



## **Oral History of Doreen Farah**

11 October 2020

Interviewed by John Koorey of the ALHS

Assisted by members of the ALHS

*JK: Doreen, all those who know you would agree that you have an enormous enthusiasm and joy for life, even throughout difficult times. So to start, tell us about your parents and your early years.*

**DF:** I was born on April 17, 1926 in Home Hill, Queensland, just south of Townsville, to Helenie and Norman (Noseef) Mellick. I have an older brother, Norman, and a younger brother, Phillip. When I was around three or four years old, my family moved to New South Wales.



*Doreen aged 5 years old taken in Home Hill, Qld*

My father, Norman, was born in Constantinople, Turkey, where his parents had been living at the time. Later they must have moved back to north Lebanon. Dad arrived in Australia between 1895 – 1898 and went to North Queensland, probably where he had some relatives and acquaintances. I never got to know any of his relatives, however, I assume he was encouraged to start a small business there, and most likely would have become a Hawker (a popular industry at the time) taking goods from one town or settlement to another. When he had saved a little money he took on a shop, but continued to do some hawking. I'm not sure whether Mum helped in the shop, she might have in some way, but she had three young children to raise, all close in age – one year or so apart, and all under 4 years old.

My mother was born in the Koura district, in Bterram. She was a Mellick, and my father was a Mellick also, but they were from different families. Mum came to Sydney at the turn of the century, when she was in her early 20's and stayed with her uncle, Aziz Mellick. He was living in Prince Street, Randwick, in Sydney. Somewhere along the way she was introduced

to my father, and then they married. It could possibly have been an arranged marriage. She was about 32 y.o. and he was around 45.



*Doreen's parents – married in Sydney in 1923*

You see, my parents died within a year or so of each other, leaving three very young children – I was around 13 years old. Some of the facts about my parents are vague, because having become orphaned at that young age, we were encouraged to make a life of our own. And, back then, young people weren't told things, and those around us were all trying to make the most of their new lives as well. And I didn't ask questions because I had so much to deal with after losing my parents. Things of course are much different today, where family is discussed freely and encouraged.



*Doreen (ages 3 yrs) with her mother, Helene Mellick, her brother Norman (far left aged 5) and younger brother Phillip (ages 2 yrs). Taken in Home Hill, North Queensland*

So we lived in Home Hill, Queensland. When business improved, Dad bought a new shop, a very nice shop, and this is the one I remember very well. We lived next door in a 2-storey Queenslander (on stilts), and the outhouse was in the garden. Also there was a theatre next door. I was very little but these things I remember well, and are my happiest early memories. I played with my two brothers and for us life was good, but I don't know how my parents felt.

Anyway before I started school, we moved to NSW where Mum had three or four brothers and she wanted to be closer to them, so we settled in Parkes, NSW. I remember we lived in Bogan Street. Dad opened a shop in Clarinda Street - we used to call them drapery shops, and he sold mens' and ladies' clothing and all sorts of household goods. We went to school at the local catholic school in Parkes. I don't remember any friendships from there because we were only there for about three years. When I was around 8 years old we moved from Parkes to Peak Hill, and this was around 1934.



*Doreen (aged 5) sitting on the lawn in the front yard of their home in Home Hill. Brother Phillip near her, her mother Helene with brother Norman and a nurse as Norman was sick with paralysis (but did recover).*

One of my mother's brothers lived in Molong where he had a business. It was difficult to make money there, and he had a young family to raise, so my father asked him to take over the business in Parkes which would improve his circumstances, and we moved to Peak Hill, about 30 miles away from Parkes where Dad opened another business.

So we settled in Peak Hill, my Dad had the shop, and my brothers and I continued school there.

Some nice memories from those days – I can remember at Christmas time we would be given two shillings (20c) each and we would go across to the Greek café and buy ice creams and lollies, all for two shillings a piece, and we were happy as Larry looking forward to Christmas celebrations. There was a Bank on one side of the shop and a Bakery on the other side. We lived above the shop, so there was a lot of activity around us, being in the centre of town. I can remember that my father built in the middle of the shop an oval-shaped counter with all different compartments where he displayed different things, to make it easier for clients to see what he sold. The shop was a General Store, again, with clothing and household items for sale, you know, a little bit of this and a little bit of that. And by now, since we children were all at school, Mum would help out in the shop.

