

*"They were the Depression years but
happy days at Carrum Primary School."
1930-1939*



In the 1930s, few Australians escaped the effects of the economic depression. The families of Carrum State School community endured varying degrees of hardship and the Head Teacher, Mr. James Raines, had challenges of his own.

In compliance with departmental requirements, the school now included horticulture in its curriculum, using the vegetable gardens established several years before. However in 1930, the school spectacularly exceeded its water allocation, using 189,000 gallons instead of the usual 50,000.

After some investigation, it was discovered that the school grounds were being used by people outside school hours as a temporary campsite and communal resource.

Vegetables were taken, water taps left running and the flagpole halyard was stolen – to be used as a clothes line. Lead flashing from the roof was also removed and some of the play equipment damaged.

For many of the children, the desperate times were incidental to their daily lives at Carrum State School.

Keith Blackson attended Carrum from 1934 until he moved to Malvern in grade 5. His father worked on the railway bridge.

"That was in the middle of the Depression, when things were really tough. I didn't realise it because I always had something to eat. I always came with bread and jam but I thought that was pretty normal because all the other children came with it as well."



Children ate their lunch in a shelter shed and played cricket. He remembers Carrum being "the bush, really". There were no more than 15 houses in Church street and very few cars. He and his peers killed snakes before playing cricket in what was a sandy, ti-treed area. Keith has fond memories of teachers kicking the footy with children and games including "cherry bobs, alleys and top seasons".

Keith recalls 50 – 60 children and one teacher for three grades in each of the two rooms in what is now the administration building. He liked the opportunities for responsibility and special tasks:

"I was quite happy to get the wood to collect for the fire. If you behaved yourself, you could do those things – be the ink-well monitor."

The original school entrance was located on the corner of Valetta Street and Walkers Road. In 1935, this was moved to 100 metres further up Walkers Road.

Of far more interest to a boy like Keith was the discovery of a large fish washed up on the beach and brought around to the school on a dray in 1936. Less pleasant was his memory of six months spent at Fairfield Hospital for diphtheria during an epidemic that caused the closure of the school for six weeks. Keith recalls the sanitary conditions of the school as basic, with no pull-chain toilets, "just pans".

Peg Flanagan (nee Kerlake) started in prep at Carrum in 1928. She remembers playing the piano while the children marched. She recalls "boogie" (lice) inspections, saying the oath and the Carrum landscape at the time.

"The area near the fence at the corner of Valetta Street and Walkers Road was full of tadpoles. Poulson Street was sand dunes. Walkers Road and Whatley Street was a big pond."

Vera Wilson (nee Dannock) spent two years at Carrum from 1932. She can't recall doing homework but can remember the boys behaviour!

"Boys were terrible. They used to get flies and stick them in the ink well and flick them at you – or girls with pigtails, they used to dip them in the inkwells."

Jill Moncriff (nee Fox) remembers one boy who continually recited "Clancy of the Overflow". Vera Wilson also recalls inspectors checking on truants and mothers holding meetings in the shelter shed. Vera and Jill both mentioned that they didn't have excursions and that Carrum was still predominantly a holiday place.

THE "ONE MAN LIFE SAVING CLUB".

Both Vera and Peggy remember a boy who became very dear to the hearts of many in the Carrum community; Godfrey Jones, known to all as "Bossie".

Bossie had left Carrum State by the time Vera arrived but she recalled him as a young man.

"He was a big, fit looking man who saved many people".

For a hero . . .



BOSSY JONES

BOSSY JONES (the big man), who was fond of a beer is dead . . .

They'll miss him in the pub at Carrum where he'd raise a laugh by pouring a glass over his head.

But the people of Carrum are determined that big Bossy will always be remembered — as a hero.

