

Charles Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Oxford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

H. B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES

*Arthur Charles Towsey
Henley upon Thames
Oxon.*

Edmond Towsey

NAME: Arthur Charles Towsey
aka Arthur Van Towsey (from 1945)

BIRTH DETAILS: 13 January 1913 Hamilton NZ

DEATH DETAILS: 12 February 1985 Auckland NZ

CHART REF: Towsey Chart A1

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 1st M: mid 1935 Auckland

SPOUSE: Marie Aline Pageau (divorced 1946)

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 2nd M: 17 October 1947 Melbourne

SPOUSE: Peggy Evelyn Knibb

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 3rd M: 19 October 1979 Sydney

SPOUSE: Sylvia Dorothy Smith

PART 4 OF 5

Judging by the date of the newspaper articles announcing the car park in the city, it is likely that Van was already discussing this development by the middle of 1954, with his friends at Fuller Theatres Ltd.

As mentioned earlier, Van's friend, Sir Ben Fuller had died in 1952, so the decision to invest in an American style multi-storey car park, had probably been taken by Garnet Carroll, the new head of the company.

There are a number of interesting points about the female 'car hops' article. The first is the blatant, condescending sexism.

Whilst it is obvious that Van and the journalist have played up the whole sexual aspect of what would otherwise be a rather dreary article about a car park, it is also an accurate reflection of the pinnacle of sexism in Western society, between the end of the war and the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s.

From a marketing perspective, you would have to admire Van's ability to generate hype about the most mundane subject.

In the event, I do not remember there ever being female parking attendants at Grand Central Car Park. My memory is of what looked like male university students working part-time.

From a practical perspective; just how safe would it have been to leave a couple of young women alone in a car park overnight, dealing with drunks and gangsters?

Because it was built on a hill, the four levels of the car park were each accessed by a separate entrance, with the top level being entered at the uphill corner of the building.

During the night, the remaining cars were all moved down to the lower two levels, where they could be supervised by fewer staff, at just two exits.

The necessity of moving cars about, so as to best utilize the space, meant that the keys had to be left in the cars.

Perhaps the most remarkable point of this article, to modern eyes, is the suggestion that mothers could just leave their children in the cars for a couple of hours, whilst shopping in the city.

**Grand Central
Car Park**

**Little Collins Street — between
Swanston and Russell Streets**

Applications are invited for a limited number of "Reserved" parking spaces in this ultra modern and centrally situated Car Park now under construction and scheduled for completion this year.

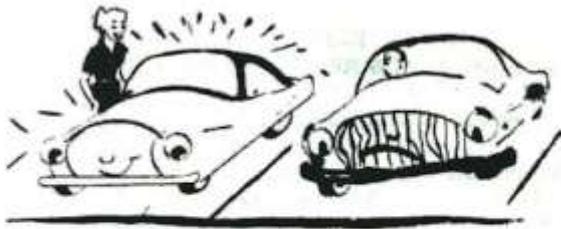
Spacious indoor parking will be available Monday to Friday from 8.15 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., Saturday 8.15 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the charge for such spaces will be £3/15/0 per week.

Allocation of a "Reserved" space entitles the user to have possession of an identifying disc which will be transferable.

Cars parked under this arrangement will be available in and out at any time of the day.

Applications may be mailed to:-

**GRAND CENTRAL CAR PARK,
C/o F. L. Birch,
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Now for the

girl "car hops" in a new city park

WOMEN drivers take a bow! Melbourne men will soon be allowing a group of girls to park their cars . . . and they'll be happy to do it.

For when an American-style drive-in car park opens in Little Collins st. on January 17 it will be staffed entirely by uniformed female "car hops."

This in itself is a great enough compliment to the ability of women in handling cars, but even more flattering are the reasons which Mr. A. Van Towsey, manager, gives for employing them.

The car park is under the direction of Fuller Theatres Ltd., and the reasons are based on the findings of Mr. A. Ben Fuller during a recent study of car parks in America and Sweden.

In his eyes women are more suited than men for the job because they:

- Handle cars with greater care, and don't slam doors, skid tyres, &c.;
- Always look happy and don't have the surly approach that men frequently do;
- Take a much more personal interest in the cars than their male counterparts, and
- Have a greater sense of responsibility, resulting in fewer scraped mudguards.

All Mr. Towsey now wants are the right girls. He needs five for each of the four parking levels, first of which will be

opened on the 17th., and the others a few weeks later.

"It's a job that should appeal to a lot of girls who don't like stodgy nine-

to-five routine," said Mr. Van Towsey.

"The girls will wear a nice faded blue denim uniform, which has just been exclusively designed, and their job will be to take over each car at the entrance, park it, and return it to the entrance when the owner is ready to leave."

Mr. Van Towsey also believes the girls will be a great help to women shoppers, who will be able to leave their children in a car for a couple of hours, and know that an attentive eye will be kept on them.

"And they'll be able to do this happily, too, for the girls we get will be nice types," he said.

The car park will be the latest in convenience in every way. There will be no waste space with ramps, because the four levels will be reached by four street entrances — two in Russell place, and one each in Royal lane and Little Collins st.

It will be a 24-hour, seven days a week service, with space for 400 cars.

Spacious restrooms have been planned, and the row of shops beneath the structure will include a coffee shop, pharmacy and dry cleaners for the convenience of motorists.

My guess is that this brilliant idea just popped out of Van's creative marketing imagination on the spur of the moment. Again, I doubt that this ever happened, but it was the sort of thing that mothers would do in those days, without raising any eyebrows. If parents were concerned at all about any aspect of leaving children unsupervised in the car, in was that they might let off the handbrake.

Although Van started working at Grand Central Car Park in 1954, the family did not move from Ringwood until early in 1955, when the garage was sold to Bill Patterson, a famous racing driver who was building a chain of car dealerships.

Van and Peggy had found a lovely three bedroom, late Victorian house in the comfortable suburb of Kew, on a quarter acre block with many well developed trees.

On the day that we moved in, in April 1955, Van had borrowed an old 1920s truck to move the last of our furniture and we all sat up in the front, with the dogs on the tray at the back.

The two dogs were happy with their new, bigger garden and Sally, the large, mild-mannered Alsatian, rushed all over the place checking out her environment. This included going next door to the Gibby house, where the grandmother was sitting in a chair on the front veranda. Sally bounded up and greeted the new neighbour by jumping up and

putting one front paw on each of the frail old lady's shoulders.