My mother was a very caring and kind-hearted person. There was a large Aboriginal community in the area and they would come into the shop to buy goods. Mum felt bad for them because they looked like they didn't have enough, so Mum would say, "just a minute ...." and she would run upstairs and bring down some of our clothes to give to them. They would always go away happy, and that made her happy.

She always wanted to help other people when she could.



*Outside the family home, in Parkes, NSW. Doreen, aged around 10 with her mother, a cousin from America, and brothers Phillip and Norman*

Now, I remember that she was often unwell. She seemed to always be going to the doctor, and she was always having treatments, for what? I didn't know. (Of course they wouldn't tell the kids anything like that). Mum decided to consult with a Sydney doctor about her

illness, so she came down, and she was operated on quickly, and after two weeks she died – it was cancer.

By now I was in my early teens, so it must have been around 1941, and WWII had started. I remember the Convoys driving through the main street in Peak Hill (can't remember the name though), and we would write notes to give to the soldiers as they passed through, to cheer them on, and often they would give us notes back giving their addresses so we could write to them while they were at the Front.

For my father it was a terrible time after Mum passed away. She had gone to Sydney but never returned. Dad was older than Mum and he was lost without her. He had 3 youngsters and a business to look after, so we kids all pitched in to keep things going. We were all in shock, really. Our world had become very sad and confusing.

Mum had an uncle and aunt living close by in Aboud Avenue, and we were often there. My mother had spent a little time there before she went to the hospital. My brother Phillip, who always worried about her, would ask her "where are you sore, Mum? Where does it hurt?" He was so young but he worried that Mum was sick and wanted to help. It was a very sad time.

There were no other Lebanese families in town.

I left school to help in the shop and at home. And because the shop wasn't doing all that well (war years), my father would fill the car with a variety of stock from the shop and Monday to Thursday would drive around to the farms to sell the goods. So he went back to hawking to supplement our income. This was hard for him and for us kids at home. And so I became mother, sister, shopkeeper, housekeeper and cook and Dad had to rely on me to help out while the boys were at school.

About 18 months later, Dad passed away. There we were, three children orphaned in the space of 18 months, and Norman was just one year older than I was. After that each of us children was sent to a relative to live and we became separated.

*JK: This is so sad. Can you now tell me what happened to you and your brothers then? After the separation?*

DF: My mother's youngest brother, Stan Mallick, lived in Blayney and was the Executor of her Will, so he took care of disposing of the assets, and everything was sold off, except for a few things which were kept for me.

On thinking back, I was rather sad that I wasn't given the 100-piece Royal Doulton dinner set which Mum was paying off over a long period of time. Anyway, I probably wouldn't have known what to do with it then, so that's okay. Maybe I might have kept it in my trousseau. But at the time I didn't think about it. As it turned out, I did get married, I did become very happy, and had everything that I wanted.



So, Norman was sent to St Joseph's College in Sydney to finish his schooling, and then he went to Albury to join the Army Cadets – he was still a teenager. He probably lived in the barracks, or maybe billeted with a family. Phillip and I moved to Blayney to live with my Uncle Stan for a while then Phillip went to Sydney and lived with an old aunt in Redfern, who had asked him to live with her.



*Doreen Mellick aged 17 years old, Blayney, Central West NSW - 1943*

I stayed on in Blayney. My uncle's wife, Aunt Sylvia, was a beautiful person and she was wonderful to me. She was only about six years older than I was and we became very close. And I learned a lot from her. They had two children, Dewhyn and Robert, with whom I keep in touch. Sylvia was one of the Albury Maloufs.

It was still a difficult time for me as in the space of 12 to 18 months, I had lost both my parents; had been separated from my brothers; and had to leave my home and all that I was familiar with. Life was very confusing, but I settled into a routine. However, my aunt and uncle were very good to me and I am grateful that I was being looked after and that I had a home. You know, I could have been adopted out, and I don't know what would have happened to me then. So I was as happy as I could possibly be and I stayed with them for eight years.

Uncle Stan had a business, and as I helped in the shop I was learning by watching and doing. I was probably expecting that I would continue my education but that didn't happen, and I was needed to help in the business. *[JK Note: At that time, it was not uncommon for girls not to complete their education, instead going into the workforce. It was war-time and the effects of the Depression years were still being felt.]*

Of course, I also helped in the house, as well, with whatever had to be done, and I remember one of things I did was that I would wake up at 7.00am and cut the little chips of wood to light the fuel stove. It was very cold in winter in Blayney, but we managed with it. Sometimes my aunt would work in the shop while I worked at home, or we would swap and I would work in the shop while my aunt was at home.

