest, a well known Minister in Queensland, who died just a few years ago. Mac was also the playing Secretary of the Hard-wicket Cricket Club, of which I think he was an original member. Not a bad record for a young fellow who earned his living as a timber sorter at a sawmill. Being in the building trade, myself I can imagine how efficient he would be in measuring up orders. Mac enlisted about 1915 and died of wounds in France in 1917. A great friend of Mac's wrote an article in the "Geelong Advertiser" which he headed "Well run, Mac".

Harry was the next to Mac and he was dubbed 'Tim' as a small boy by the same Uncle who gave Adrian his "prefix". At least it suited him surname. He was called Tim by the family excepting Father and Mother, and a lot of his friends who grew up with him. Harry, in my mind, was the most popular member of the family, and one could safely say he'd be the most popular, or should one may best-liked, chap among his many friends. One could write a lot more of a certain one in the family which would seem a little unfair, but as the writer as it were, was taken under Harry's wing, I would like to indulge a little more about Harry. He, like the rest of the family, excepting the two youngest members, left school after passing through the 6th class, which was the top class at the state school. He left school at about the age of 14 years, but what a lot he accomplished from then until he enlisted at about 26 years. He became a grocer boy and worked from 8a.m. until 6p.m., and on Saturday nights until 9p.m. or later, with half-day off any time after 1p.m. on Wednesdays. One of his first pursuits was purchasing a second hand motor bike, and buying a second hand motor bike in those far off days, one would certainly be buying trouble. The procedure for quite a long period of time was he would ride it or push it for about a week, then he would take it to pieces, and then put it together again. Putting it together again would take about a month, but he eventually got it running very well, and only rarely would it 'jib'. He was musically inclined and played a tin whistle or mouth organ through his young life, and when the family was able to afford a piano, he began learning music in earnest. About that time he joined a Church choir, and soon began taking lessons on the pipe organ and having his voice trained. He became a concert party soloist and was able to take the organ through a church of England service. In his spare time, which he didn't have much of, he decided to learn shorthand, so he found time to attend the Technical College, and after becoming proficient in this art, he applied for, and got a job, as a reader with the Geelong Advertiser and he often times did some reporting. He eventually gave this job away as he only had one night a week off. The Advertiser people offered him the next vacancy as a reporter, but he would not accept as it interfered too much with his music. He went back to the Grocery trade under much better conditions. Harry, like Jack and Mac, served this country well, and died of wounds in France. I might mention finally regarding Harry, that he was a first class gymnast and often performed at concerts with his club mates. Alex was the fourth son of the family and although about five years older than the writer, we did not see much of him at home as he left the 'nest' about the time of my leaving school, and although he would play with me at times, he would go out and about with his own 'cronies', but I remember very well the time he was an apprentice painter. He did not get on too well with his boss, who to say the least, must have been a bit cantankerous, as every now and again Alex and Boss would have a row and Alex would leave the job, but invariably the boss would be up to see Mother, and Alex would make a fresh start. He belonged to a Harrier's Club and competed in many events, both Club and State racing, and was rather successful as he won some very nice trophies. After finishing his apprenticeship and rowing with his boss, he left to work at his trade in the Wimmera district in Victoria, where he remained until he left for Queensland about 1917. He must have spent a few years at Ararat where he became a Fireman, and was often times selected in the brigade team which competed at the Annual Country Fire Brigades' annual competitions, which was quite an event in the town or city where they were held. He was able in later years owing to this training, to form a fire brigade in the town in which he resided for many years, and as their Chief Officer for many years, was able to bring it to a high standard.

Our sister Stella was the next in line and, being the seventh child, she was christened Septema Penelope, a name chosen by Father, I guess. She did not enjoy her names 'one little bit', so she always went by Stella. Stella was quite a girl, but unfortunately, did not enjoy good health, but to her credit kept diligently at her lessons and was quite a scholar. She became interested in the piano and had lessons from a music teacher who lived nearby. Unfortunately her health broke down and she was unable to finish the final year when she would have gained her diploma. Stella helped Mother at home and

helped to keep the younger members from getting out of hand, and by the way, Nos. 8 and 9 were not all that easy to manage. Stella was a devout Christian and was caused a lot of trouble in keeping the younger members of the family on the "straight and narrow" way, we hope she met with a measure of success. Stella lived until she was 64 years, and as mentioned before, although never very strong, crammed a lot into her years. She was married the second time and without doubt, was a great helpmate to her husbands. I might mention here, that both Florrie and Lena were real Christian women, and followed in Mother's footsteps in guiding the other members of the family. The writer would like to pay tribute to our Mother and two elder sisters in guiding me through or past the pitfalls that youth encounters, and although past the allotted span of three score and ten by over a dozen years, I look back with thankfulness in having had such a good mother and elder sisters.