Although the grandmother died a week later from a heart attack, nobody in any way blamed this on Sally. But then, it was decided that a back garden in Kew was not a suitable place for the two big dogs and we children accepted the story that they had gone away to a farm to live. What we could not understand, was why it would be impossible to go and see them there.

The appearance of an edifice like the Grand Central Car Park these days, would stir no passions other than perhaps complaints about vehicular intrusion, but in culturally insipid Melbourne of that time, it was a symbol of the arrival of modernity. It also introduced Van to a whole new social set of the sort of self-made men whom he admired. These men were gangsters.

Because the car park remained open twenty four hours every day, it was a convenient and secure place for those enjoying the night life, to leave their cars.

Of course much of the nightlife of those days was illegal, as bars closed at six in the evening and most gambling was banned.

The Argus, Melbourne, Wed. 29th Dec. 1954

As a consequence, many of those running nightlife establishments were members of the criminal fraternity. And a fraternity it was too.

Until late in the twentieth century, Australian society was riddled with corruption. The organized crime was well organized and encompassed the police, politicians and many leading business people.

Of course the crimes, before drugs were such a big thing, were also more acceptable, being mainly involved in gambling, prostitution, after hours drinking clubs and of course burglary, particularly on the waterfront, before containerization put an end to that entire line of business.

One of Van's friends at that time was Freddie (the Frog) Harrison.

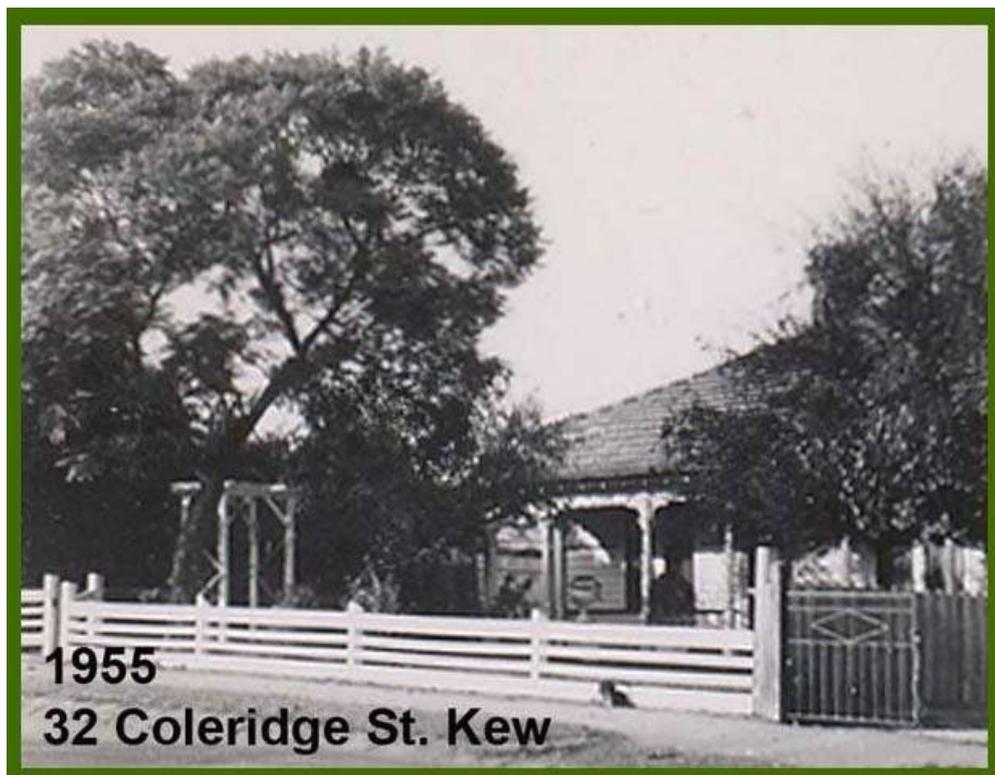
In those days of sombre black cars, Freddie drove a large white American convertible; a 1953 Ford Customline. He was head of the waterside workers gang and an often reported 'personality' in the Melbourne newspapers.

Everybody, including Peggy, seemed to like him, choosing to overlook the fact that he had a habit of gunning down his gangland rivals.

One widely reported incident in 1950, for which he was actually arrested and tried, was the attempted murder of a rival in a drive-by shooting. On this occasion, Freddie was seen in the back seat of a car, firing a Tommy Gun (a Thompson Machine Gun; popular with Chicago gangsters in the 1930s). Nobody was actually killed on that occasion, but despite a number of witnesses, after all sorts of representations by Freddie's slick lawyer and some witnesses who decided that it was better to disappear for awhile, the judge finally directed the jury to acquit Harrison's accomplice and the jury found Freddie not guilty after just one hour.

When he married for the second time, all of Melbourne's leading criminals attended.

Peggy most remembered the reception, where the matriarch of the underworld, who had been moll to



Melbourne's most infamous gangster, Squizzy Taylor, earlier in the century, was treated with the deference normally reserved for royalty. Although I do not remember it, my elder sister and I were apparently guests, on another occasion, at the birthday party of the daughter from his first marriage.

Van's many shady friends included not just gangsters, but police officers as well. One whom I remember, was a friend of Van's for all the time that he lived in Melbourne and about a decade later, Van told me that if I were ever to get



into trouble with the police, that I should ask to see that detective, who was by then head of the Criminal Investigation Division in St.Kilda, which was an area at the centre of Melbourne's underworld.

There was a certain level of drug smuggling in the 1950s, also controlled by the waterside workers, but in those days it was mainly opium and heroin which, after being trafficked by Freddie and his cohorts, disappeared into the mysterious, detached world of Melbourne's large Chinatown. So, of no real concern to the authorities.

My strongest memory of the car park and the city streets around it, is of tall, grey stone buildings lining mysterious, gloomy streets, double-breasted suits with wide lapels, wide-brimmed hats that dipped in the front and of course, walking about those magical cars in the enclosed spaces of the car park; looking up at the proud, vertical grills, framed by sweeping mudguards that curved down to long running boards: The smells; warm engines, oil and leather upholstery. It was the very epitome of American Film Noir. The only thing missing was Humphrey Bogart.

As I mentioned, because it was necessary to move the cars about in the car park, the keys had to be left in the ignition. This was not usually a problem because of good security.

On one occasion, a newlywed couple arrived for their first night together in a fancy hotel, with all of their wedding presents in the car. They were naturally reluctant to leave it unlocked, but were persuaded by Father's usual overwhelming confidence.