That was life as we knew it then, and we just got on with it. And I was grateful for what I had. They were good to me.

In those days a young girl's thoughts often revolved around whom she might marry. When I worked in my uncle's office I became familiar with numbers and figures and how a shop operated. I would think to myself that if I'm going to get married and I can't add and I can't spell, what is my husband going to think of me? So I worked hard at improving my spelling and arithmetic. I was starting to develop a vision of how I wanted my life to be. As well, I became adept at selling our clothes, which I enjoyed, and I would never let a customer leave the shop without buying something from me – and they always left the shop with a smile on their face. After a while Uncle would only let me serve. And I became a very good sales person. I used to get a wage for working in the shop.

From my wages from the shop, uncle asked me to give my aunt two pounds a week for board. At first I was a little surprised, but I agreed and did what he asked. *[apparently that's what people did back then]*. My needs were few and I always put aside a little bit of money, so saving became a habit for me, and I became a life-long saver, and when it came time to leave, I had a little savings to see me through. In later years I never expected my children or anyone that stayed with us to pay board – but times were different, and happily, our income was satisfactory and it never became an issue.

I was always thinking ahead and what I had to do, how to improve myself, and it was clear to me that I had to be responsible for myself. Having led a very sheltered life, both at home and with my Uncle, it was a little scary to contemplate living life on my own terms, but I somehow knew that I had to rely on myself and my intuition. I wasn't allowed to go anywhere unless I had my aunt with me, I was chaperoned everywhere.

*JK: So you stayed in Blayney for eight years, and then what did you do?*

DF: Well, there were some issues that my Uncle and I didn't agree on and one day I said "Uncle, I have been here with you for eight years, and you have looked after me and I really appreciate that. You and Sylvia have been wonderful to me, but it's time for me to leave". He didn't say anything, maybe out of shock, I don't know, but I went down to the shop and bought a suitcase and booked a seat on the train to Sydney. Darling Sylvia was quite distressed at my leaving and urged me to stay saying that Uncle means well. I knew that, but I told her I will miss her terribly but I have to go. She and I had become very close.

By now, I was in my early 20's, and I knew that I couldn't grow any more in Blayney, decided to go to the city (Sydney) and find work there, since my brother Phillip was there, and I would be safe. I sent Phillip a message and he met me at Central Railway station.

On the way in the train, I cried all the way. My bravado deserted me and I started thinking what am I going to do and what is going to happen to me? – I really had no idea. And I cried and cried.

And then I cried tears of joy when I saw Phillip waiting for me when I got off the train and we greeted each other. We were finally re-united although he did make the occasional trip to Blayney to see me. However, he was surprised to see that I had so much luggage with me, and asked what was all the luggage for? I filled him in quickly and started crying again when the feeling of uncertainty returned, and especially when Phillip said, "what am I going to do with you?" At hearing his words reality hit home, and I cried some more. Phillip was renting a room with an aunt.



*Doreen (right) in 1949 (age 23 yrs) with her brother Phillip Mellick and a friend of his*

Finally he sorted things out. He called our cousin Mavis Mellick and her husband John. They were beautiful human beings, both of them, and they insisted that I go to them. They lived at Strathfield, in a beautiful home in Llandilo Avenue. Immediately she started re-assuring me that everything is going to be alright and that I mustn't worry. I think she must have called Blayney later on and told them I had come to stay with her and that I was okay etc. etc. Anyway, a week down the line, Uncle Stan came to Sydney and asked me to return to Blayney with him. I thanked him for all he had done for me, and said that he and Sylvia had been wonderful to me, and I was grateful – but I wanted to stay in Sydney.

Two days later, Mavis told me to go to David Jones to apply for a job as a sales girl, and I was immediately employed and asked to serve at the cosmetics counters on the ground floor! I assumed they might send me to the clothing section, but they chose cosmetics for me, and I happily agreed! I must have made a good impression! I learned quickly; was good with

customers; was always well groomed, and a very good sales person, so I was promoted to the Revlon counter where I became a demonstrator (a Beautician in today's terms).

