

My name is Victor Norman Connor, and I am writing of what I know of the family tree, my Mother's people, the "McKenzie Clan", as requested by my niece, Beth Connor. One could be correct in saying, that many people in their youthful days, would not have such interest in family trees, and I am afraid I belong to that category, for which, in my later years, I am sorry. Most likely what I write now will be known by Ann McKenzie, but there may be some "anecdotes" which will be mentioned that will be of some interest. I shall write what I was and heard during the first twenty-five years of my time, and as one could call it history now, there could be a touch of humour and sadness.

My Grand - father and Grand - mother, I am not sure Of Grandpa's Christian name, it could have been Hugh, but I have a fair idea he was called John. As for Grandma's name, I haven't a clue. They arrived in Australia some time in the 1840's, bringing with them their son Hugh, who I believe was about 2 years. I never ever knew if Grandpa had any brothers, but he must have had a presentable education, as the first knowledge of him after his arrival was that he was managing a station in the Cooma district of New South Wales, where some of the other members of the family, including my mother, were born, also Aunt Jessie was born there, but whether Uncle John and Aunt Dorothy (Dollie) were, I do not know. I understand Grandma's maiden name was Clark, and the only real clue for the name is, she had a Sister, who, if memory serves me, never married, and we called her Aunt 'Clark' whether it was the Scottish idea of calling their Aunts by the surname, or only the family idea, I could not say. My first visit to Melbourne was when my sister Lena took myself and my younger sister, Muriel, to stay with Aunt Clark, that would be in the early years of this century, perhaps 1902. I never met Aunt Clark again. Another sister, Great-Aunt McLeod, migrated to the U.S.A. and we understand, became quite prosperous, we understood she had a family. The other sister, Great - Aunt McKay lived with her husband on station properties through the years. Aunt McKay stayed with our family for sometime after her husband had died. Apparently she did not have any children, and I understand she had a home at Kilmore. Prior to her staying with the Connor family, she had been to America, and intended to live with Aunt McLeod, but one winter was enough for her as she felt the cold too much. I remember her saying that one's breath would freeze on the bed clothes - no such things as 'electric blankets' those days! She did speak about Aunt McLeod and her family, whom if I remember rightly, she rather liked, but was not wholly taken with their accent. Speaking of accents, her own was decidedly Scottish, the 'half-grown' schoolboy horror got himself vary much disliked as he would persist in mimicking, and fancy got a smacking from Mother. However, Aunt McKay took a liking to the family, and especially to brother Mac, with whom she corresponded after leaving our home. Well, Mac made fame as a long-distance runner, and, in the course of time, sent her a snap of himself in running togs, which consisted of a sleeveless singlet, a pair of knickers which did not reach the knees, and a pair of running shoes with short socks. Well Aunt McKay was shocked to think that he would do such a thing as to send her a photo of himself half - naked. She wrote to Mother and said she didn't think Adrian (Mac) would do such a thing. Mac was in 'The Gun', and this friendship terminated. I wonder what dear old Aunt would say or do if she saw the present-day day female of the species in their swim suits? Mother understood that she was to be remembered in her will, but it didn't happen that way. Mother received a letter after Aunt died, explaining that Aunt thought that, we being so poor and would not be able to handle money, no doubt she could have been influenced by someone else. Mother's eyes were filled with tears when she read that letter, she was not the weeping kind, the only other times that I recall her weeping was when she lost her sons in the 1st World War.