It was never discovered who the thieves were, nor how they got the car out without being seen, but as soon as the loss was discovered, Van was on the phone to Freddie.

In a perfect demonstration of the interconnectedness of Melbourne's criminal fraternity, the car was returned within hours, with all the wedding gifts just as they had been left.

When the blissful newlyweds returned in the morning, there was no evidence of the night's drama and Van explained the fact that the car had been spotlessly cleaned, with not one finger mark remaining, as the management's wedding gift.

I remember one day in early 1958, two police officers, with whom Van seemed to be very familiar, coming to visit him at home. I learnt many years later that they had come to warn him to stay clear of Freddie, as rumours of danger were circulating around the criminal community.

Sure enough, soon afterwards, Freddie had half of his head blown away by a criminal rival, from a distance of about one metre. Despite thirty men being in the immediate vicinity, there were no witnesses. Even the man standing next to him, who was covered in Freddie's blood, had seen nothing.

In his evidence, he explained without any hint of irony, that as the shotgun blast had come from the left, he immediately turned right and walked off without looking back. Of the other 28 men nearby, about half had been occupied in the toilet at that moment. A toilet built to accommodate two.

Such was the code of the waterfront.

Everybody knew who had done it, but nobody was ever charged. But then, one gets a clear impression that the police investigators were merely going through the motions.

When he was settled into managing Grand Central Car Park, Van tried his hand at distributing a new German car, called the Goliath.

This car was produced by the Borgward car company, which had been around since the 1930s. Borgward cars were a bit smaller than, but of comparable quality to that other German import of the time; the Mercedes Benz.

There were a reasonable number of Borgwards on Melbourne roads in the late 1950s, the nicest being the rather classy Borgward Isabella Coupe.

Goliaths had also been around since the 1930s, but had started out as small, three wheeled vehicles with two-stroke engines. In the mid 1950s, Borgward started making larger, four wheeled Goliaths and those that they

57
GOLIATH

2-TIME WINNER MOBILGAS ECONOMY RUN

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32 Hunter Street West, Newcastle NSW 1585

wanted to export to Australia had four cylinder engines.

Van seemed to have about three of these over about a year, but they never took off and the whole Borgward company went broke in 1960.

During his time at Grand Central, Van would often bring things home from work.

On one occasion he brought us a lovely new mantle radio, with many shortwave bands, that he had apparently bought for a very reasonable price from a regular car park patron, who happened to be a professional burglar, specialising in electrical retail. The radio had been dropped whilst getting it through a broken window, and the case was cracked.

On another occasion, he brought us a Labrador cross puppy that had somehow turned up at Grand Central. Van had called him Benjamin Fuller the Second, which was presumably meant to be a tribute to his late friend.

Benny was a lovely dog, but like all of the wide range of pets that passed through the Kew house, he died through some misfortune.

In about 1956, Van built an extension onto the side of the garage, to accommodate a car for Peggy, and a large shed behind that, in which he intended to build speed boats for the fast-growing recreational boating industry.

One reason for the rapid increase in pleasure boating, was the constantly improving Australian economy. Another was the recent development of boat hulls made from fibre-glass.

This had the advantages of not just being lighter than wooden boats, but also of being a lot quicker and cheaper to build. Van started out by building two conventional wooden boats, then spent a lot of time and effort producing a plaster

model of what would be the fibre-glass hull. This process took many weeks before it was ready to make the fibre-glass mould, in which numerous hulls would be fabricated.

Van employed a boat builder, called Fausto, who was probably the first foreigner with whom we children had had any contact. I do not remember now whether Fausto had recently arrived from Italy, or had been a prisoner of war who had chosen to stay on in Australia. One thing that I do remember about Fausto, was that his bright, lively Italian personality was in stark contrast to the plodding, uncultured locals. Before the arrival of Italians after the war, Australians had never even heard of broccoli or zucchinis.

The first boat to come out of the new hull mould, was also given a wooden deck. This was presumably so that Van and Fausto could be sure that they had got the process right, before



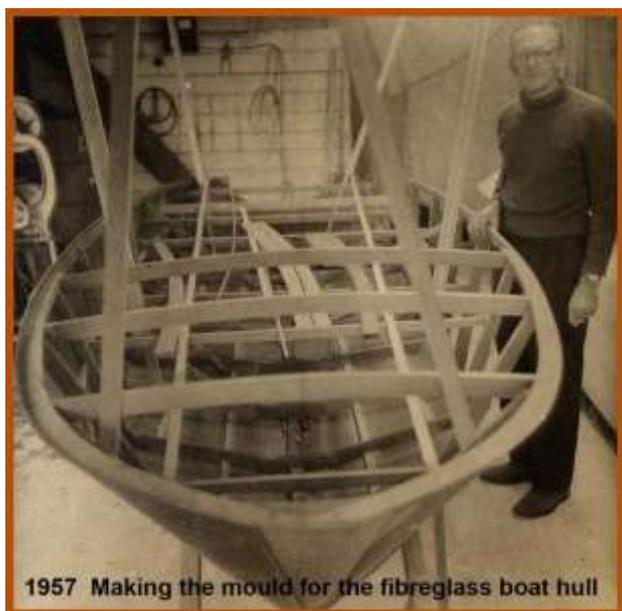
spending a lot more time make another mould, for the deck. These two photos from 1957, are of that first fibre-glass boat with the wooden deck. This would have been one of the very first fibreglass boats produced in Australia.

I am not sure exactly when Van finished working at Grand Central, or why, but it was probably in 1957 and may well have been so that he could go into business with a man called Murray Whitman, producing and selling speed boats.

Murray Whitman was probably the one who put up the money to build a small showroom, on land that had been a disused suburban railway line.

Exactly what sort of arrangement they had, I do not know, but I do remember Van working at the new showroom at some point.

This must have been after we got our first television set, in 1957, because we saw Van on the news one day, showing how thieves had broken into the place.



It was when they had finally started making all fibreglass boats, that Van gave them a specific brand identity.

The name 'Bay Boats' presumably refers to Port Phillip Bay, on which Melbourne is situated, but is also perhaps, an interesting link back to Van's involvement with Bay Motors, in the 1930s.

It was possibly in 1956, that Van started having an affair with his secretary at Grand Central.

Although I had forgotten it, apparently Van would take us to play in what I think was Powlett Reserve, in East Melbourne, then nick off to visit his girlfriend.

Irresponsible, dangerous parental behaviour? Not at all, by 1950s standards.

Anyway, Peggy eventually found out and apparently went to confront the brazen hussy. Rather than getting into a fight, the story that I heard is that they both agreed that he was not worth the effort.