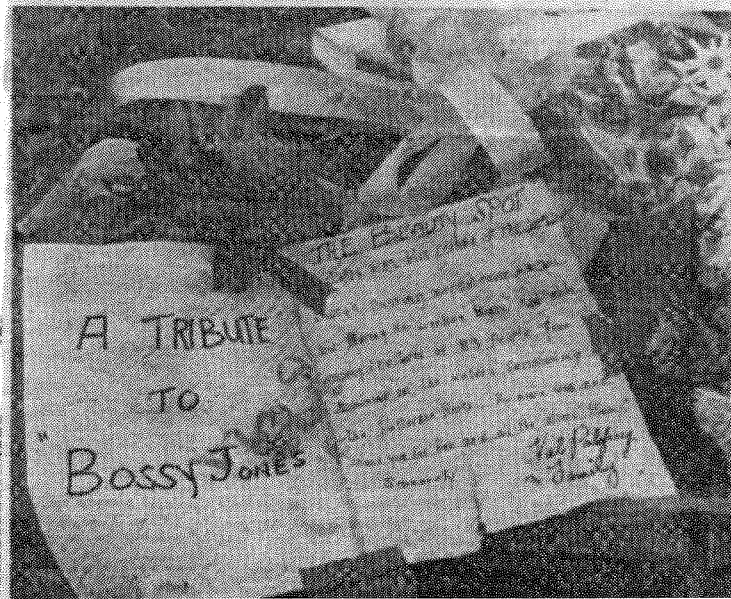
For Bossy was a one-man life-saving club credited with saving 83 people from drowning in the Patterson River.

A plaque in his memory is to be set up on the foreshore at Carrum and the local council will create a garden.

Neighbors found Bossy's body when they went to his Attunga Creek home where he lived alone — because they had not seen him for two days.

He was headed for a pauper's grave until the news of his death got around and an appeal was opened to pay for his funeral.

"We raised enough for a decent funeral in one day, with enough left over to put up a plaque," one of the organisers, John Hoyne, said yesterday.



"The way things are going it just made a bit of an effort you could build a lighthouse for him," Mr Hoyne said.

Carrum's feelings for the big fellow were justly well summed up in a poem read at his funeral late last week, and written by Mrs Lillian Fisher, whose daughter Christine was one of those Bossy saved:

"A gentle man who spent his time in friendly company, God's guardian of the river, that's what he seemed to be. He loved the open spaces, the sunshine and the sea, And the laughter of the children as they frolicked merrily. When danger threatened he was there to save all 83, The guardian of the river, that's what he seemed to be. Somehow it just won't be the same, dear Bossy, now you're gone. But in our hearts you'll always live, your memory imperishable."

One of the many local people who Bossy taught to swim was Mrs Peg Flanagan, who said yesterday that "all of Carrum thought the world of Bossy."

"I went to school with Bossy. He was awfully good at throwing pens into the ceiling and getting belted around the backside, but he beat that by shoving socks down his pants."

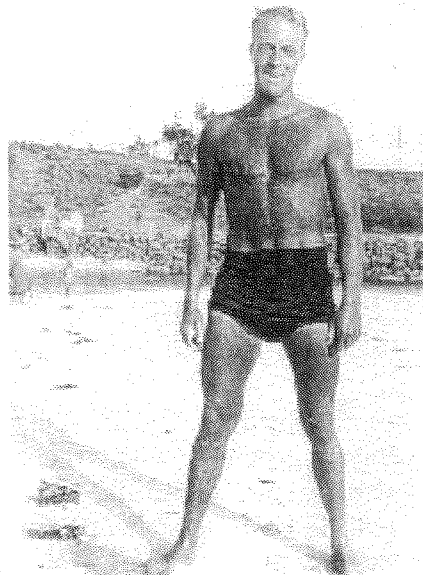
"All he wanted to do was get down by the river, lie on the sand and pull them out," she said.

And pull them out he did, in the days when the Patterson River was deep and treacherous.

Newspaper articles of the '30s record the young hero's feats of pulling five people out of the river in a week when he was only 16, and diving from a bridge fully clothed to save a young girl.

John Hoyne recalls that Bossy was a strapping young lad in his prime, and was a real legend as a shaver when he worked in the Carrum sanatorium.

Bossie gained a reputation for his remarkable record of saving the lives of 83 people from drowning in the Patterson River. A plaque at the "Beauty Spot" near the bridge calls him **Keeper of the River**.



At the time:

- * Australian Prime Ministers: James Scullin (29-32), Joseph Lyons (32-39), Earl Page (34-39) and Robert Menzies (39-41)
- * Don Bradman scored 974 runs in 1930
- * Sydney Harbour Bridge opened in 1932
- * Unemployment was 33% in 1932 but had dropped to 9% by 1939
- * 5000 Jewish refugees arrived from Germany in 1938
- * September 9, 1939, WW2 began