

Margery Fenton



Margery grew up at Dingee, on the family farm; she was the eldest of four children. Her father was a soldier settler from the First World War & her mother had been a teacher in the district. Margery remembers the property had sheep & her father grew wheat, which was sown & harvested with horse drawn implements.

The children attended the Dingee school until grade eight, then Margery was sent to Bendigo to complete her schooling to year eleven, during this time she boarded in private homes & said she was lucky to have had lovely people to stay with. As she had an interest in teaching, Margery was sent as a student teacher to a little school at Winnamboo near Manangatang, this was done so the student could see what to expect when they eventually became teachers. She remembers the 23 pupils & how isolated it was, with no mod cons & how she tried to start a little garden, but soon realized that the lack of water & carting it up in buckets wasn't ideal at all. Margery still thinks of those children fondly & to her joy, one of those pupils visited her at Northaven recently.

After trying an office job in Bendigo for a short time, she decided to go on with her studies to become a teacher. Her mother was keen for her to continue, because it had been a dream of hers to go to university, so with great sacrifice & good management, Margery's parents found a way to send her to college in Melbourne. It was war time again when she finished her studies. Margery applied & was successful to teach at Normanville. She has lovely memories of that time, it was while there that she met & later married a local farmer, only to be told by the department that married women were not allowed to teach, she said this astounded everyone as there was such a shortage of workers.

The farm was a busy wheat & sheep property, so Margery had plenty to do, particularly when her children arrived. She kept herself busy, cooking for the shearers, & she joined the CWA in the early days at Dingwall & during this time the Normanville school had been closed, so when there were 4 five year olds & 3 other children from the district already going to school elsewhere it was decided to reopen the school if Margery consented to be the teacher, as one of the children was her own. She decided to do so & said the mothers from the district helped by looking after her toddler daughter. Margery is very proud of her students from those days, "they have all been successful in their careers" she said. Eventually a replacement teacher was sent to take her place.

One of Margery's interests was Guiding, she had been a Lone Guide as a young girl & had continued her interest in the movement. She became a Regional Commissioner later in life, this took her to many functions & meetings, she said it was most enjoyable. When her children were at school she helped at

school functions & sporting events, taking the role of President of the Mothers club at one stage.

Margery had several hobbies, spinning & weaving, using wool from their own first cross sheep, even dying the wool as well. Some of her lovely work is still to be seen in her room.

She liked to plant native shrubs & trees around the farm & she developed new Iris varieties & had them registered, one she named after her mother who sparked this interest by giving her a subscription to an Iris magazine.

During those years Margery said she and her husband travelled to New Zealand & to England which was a wonderful experience. Margery & her husband were always interested in their community & worked hard to help their district in many ways. Her husband was a shire councillor for sometime, she said he was a compassionate man & could see a need to help families through stressful times. So a committee was formed including Margery & her husband, they worked to have Murray Mallee Family Care set up in our Northern District. Gradually the old Salvation Army hall was transformed into the present building. Margery served as President for some time. A plaque has since been placed on the outside wall of the building in honour of Margery & her husband's contribution to this outstanding achievement.

Sadly while serving as Shire President Margery's husband passed away, she felt the need to carry on his work so she stood for council & served the community for 5 years. Margery said it was a difficult time & she did her very best.

Carrying on through the years Margery was able to travel to Germany & England again to visit family. She has experienced many changes through her lifetime, and as her children grew up, left home & eventually had families of their own, Margery involved herself in other projects.

Eventually she settled into retirement and is still very interested in the farm, her family and the community.

After years of working ill health took its toll & with the need to be cared for & with the support of her family Margery moved to Northaven. She said she is quite comfortable, and really likes to sit back & enjoy her listening books & loves to join in the quizzing competitions. She also enjoys her strolls of a morning with Mr Brown when weather permits. But most of all enjoys visits from family & friends, she is very proud of her family.

Margery has many fascinating stories to tell. We have only touched on a few. PS. Recently Margery was invited to attend Govenment House to honour the work Murray Mallee Family Care does in our district. She felt very honoured to be invited but was unable to attend so her daughter went as her representative she told Margery it was most interesting & she met friends that had been involved in setting up this organization.