Perhaps this was when Van started sleeping in my room, but then, that might have been another time.

My memory of the sequence of events for a few years after about 1958 is a bit confused, mainly because there was much coming and going. It is also difficult to put a date to when Peg and Van's marriage actually ended..

Until I started to really look into the details, I thought that Van's behaviour was always spontaneous and a bit irresponsible, but by modern standards, he was not doing too badly.

With what we might now regard as Attention Deficit Syndrome and after two decades on the move, Van had settled in one place and stayed married for over ten years. He had always tried to provide for the family and even after separating, continued to send financial support to Peggy, as well as paying off the mortgage on the house.

In 1958, Van abandoned the boat building business and his partnership with Murray Wittman.

Again, they probably just lacked sufficient finance to get the business securely off the ground.

Proof of this could be seen in the fact that Van sold his Austin A95 in 1958, replacing it with a dreary old panel van, which he kept for several months.

In 1958, the Melbourne industrialist, Arch Spooner got into the same business and, with lots of money, managed to establish his company, International Plastics, on a sound footing.

International Plastics built fibreglass boats under the Caribbean brand, as well as making under licence, American designed Bertram Boats. A couple of years later, they also took the franchise for importing Mercury outboard motors.

At some early point, the whole boating business became known as International Marine (A'asia) Pty. Ltd.

The company still claim to have been the first to build fibreglass boats in Australia, though Bay Star boats were bobbing about one year earlier.

It would though, be correct to say that Arch Spooner was the first to do so successfully.

Van worked with Arch Spooner from 1958, when he replaced the dreary old van with a new, Italian designed 1959 Austin Cambridge, in two-tone beige.

Van was certainly then back doing what he did best, concentrating on sales expansion, whilst others did the bean counting.

He held several different positions in the company that saw him coming and going from Melbourne, spending long periods away, often in Sydney.

At some point, in about 1960, Van had presumably left Arch Spooner to try his hand at something else that did not work out. After returning to International Marine, Arch sent Van down to southern Victoria for a spell, as a sort of punishment, to manage an oil exploration site.

Van finally moved to Sydney full-time, in 1961 or 62, as Arch Spooner's regional manager for New South Wales and Queensland.

Although Arch and Van seem to have been good friends, there also seemed to be an underlying tension within their business relationship, probably because of the proximity of two such strong-willed personalities.





Although he was then away for most of the time, we children just thought this was because he was doing a job in Sydney. He would come down every couple of months, for maybe a week and to be honest, we soon got used to not having him around. When he came to visit, it was always exciting but after some days, there was a certain relief in having him leave us again, to settle back into our quiet family life.

It may have been because he was then living in the city that he preferred, in the single style that better suited



him, or it might have simply been the inevitable stability of maturity, but the intense, dark aspect that had been a part of Van's personality since the war, steadily diminished after his move to Sydney.

For most of his time in Sydney, Van lived in the Kings Cross area, just east of the city.

After many years in the placid suburbs of Melbourne, he was back to the sort of exciting environment in which he felt more at home.

Kings Cross in the early 1960s, still had something of a village atmosphere; albeit a village filled with strip clubs, numerous bars and other assorted venues for the enjoyment of decadent pleasures. A bit like London's Soho.

Kings Cross had for many years, been inhabited by bohemians, fringe dwellers, a range of interesting misfits and gangsters.

Even with the prevalence of American servicemen, and of drugs, Kings Cross was still an exciting place to stay and Van lived in a number of different apartments, of differing quality, over the years.

A comfortable flat was not a big priority for Van, who thenceforth spent little time at home anyway.

It was just the sort of life that best suited him, and that is how he lived for the next couple of decades.

Despite his familiarity with underworld figures in Melbourne, I am fairly sure that Van made no such contacts in Sydney, preferring instead a social life based around the beautiful harbour, with those involved in aquatic pursuits.

Setting up his permanent office in Sydney, Van employed Dorothy Smith as his secretary.

Dorothy turned out to be the woman who understood Van better than anyone else and, more importantly, was also able to deal with his gregarious personality.

Van and Dorothy remained a couple for the rest of his life and it would probably be true to attribute this success primarily to Dorothy's natural spiritual inclination, which gave her an insight into the intuitive, subtle side of Van's personality, in spite of the sometimes outrageous or inappropriate expressions of his individualistic personality.

The other factor that would have contributed to their ongoing relationship, was that with the passage of years, Van had by then achieved some degree of the middle-aged stability that comes to even the most hyperactive.

This is not to say that Dorothy would just tolerate Van's bad behaviour. After he had finally bought himself a yacht, for cruising and racing. He took Dorothy sailing on the harbour one day and put her in charge of steering whilst he went below briefly, to collect something.

Emerging back on deck, Van saw that they were heading straight towards another yacht and, in the urgency of the moment, let fly with a few spontaneous criticisms of Dorothy's failure to take evasive action.

Rather than just accepting such rudeness, Dorothy vowed to never set foot on his boat again and, as far as I remember, she never did. But then, I do not think that sailing was really her thing anyway.

I must say though, that Dorothy's quiet punishment did seem to introduce a small note of consideration into Van's aquatic leadership style, thenceforth. It was slightly amusing to observe how he would sometimes struggle with his natural impatience, in directing whatever crew he might have for the day.

When Van chose which yacht to buy, it goes without saying that he managed to secure a special deal. He also chose a boat that would be about the largest that he could handle on his own. This was so that he could go out on the water whenever he wished, without being dependent on the availability of a crew.

We liked to joke that it was actually because he was such a tyrant that nobody would sail with him.

Another New Job

The American car company, Chrysler, has often sought to expand their business by diversifying into areas other than their core motor vehicle manufacturing and, in early 1965, they bought a small US outboard motor company, with



TRADE NEWS April 1966

HEALING (SALES) APPOINT NATIONAL MARINE DIVISION SALES MANAGER

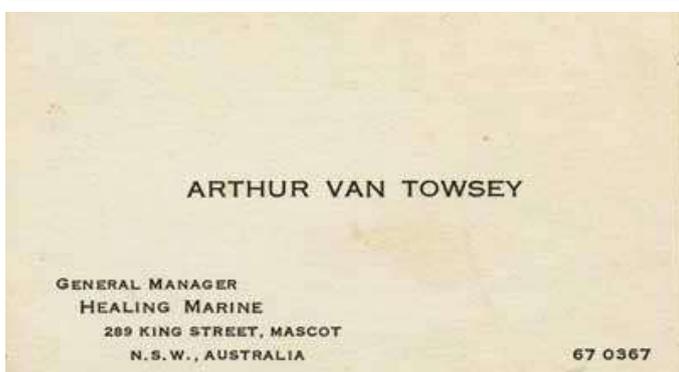
SYDNEY.—Healing (Sales) Pty Ltd, Australian distributors of Chrysler outboard motors and engine-and-stern-drive units, have appointed Mr Arthur Van Towsey to the position of national sales manager, marine division.