Now, I must get to 'Grannie' as our family called her. Whether it was through blood relationship, but there was never any doubt that the whole of our family loved her staying with us. She came to Geelong each summer as the climatic conditions suited, excepting for the odd heat wave which happened each summer. She was of that sturdy Scots build, and had a very

pleasant disposition, and I feel sure she enjoyed the kids of the family being about. She no doubt enjoyed good health, as she lived well into her 92nd year. For the period of one would say, about ten years of the latter part of her life, the period in which I knew her, she wore the 'Widows' Weeds', I think they were called, which consisted of a small bonnet cap like hat, black dresses with a touch of white lace, and elastic-side boots. Whether she wore this kind of garb as soon as her husband died, I do not know. One smiles on seeing what the ladies of that vintage wear today. Grand-father McKenzie must have died many years prior to my birth. I cannot recall any of my elder brothers or sisters giving him a mention. He must have died about the time, or not so long after the station "Wyuna" which he managed for one of the big estate firms, was cut up for closer settlement, mainly for wheat growing, by the Victorian Government, because it would be correct to say that Grandma, assisted by her eldest son, Hugh, which they, the McKenzie's, selected when "Wyuna" was cut up. There is only one story that I remember quite well, which my Aunt Jessie mentioned about Grand-pa. He used to drive a pair of horses in a buggy, and often times drove into Echuca on business and pleasure, the buggy was well 'got -up' and the horses always in 'good nick'. When they were all up ready to return home, the horses being full of oats, etc., and Grand-pa fully reinforced with whiskey, the first few miles towards home would be slightly more than 'jolly'.

My Mother informed me that each member of the family were allowed two selections each, and as there were five in the family, and each selection 320 acres, and if Grand -Dad and Grand-Ma selected, they would have had up to 1400 acres altogether, so one can understand the McKenzie's were the 'big' people in the district. They named the farm 'Johnswood', so I imagine Grand -dad's name could have been John. They apparently were successful farmers, my sister Florrie told me that they won the prize, given by the Victorian Government, for the best large farm in the area.

I shall now mention what I can remember about each member of the McKenzie family. Starting with Uncle Hugh, who was the eldest, he must have had a considerable education. I'm not sure whether he was sent to boarding school, but Mother mentioned they always had a governess on the property. He must have been a great help to Grand-ma, running the property when he was a young man. In my eyes he was a big man in every sense, and lived much more than a useful life, ever ready to help people. He became a very successful auctioneer, the name McKenzie & Co becoming very well known throughout the Goulburn Valley and many other areas in Northern Victoria. He was elected to the Victorian Parliament, and was Minister for Lands and then Railways, for many years. He would visit Bessie (our Mother), when we lived in Geelong, about once a year, and when Grand-ma was staying with us more often, he invariably wrote a cheque for Mother. He married a daughter of a nearby farmer, who went by the name of Old Mitchell, and they had four sons and two daughters. I'll give a brief summary of this family seeing it is now history. Hector, the eldest, we, our family, thought was a fine type of man and, like his father, would be very well liked, as far as I know he "grew up" in the business, and one would guess, carried a lot of responsibility when his father was a parliamentarian. Hugh, the second son, was a bank officer for some years, then joined in the business as quite a young man, and although I did not know much about him, I guess he was a man much like Hector. The third son, John, was a character very much like his Uncle John, whom I'll refer to later. He, like Hugh, was a bank officer until 'something happened' and he was no more an officer of the bank, although not by embezzling or anything of that nature. Apparently he was a 'good-time' boy and owing to his 'additions', the bank found it necessary to do without his services. We next heard of John when he worked for Uncle Jim Goodger in Queensland (a man we shall have something to say about in due time). It was not long, we understand that John retired from his Uncle's payroll. No doubt what he was promised, and what he got as wages from Uncle Jim, knowing the latter as we did, would be more than marginal. John apparently was taking to night life in Queensland, Uncle must have thought John was coming home too late, but the only episode I can relate is that Uncle placed a kerosene tin above John's door one night, and most of the family must have heard John's homecoming that night or morning.

John had a charming manner, but wasn't noted, as the story goes, for keeping rigidly to the truth. When John and I last met was after he returned from the 1st World War, he had an arm badly damaged, 'war wound', and carried it in a wooden tray when walking. I never heard if he ever married.

