

History of Sandy Point

Sandy Point, the World's Best Kept Secret

My name is Margaret and my story about Sandy Point goes back to 1958 when my family first started coming here.

My father, Charlie McKay, found out about this wonderful place after my uncle Ken Barkas had become mates with Bill Henderson while they were on active service together in the Second World War.

After the war, Bill and Ken met again in Melbourne where Bill invited Ken to Bill's home town — Sandy Point. Ken fell in love with Sandy Point and before long he bought a block in Henderson Ave (now known as Anderson Ave). Soon after, Dad purchased land around the corner in Manuka St.

At weekends, Mum and Dad would pile us kids into the old Ford car and off we would go to Sandy Point. We would get up at 4am, with the excitement of a long trip ahead of us. We had many stops on the way from our home in Camberwell. We stopped at Tooradin, Korumburra and Fish Creek for petrol. The roads from Meeniyah onwards were unmade and the journey rough, dodging potholes along the way. When dad hit a pothole the mud would splash up all over our old Ford. My brothers loved it.

On the block at Sandy Point we had a little caravan. At night Dad would light the kerosene lantern and we could play cards. Snap and Sevens were the only card games we knew. There was no TV, mobile phones etc and if you needed to make a phone call from the phone box near the general store you had to make sure you had plenty of coins and not talk too long as long distance calls ate up the coins.

By day we would go and hunt rabbits with Dad: we loved it. My brothers also loved the tip where many treasures were found. They often bought back pieces of corrugated iron, boxes, you name it, the tip had it, and take it back to Dad who always had a use for everything.

We often would go and fish in the channel at Shallow Inlet. The road to the inlet was narrow and unmade, wide enough for one car only. If a car should come the other way you had to move right over into the bushes.

Dad had an old wooden rowboat and would row out to his favoured position from the boat hole. Then after fishing he would row back once more to the boat hole.



Margaret Paynter and her brothers Ian and Peter in their family's fishing boat in the inlet in the late 1950s. Note the poles in the background, which were used to dry fishing nets.

As children, we marvelled at the skill of the Hendersons weaving their way out of the boat hole into the channel.

The beach on Waratah Bay had big curly shells and mum, being a great walker, would walk from the track at the end of Manuka St to the entrance or, as it was called then, the mouth, where the sea and inlet met. Mum collected many shells which she displayed in her cabinet at home.

Dad knew lots of people at Sandy Point. He knew Bill and Roy Henderson and their families well. Also Dick Martin and his wife Peg and family. He knew the owners of Telopea Caravan Park and they allowed our family to have a shower there. It was such a luxury for us.

After much hard work and toil, weekend after weekend, Dad was able to get a small home built on the block. We loved our little house and Dad and Mum named it "The Sandfly Ranch". When in later years bigger homes were built it never worried us. This was Dad and Mum's castle and we loved it.

The roads of Sandy Point were unmade in the '50s and caused many a mishap as we children rode our second hand bikes to the general store for items.

Mum bought us six kids a Sandy Point t-shirt. They were the first that appeared at the general store. They had “Sandy Point, the World’s Best Kept Secret” on them. When we wore our t-shirts proudly in Melbourne people would ask us, where is Sandy Point? We never told them: it was our secret.

Recently I returned to Sandy Point and I saw so many changes. The people who now are the owners of Mum and Dad’s property, kindly invited my husband and I in to see our little house once more. It was a magical moment for me and it made me remember so much happiness there:

Dad sitting out the back at his little campfire.

Mum in the kitchen cooking the fish that Dad had caught.

Listening to the waves crashing in at night while laying in our beds.

The wind howling around us as we stayed snug in our little house.

The kangaroos and koalas in the bush across the road.

The inlet — tide in, tide out.

The sand dunes and the sand blowing on the wide sandy beaches.

The tip, the highlight of the boys’ holidays.

The general store.

The telephone box that sometimes worked and sometimes not.

These are my dreams that stay in my mind for ever.

Now my sons motor their boats out into the inlet to go fishing, but my grandchildren slide down the sand dunes the same as I did when I was a little girl. This is a magical place like no other. Sandy Point will remain with me for my lifetime.

Margaret Paynter.



Top: The store and cafe in about 1987.

Bottom: Manuka St, before the road was made up, about 1987.