Mr. Van Towsey joined Healing (Sales) on April 4. He was formerly NSW manager of International Marine (Asia) Pty Ltd, Australian distributors of Mercury outboard motors and Mercruiser engine-and - stern - drive units. He is a well known marine trade personality of many years' standing; in Melbourne, together with Murray Wittman, he produced some of Australia's earliest fibreglass runabouts before joining in 1958 the service of Victorian industrialist Mr Arch. W. Spooner, who had then recently established International Plastics (Asia) Pty Ltd, manufacturers of Caribbean fibreglass boats. In 1962, he came to Sydney as manager for NSW of the International group companies. Mr. Van Towsey was born and educated in New Zealand. He was wounded in 1941 in Crete while serving with the 2nd NZEF and after being invalided home went to sea for two years as purser on the Shaw Savill liner "Waipawa".

Knows Small Businesses

In 1943 he was appointed regional officer for the Dominions in the British Council, London. When World War 2 ended, he became personal assistant to the managing director of the big Beecham Export Corporation (UK) and came to Australia for Beecham Group interests in 1947, resigning in 1950 to remain and settle here. He is no stranger to the operation and management of small businesses; his first Australian venture was a motor garage business in Ringwood, Vic., which he subsequently sold to well-known racing driver Bill Patterson.

Mr Van Towsey's headquarters are in the Goulburn Street, Sydney, executive offices of Healing (Sales) Pty Ltd. He has already made several interstate trips to visit Healing (Sales) marine division people in other States.



hopes of making big profits in the pleasure boating industry.

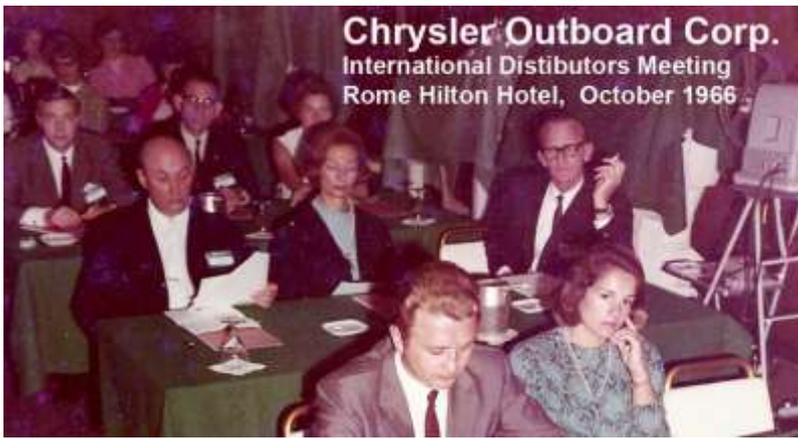
Although Chrysler had set up an Australian branch in the 1950s, initially assembling modified American cars, then manufacturing the Valiant from the early 1960s, they chose to franchise out the distribution of their outboard motors.

In April 1966, Van went to work for A.G.Healing, an Australian manufacturer of televisions and white goods, who had taken the Chrysler franchise for selling outboard motors. Van became General Manager of their new Marine Division.

It was with this job, that Van left Australia for the first time in eighteen years, to attend the annual global sales meeting of the Chrysler Outboard Corporation, at the Cavalieri Hilton Hotel in Rome, in October 1966.

The whole trip took just eighteen days, six of which were spent in Hong Kong, at some sort of regional meeting. This gave Van time to have made, several of the finely tailored Italian designed suits for which the 1960s have become famous.





1966 turned out to be a big year for Van.

In December he was elected President of the national Marine Association; a lobby group for businesses within the marine industry.

As far as I know, this was not a paid position, though he did have an expense account and a paid membership of Sydney's exclusive Royal Motor Yacht Club, in Rose Bay.

Van only ever used this membership for business entertaining, not just because it was very expensive, but also because the atmosphere of the club was not the sort of place where you would feel comfortable enough to actually relax.



September 1967 Chrysler Annual Global Conference, Zurich

maybe even coming to terms with his war-time memories.

Perhaps he also met up with his old Greek friend, Costa Tantos; the war-time interpreter for 21 Battalion.

After the conference in Zurich, Van spent a couple of days in Lisbon before flying to New York, where he visited Chrysler headquarters.

From there he flew to Auckland on 28th September.

This was the first time that he had seen his brother, Pat, since 1948.

Mr Van Towsey

Boating group election

MR Arthur Van Towsey was elected president of the National Marine Association of N.S.W. at the annual general meeting at Royal Motor Yacht Club, Rose Bay, last week.

Mr Van Towsey said he hoped to lead the Association toward greater promotion of boating as a pastime and in obtaining better facilities for the boating public.

The constitution of the association was amended to allow affiliate membership for clubs representing boat owners and users.

Mr Van Towsey said he believed the association could become a spokesman for all boating enthusiasts with the support of these clubs.

Mr Van Towsey is national manager of the marine division of Healing (Sales) Pty. Ltd., Australian distributors of Chrysler outboard motors.

He has long experience in the marine industry and was associated with the commercial production of the first fibreglass boats in Australia.

December 1966

The 1967 Chrysler meeting was held in Switzerland, and on this occasion, Van spent three weeks going around the world.

During this trip, Van stopped off in Athens for one day, and I wonder if this had something to do with revisiting, or

One of Van's main duties as President of the National Marine Association, was to organize an annual boat show in Sydney, which then extended to a show in Melbourne, as well.

BIG PLANS FOR SHOW



SYDNEY'S first International Boat and Sporting Show which will be held at the Showground from July 26 to August 3, was "launched" at the Royal Motor Yacht Club last Tuesday night.

The occasion was a special meeting of the National Marine Association of N.S.W., at which the president, Mr Arthur Van Towsey, announced the plans.

Chief among them was the announcement that Exhibitions Promotions Pty. Ltd., a subsidiary of the world-wide Thomson publishing and exhibition group, would organise the show.