Walter, the fourth son, one could say was a mixture between his elder brothers and John, but did have the suave of the latter. He worked for the firm and later on went into business himself in Jerilderie. I think, but if memory holds, he did not live to any age. Aunt Maggie oftentimes brought her two daughters, May and Winnie, Aunt having a sister a Nun, who was for many years stationed at the Convent in Geelong, and as Mother and Aunt grew up in the same district, we kids of the family were always pleased when Aunt paid us a visit as she, in her gracious way, presented us with two shillings or half-crown to buy sweets. As a boy, the daughters were grown-up ladies and very nice. Looking back, one would say the McKenzie's were a charming family.

Aunt Jessie was next to Uncle Hugh, and although I did not know much about her or her family, as they left the Goulburn Valley to take up farming near Nanango, Queensland, about the year 1900, but migrating to Queensland myself in 1918, I saw quite a lot of Aunt Jessie and her husband, Uncle Jim, and family. At this period of time one could have quite a lot to mention but will write what was told me by Mother and my older brothers and sisters. Uncle Jim came to Victoria from South Australia, he being one of several brothers whose people were farming in that State, and was employed as a farm hand by the McKenzie Grandma, and he, being a man who didn't believe in letting the grass grow under his feet, soon began to assert himself and make his presence felt, as a man of importance. It was not long before he was courting the eldest daughter, and of course, became driver in chief, and Aunt during the courting days, had the privilege of sitting next to the driver. In good time they were married and after some years of living at Johnswood, Aunt sold her two selections at a good price for those days, which enabled Uncle Jim to remark that he had \$1400.00 when he came to Queensland. Aunt Jessie carried the McKenzie charm with her to Queensland, and naturally she was one to whom the wives of the settlers would come for comfort and advice, having been taught the piano and organ, she played the organ for Church services, and no doubt performed at many functions. Generally speaking like most other lands which were being opened up for closer settlement, there would be many settlers that came who didn't have much of this world's goods and it was a great struggle to survive on their farms in their early years of pioneering, but one could say that many of their descendants have prospered owing to the efforts of their forefathers.

I must refer to our Uncle Jim again, he was a good farmer and won many prizes at shows for his cattle and horses. Uncle Jim had two moral codes one for himself and one for other people, and promises in his own code were only a means to an end. The old saying that promises were like pie-crust' never worried Uncle so long as you did not sign the 'dotted line', and seeing that it is history that we are writing, one can quote several cases. As was mentioned previously, it was through his influence that his three younger brothers came to Victoria, and when he was settled in Queensland, he got them to follow him to Queensland. He had them working for himself, no doubt with promises that he would help them to set up their own farms. Well, according to the brothers, they worked hard for Jim who was the only one who did well out of all the promises. The margin that the brothers got for their labour and what they were promised, was great, so, with them, as mentioned about John McKenzie, wisdom came rather late. Looking back on one or two incidents, from what they said Uncle expected from other people after a Church service one Sunday a man came up to him and offered to shake hands, however, Uncle refused to shake, exclaiming that he did not shake hands with "Twicers".

After he retired to a property which was at the time on the outskirts of Brisbane, he and Aunt were attending a Church service and he thought the young preacher was holding forth for too long, so he called out to him 'You had better stop now, you have been going long

enough'. One could guess that the service would have ended fairly promptly, and while several women were giving Uncle a bit of their tongue, the young fellow came along to join in, but Uncle promptly told him he would see him outside, as he was dealing with the women at the moment. Aunt Jessie related this incident to me, and she said 'Dad shouldn't have spoken to the preacher like he did'. One could keep on quite a bit about dear old Uncle, but seeing he has had more than his share in these writings, one had better leave him lie in peace, there could be some more humorous "bits" but I'd better finish with this one. Uncle Hugh came to Brisbane to see his sister Jessie as they had not met for several years. Uncle met him at the train, and 'taxied' him home in an old spring cart, much to the discomfort of Uncle Hugh, who was at that time, one might say, at the pinnacle of his fame, being either Minister for Lands or Railways at the time, in the Victorian parliament. There was never much love lost between those two Uncles.