Now, the writer happens to be the eighth child and answers to the name of Victor Norman. I cannot recall having won any great victories. My parents might have had a wishful thought that the name given to their 8th may have helped him along life's pathway but in thinking over this subject, if one can say that being brought up where the Ten Commandments predominated and being fortunate in marrying a good wife is a victory, all I can say is that I did very well. I'll not go to any length in speaking about the 8th, excepting he was a very robust boy, and practically all through his schooling, until the last year or so, had it in his small mind, that to play was life, and perhaps with eating and sleeping being the next best things it was only by sheer force, that is corporal punishment, that I put my mind to learn, and as far as doing anything that meant work, that was abhorred. It was through the good graces of my mother - she had a way about her - that No. 8 became an apprentice carpenter, but I will not mention much about those days of strict training, which stood by him in after years and look back with thankfulness to his old bosses whom he thought were tough task-masters.

The ninth child of the marriage went under the name of Muriel Nona, there isn't any doubt that our father had something to do with the naming of the 9th. Looking back, I cannot help thinking there was a great similarity between the 8th and 9th. Muriel found plenty of time for sport and about this period of time, the family were much better off. Muriel was able to attend High School - it would be called secondary education today, I think. The object of her attending high school was, I believe, to become a teacher, but we think, or rather are sure, that Muriel would rather wield a tennis racquet, which she made quite a fist at. She never became a teacher, but life was pretty good for her through all her years. I might mention there were no High Schools around up to the time I had left school. The Geelong High School commenced prior to Muriel passing through the state school. There were two public schools in Geelong which were opened many years before our time. Namely the Geelong Grammar and Geelong College, but people had to be fairly comfortably off to send their children to these places of learning, unless they, the children, were smart enough to win a scholarship, two from each school, that is four each year.

At last we have come to the end of the line, Eric Decimus. He was certainly the baby of the house, here was a name that Father, for sure, had a hand in. After Eric was getting into his teens, he was not altogether pleased with his second name, but in later life, he never mentioned what he thought about it. Eric was more than five years younger than myself and as a little fellow until he had started school, no dog would cling to its master as Eric clung to me, and, after school or holiday time, Mother would tell me I must look after Eric, so No. 8 found it extremely difficult if I wanted to go out with my mates. If I ran away he would just lie on the ground screaming and waving his arms and kicking his legs up in the air. Consequently, we were together much of our play-time. Although I often made him cry for he would tire quickly, he could not stand anybody hurting me, and if I was getting 'donged' by anyone, Eric would scream out "Don't hurt Dick" - that was my school-boy 'nick-name' - and he would scream and go for them. No doubt he was certainly a help to me when I got into difficulties. Eric often times ran into trouble when a little boy; on one occasion he ran a splinter into a big toe, that

the Doctor had to perform quite an operation to remove it. Another time No.8 hit him on the temple with a shin tee stick when we were playing with tennis balls. He had to be taken immediately to the hospital, where they removed a splintered bone resting on the brain; he was home in about a week, but it was very delicate operation. We were all very upset, including No. 8. Another time he was staying with an Aunt at Echuca, and whilst cutting kindling on a bench, a piece of timber struck him in the eye. The local Doctor ordered him straight to a Melbourne specialist, who fortunately was able to save the sight. Eric was very smart at school and won a scholarship to Geelong Grammar, from there he entered Melbourne University and won his degree, and through the influence of Uncle Hugh gained a position in the Testing Department of the Victorian Railways where he became chief possibly through sheer ability before he was 30 years old.

Copied from Uncle Vic's 15 page hand-written effort. A wonderful effort on his part.

Typed 29 August 1970

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