Mr Trevor Riddell, managing director of Exhibition Promotions, who will direct the organisation, said that it would be the biggest and best boat show in Australia. "Sydney is the place for

National Marine Association officers discuss the show. They are, from left, Messrs Leon Simons (treasurer), Don Clarkson (vice-pres.), Arthur Van Towsey (pres.) and John Iemey (sec.). 1968

boating," he said.

He pointed out that New South Wales, with 62,697 powered boats, 10,000 sailing craft and several thousand rowing and professional boats, as at June 30 last, had 39.9 per cent of the total boat population of Australia.

Most of the main exhibitors were at the meeting and were interested in big displays showing the preliminary lay-out of the exhibition halls.

These preliminary plans already provide for 66,818 square feet of space, against 33,000 square feet at the 1967 show.

They also define spaces for 124 displays in the Manufacturers Pavilion, Commemorative Pavilion, Arts and Crafts Pavilion,

with a possibility of expansion into the A.M.P. Pavilion, the Hordern Pavilion and the Rothmans Theatre.

Mr Riddell also revealed plans for mannequin parades for the modelling of aquatic and boating sportswear, and a new emphasis on displays of chandlery, sportswear, camping equipment and many other supplies which can be given a new emphasis.

He urged exhibitors to pay attention to the displaying of tents and other camping gear, which can be carried in boats on trailers.

CHRYSLER BULLETIN

31/68

APPOINTMENT - OUTBOARD DIVISION

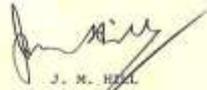
ARTHUR VAN TOWSEY
MANAGER

Effective August 1st, 1968, Mr. Van Towsey assumed the position of Manager, Outboard Division.

Mr. Van Towsey was previously General Manager of A.G. Healing Marine Division. He is widely known in Marine circles throughout Australia and is at present President of the National Marine Association of N.S.W.

In this new appointment Arthur has full management responsibility for overseas ordering, stock control, marketing and sales promotion and invoicing. His duties also include control of outboard stocks and personnel located in other Capital cities.

He will report directly to the General Manager, Truck and Diversified Products Division.


J. M. HILL
GENERAL MANAGER - TRUCK & DIVERSIFIED PRODUCTS DIVISION

19th August, 1968

3042-87

In 1968, Chrysler decided to put the sales of their outboard motors under the control of Chrysler Australia. Van went over with the business and was then working within the well-organized global management structure of the Chrysler Corporation, with all of its modern management and reporting systems.

This was all quite a shock to Van. This was his first taste of modern, systematized management.

What most bewildered Van, was the requirement to be constantly filling in, and ticking boxes in performance reports, that presumably all fed back up a very long line of management, to some grand head office in America.

Another incident that Van related, was when he had bought his new yacht and was thinking about the type of lettering to use on the side. The name of his boat was 'Avant', which in Italian would mean 'Forward', if it had an 'i' at the end. Otherwise, it is French for 'before'. Anyway, the name implied going boldly forward, but was also a sort of acronym for Van's name; A-van-T. Very cute!

MAJOR POLICY STATEMENT BY CHRYSLER

July 1969 "RESTRICTED FRANCHISES"

The Marine Division of Chrysler Australia Limited will restrict the number of its franchised outlets. This was stated to Boating Industry in an exclusive policy statement by Mr. Arthur Van Towsey (pictured), Manager of Chrysler Marine.



Mr. Van Towsey said that Chrysler's philosophy has always been to ensure that each retailer has a sufficiently large area of influence to make sure of profitability.

Chrysler intend to develop a restricted group of retailers who have a large enough market area to ensure that there is profit for the retailer and who can develop service facilities of premium quality for the customers of Chrysler Marine.

Mr. Van Towsey added that this development must be made on a step-by-step basis. "We have no desire to rock the boat by any over emphasis on sales at the expense of service or vice versa.

"The Chrysler vehicle business has developed long-term satisfaction with consumers through a plus in design and/or engineering performance. The marine development over the past four years has been most spectacular and with a completely revitalised product range, the new marketing plan developed by the Chrysler Organisation, would give selected retailers the 'something extra' in the Chrysler marketing tradition."

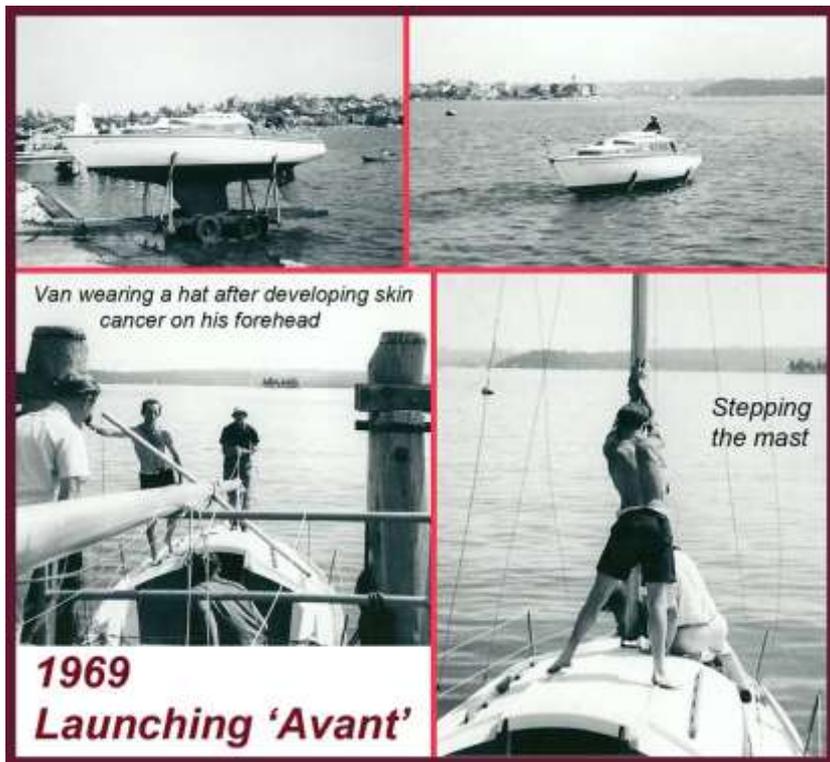
The first two new-image Chrysler marine retailer establishments will be operating shortly—one in Melbourne and the other in Sydney. Mr. Van Towsey declined to give further details regarding these two new outlets, but arrangements have been made for a pictorial presentation of these stores to appear in a future issue.