Next in line was our dear Mother, Elizabeth ... Bessie was the name she was called throughout her life. There isn't any doubt she was the favourite of the family, always a lady. In her younger days riding was one of her past times, and according to report she was a good rider. Among her other qualifications she played the piano, and must have had quite a voice. She, no doubt, had several 'suitsors', but eventually married our father, who must have been quite a man about town. Little she could have realized on her wedding day, the trials and tribulations she would have to endure.

It must have been a great satisfaction to her, having raised ten children, not one of whom she would feel ashamed of. I am happy to say in her latter years she was able to enjoy life. Always charitably minded, she continued on, always pleased to help people. She eventually became Vice-President of the War Mothers, having lost her three eldest sons, Jack, Adrian and Harry, who died of wounds in France in the 1914 - 1918 war. I thank God for having such a Mother, and also for the older members of the family, specially my sisters Florrie and Lena.

The next in line, Uncle John - a most likeable chap, full of charm, but certainly the 'black sheep' of the family, but I'll not pull any punches in referring to him. His Mother certainly had a soft spot for her 'Prodigal'. He was of a similar character to his nephew .... John McKenzie - who was mentioned previously in these writings, but the nephew could not 'hold a candle' to the escapades of our dear, very likeable John. Alcohol would have been his greatest enemy, and it had been said in my hearing, and I really believe it myself, if he had been a temperate man, he would have had a career equal to his brother Hugh. When sober, which would last for three or four months, he was always well dressed, full of good looks with his beard and moustache carefully groomed, good physique, and as mentioned, full of charm and intelligence above the ordinary. The first episode which was told to me .... he left home when quite young, and got a job as a porter or something similar, on the Victorian Railways, and was stationed somewhere in Gippsland, 'something happened', and he had worn his boots off by the time he reached home. No. 2 hearsay - he got up to Charters Towers in Queensland during the gold rush, but unfortunately, he, the manager of a mine and the engineer, had to make a hurried departure from that fair city. No. 3 hearsay - 'something happened' at Kilmore, he was married then and had been apparently living there for sometime. We understand Uncle Hugh had to come to his rescue, otherwise the 'Prodigal' would have served a period in one of His Majesty's Prisons. Uncle decided it would be better if he left Kilmore, and decided to come to Geelong, bringing a wife and three daughters, where he stayed for many years, and where his wife and family had to leave him. The Connor family were in contact with him for several years, during my boyhood and teenage years. After 'coming out' of a bender, Uncle would be seen carrying or hawking around a basket of seedlings, next he would be seen pushing a hand cart around with pot plants, and on very rare occasions, he would rise to the great height of selling his goods from a horse drawn conveyance. Grandma was a very careful Scot, but the Prodigal oftentimes persuaded her to let him have a couple of sovereigns (coinage of those far off days).

He would come 'broke to the world' in a hansom cab and order the cabbie to wait for him, as a result, Grandma would have to 'cough up' as the cabman would have to be paid. To his credit, to my knowledge, he never asked our Mother for any hand-outs. After Grandma died at the age of 91 years,

Uncle lived with his eldest daughter in his declining years. He was in his 80's. What a constitution!

The next and last member of the family, Auntie Doll, I knew little of her early life, there was only one remark said during this period that the writer can remember ..... it was 'She used to fire the "bullets" for Aunt Jessie' ..... one could not hold anything against my Aunts, it could just be a part of family life. Auntie Doll was unfortunate in that she married a man who became a very heavy drinker, he had a good farm and farmed it well until the drink took its toll she had a family of eight and one could say she and her family liked the Connors when the family were growing up. I knew some of the eldest of the family as they stayed with us during their school days and we found them quite nice kids. I have heard later in life that they all did pretty well for themselves, hard-working and good citizens, and would be well known around Maroopna, where they lived after leaving the farm.

Copied from Uncle Vic's 11 page hand-written written effort. Typed 26 November, 1978.

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