So, after pondering this for awhile, Van suddenly realized that the individual letters attached to the bonnet of his company car, said Valiant. All he needed to do, was go down into the Chrysler stores and get a set of these bold, chrome letters. And that is what he did.

This though caused whoever was in charge of stock control, to go into a fit of apoplexy, because the proper requisition forms had not been submitted through the proper channels.

Rather than being at all bothered by all of this broohaha, Van simply held this up as a contemptible example of the bean-counters taking over the world, launching into a rant about the dire consequences that such a lack of entrepreneurial spirit would have on the economy.

Although Van looked every bit the 1960s businessman, working for Chrysler was quickly losing its appeal and Van was very aware that this was because his management style was



that of the past, where force of personality was what counted most. In the new corporate world, men, and maybe a few women, were coming into business with university degrees and more subtle techniques of persuasion.

Perhaps because of the move from Healing to Chrysler, Van did not attend the 1968 Global Chrysler Conference, but he did go the following year, to Lisbon.

Soon after returning to Australia, Van reached the end of his time as President of the National Marine Association.

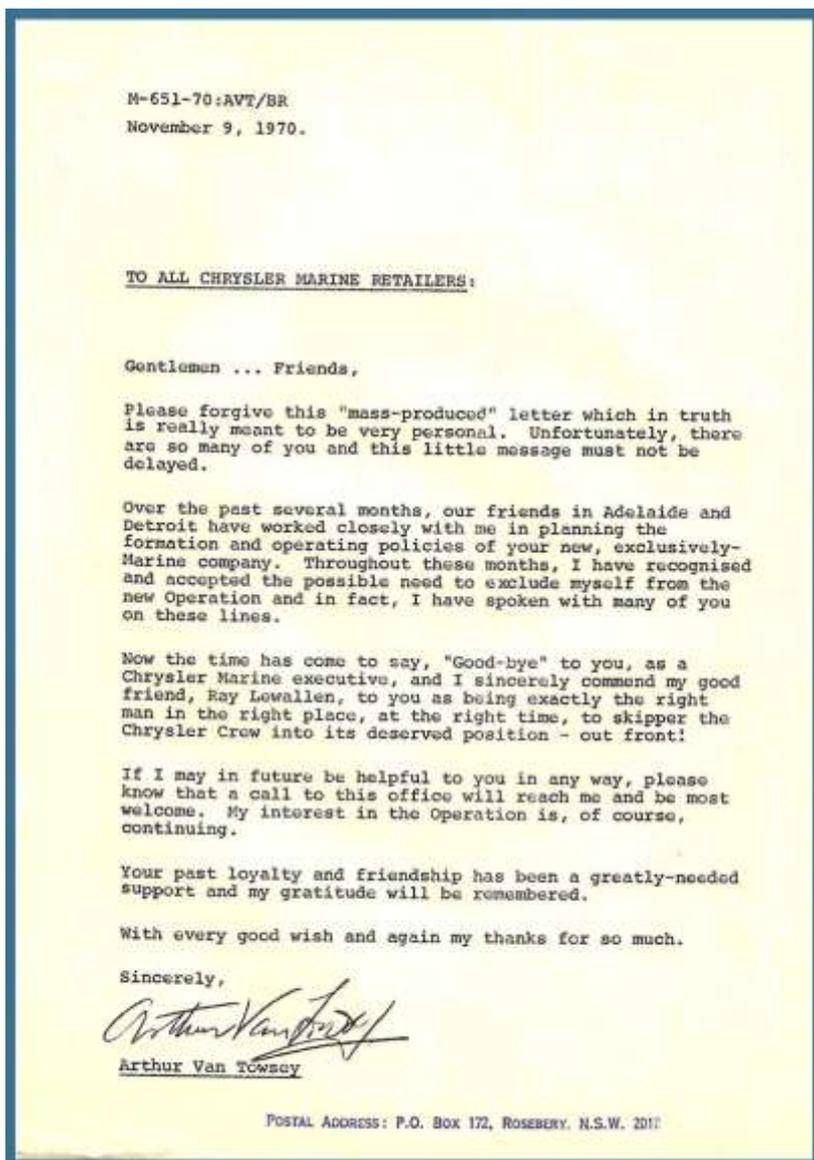
In November 1970, Van resigned from Chrysler.

What he was planning at that time for his future, I do not know, but he was also becoming rather tired of the whole power boat idea. He had always preferred sailing.

Van and Dorothy never, as far as I know, shared a flat whilst living in Sydney and, although she stayed in the same room from year to year, Van was in different Kings Cross digs every time I visited Sydney.

After Van left Chrysler and also moved out of Kings Cross to a small flat in the central suburb of Mosman, which was just up the hill from Middle Harbour.

The reason for this radical move away from 'The Cross', was twofold; for easier access to the yacht club and, more importantly, because Dorothy had given up secretarial work and bought a gift shop in the area, behind which she lived in a small flat.



As ever, Van's flat was just as big as it needed to be, as was his new car.

The last company car that I remember Van having at Chrysler, was unimaginatively called a Chrysler, by Chrysler. This was basically a Valiant, but with a slightly different roof and all sorts of luxury doodads on the inside.

Having to now actually buy a car himself, Van opted for a ten year old Simca Aronde, which was a small French car that had sold well in Australia for about a decade up to the early 1960s.

I should point out, that Van was never impressed by displays of opulence or extravagance and always lived in a frugal manner: His life was perhaps, an incongruous juxtaposition of asceticism in the middle of Sydney's decadent heart.

Van's asceticism extended beyond his bare apartment and simple little car, to also encompass his diet, which was, well, almost non-existent.

Staying with Van, I had to constantly remind him that I needed to sometimes eat.

Dorothy would presumably reel him in from time to time for a meal, but apart from that, he seemed to survive mainly on coffee, cigarettes and ready-salted prana in the wind coming off his sails.

Van did not spend very long away from Kings Cross.

Probably in early 1971, he bought a twenty five percent share in a block of thirty one serviced apartments, called The Roosevelt, right at the centre of The Cross. This is not to be confused with the Roosevelt nightclub, which operated in Kings Cross up until the 1950s.

The Roosevelt had been built in the 1930s and had the dark, polished wood decor that was popular before the war. It was clean and well maintained, but getting to the point where a comprehensive modernization should have been undertaken.

Along with his share of the business, Van also took on the role of manager and caretaker, living in yet another small flat, on-site.

Van and Dorothy finally married in a quiet ceremony in 1979.

Although I do not remember the exact year, it was at about this time that Van had an operation to remove a small bowel cancer.

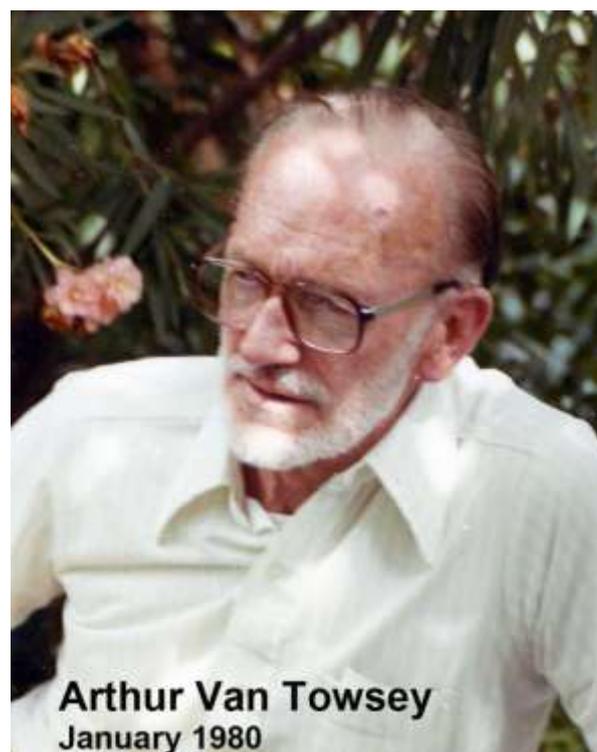
In what might be called some sort of cosmic connection, or just pure coincidence, Peggy had the same operation at almost the same time. Both procedures seemed to have been successful.

It was also at about this time, maybe earlier, that Dorothy sold her gift shop in Mosman. Van also, had retired by then and they decided to move over to Auckland, where they bought a very nice house at Laingholm, with a spectacular view overlooking the Manukau Harbour.

Upon entering the house, one was immediately enveloped in the atmosphere of lightness and space; of simple, uncluttered modernism that reflected mainly Dorothy's spiritual personality, but also with touches of Van's rational asceticism. It was a place of peace and calm; a retreat from the hectic past of Sydney.

Dorothy took me on a tour of the very large garden, where every plant was her personal friend and every visiting bird seemed to have been drawn by her personal concern for their welfare. The only very slightly discordant note, was the chickens, who sometimes had to be rounded up, rather than merely returning to their coop after a verbal directive had been issued.

Seeing Dorothy achieve exactly the goal that she had set herself, was a testament to the power of one-pointed ideation, when that idea is backed up by the strength of a pure character.



It was in the following year, that Van was diagnosed with lung cancer.

He had smoked for most of his life, but had given up several years earlier. Even a decade earlier than that though, I remember Van saying that in regard to his smoking, that the doctor had said that any damage that was going to happen, would already have occurred.

Van did have medical checks from time to time over the years and each time that they x-rayed his lungs, they were shocked to see what looked like cancerous growths.

When these had first been spotted, they turned out to be no more than the scars from his war wound, so when later x-rays showed dark patches, they were also dismissed, which was unfortunate, because by then, cancers were indeed growing and not just in Van's lungs.

With a quiet, rational determination, Van decided that as Dorothy had never really travelled abroad, that it would be a good idea to take her on a short foreign holiday, to get her used to travel. It was also only since moving to Auckland, that Dorothy had learnt to drive.

In October 1984, Van and Dorothy went firstly to Australia, to visit various relatives, before heading up to Hong

Kong and Japan, before returning to Auckland in November.

In Australia, they went up to Armidale, in northern New South Wales, to visit Dorothy's relatives.

At that time, both my younger sister and I were living not too far north of there, in Southern Queensland.

We took the two hour drive south and met up with Dorothy and Van in the motel where they were staying.

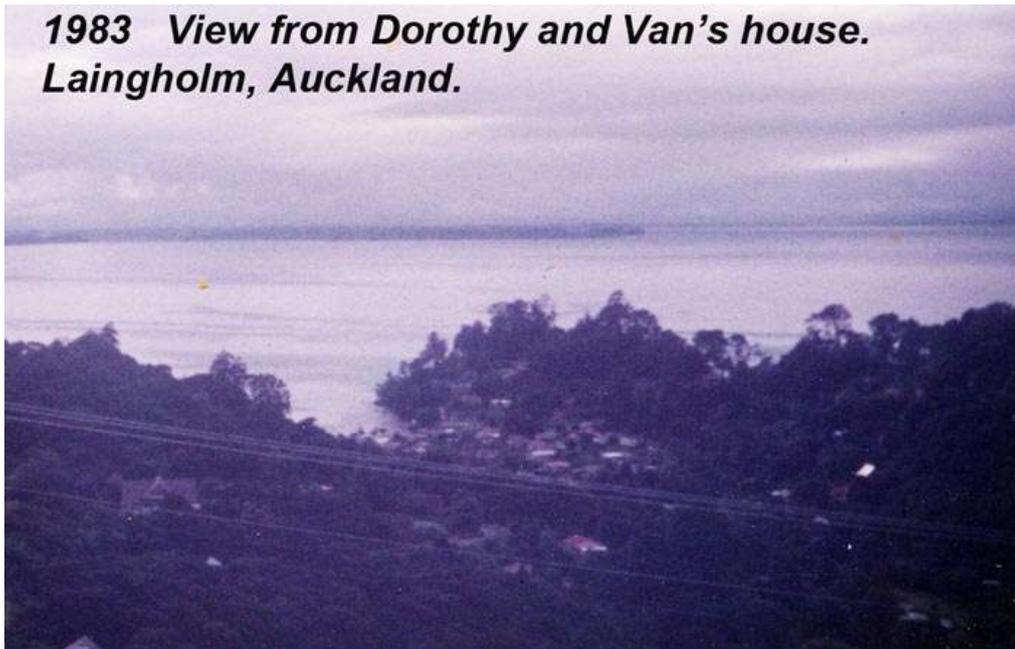
Despite his terminal cancer, Van looked and acted as if he were in perfect health.

We spent several hours

together in Armidale, but as evening drew closer, Van and Dorothy had to go and meet other people, so it was time to say goodbye.

Getting into the car and waving as we drove off, was a surreal experience; knowing that we would never again see our father who was standing there, looking perfectly calm, happy and healthy.

Van passed away in February, 1985, at home in Laingholm, which was not really too far from where his journey had started, 72 years earlier, in Hamilton.



**1983 View from Dorothy and Van's house.
Laingholm, Auckland.**