A photograph of me was placed at that counter to show that I represented the brand in David Jones.



*Doreen with her David Jones work girlfriends in 1952. They all worked at the Revlon counter.*

*JK: David Jones was upmarket store, and it was known that they only put the most attractive and smartest sales girls on the cosmetics counters – as the face of the Store.*

DF: Well, there I was, at age 22, living in Sydney and working at David Jones in the Beauty section, with a grand piano just by the eastern door. The war had finished three years beforehand. I was near my brother and living with relatives. We had other relatives in Sydney, like Lorna and Tony Mellick in Coogee. The social life in Sydney was much busier than Blayney. Phillip and I would go to visit with Norman in Albury whenever we could, and he would come to Sydney whenever he could. I was out and about – without a chaperone - taking buses and trains on a daily basis, on my own, and I felt, finally, very grown up. I was very slim and chic, and always looked very smart going to work in my hat and gloves and umbrella, and life looked very bright and exciting.

After four years of working at David Jones, I was offered a job in a dress shop, Walker Smith's, not far from Wynyard. They had five shops around the City. After a while I topped the sales of not only in my shop but all the other four branches and continued to be their top sales person. And I was very pleased with that. I always seemed to do well in fashion.

And then I had a little bit of a turn – After everything that had happened in my life, I seemed to have a little bit of a breakdown. I was crying all the time, and I didn't know why, there was no reason. While at work, we had to keep a smile on our face, look smart, and get on

with the job of selling, and our feelings were kept hidden. All of these major life changes finally took their toll, and I needed time out. I took a couple of weeks off work and went down to Albury to spend time with my brother Norman.

That turned out to be the best holiday. Of course I had never had such a holiday before and so I had the best time, meeting a lot of young people and doing a lot of fun things. It was lovely there. That was very good for me and I loved spending time with Norman. Feeling well again, I returned to work.

*JK: Now, tell me how you met your husband, Nassim*

DF: Well, sometime before I came to Sydney, my uncle told me to write to a man he knew in his hometown in Lebanon to express our sympathies to him for the death of his uncle, who had recently been killed. The uncle who died was married to my uncle's aunt, and I couldn't see the reason. He wasn't a close friend of the family. I told Uncle I couldn't write to him because I don't know him or anyone from his family. My uncle insisted so finally I wrote a brief letter saying we are sorry to hear etc, etc, and left it at that. I thought that would be the end of it.

A few weeks later I got a lovely letter back from him in English and beautifully written. And his name was Nassim – Nassim Farah. Well, I thought he was very polite and I left it at that. However, in his letter he said he would love to hear from me again and would like to know about Australia and everything here. So, I thought, well I'll think about it, and I let it go for a few weeks. Eventually, I did answer his letter, and there followed an enjoyable correspondence between us for about four years! He would ask about things in Sydney, and he would tell me about where he went for holidays, etc, and said that one day he was going to come here. One day he sent me a photo – a studio photo – it was serious and darkish looking and what I saw was this black hair, dark eyes and a black moustache.



So my first impression of Nassim was that he looked too much like an Arab for my liking, but then, he was there and I was here, and his letters were very, very nice, so I didn't give it any further thought, and kept up the correspondence. Afterwards, I sent him a photo of me -

those little ones that were so common back then - and later on I sent a bigger, more current one. Well ... he must have liked it because he decided to make a trip to Sydney! Later on he sent more casual photos where he was walking and working and so forth. Well, from these photos I started changing my mind and thought, 'this guy looks quite nice'. He didn't look like that first photo he sent me. He was beautifully dressed and looked handsome, really handsome. So I continued writing with a different vision of him in my mind.

Meantime, the cousin I was living with in Strathfield asked me if I would like to live with his mother, who lived also in Strathfield, as she was an elderly woman living on her own. She had a daughter who was always sick and spent much time in hospitals. I said, yes of course, I would. So I went to live with her and stayed there for a few years. I used to do little things for her and help out whenever I could and before I went to work.

One day, before I left for work, I went to the mailbox to get the mail and found a card, addressed to me, from the SS Vivaldi. It was from Nassim and he said he would be arriving in Sydney on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1951. I became so excited and rushed back inside to tell my Aunty that Nassim was coming here, to Sydney! I couldn't hold back my excitement – I was finally going to meet him, and I didn't know what to think or what I was going to do. Finally, it was decided that I would go to meet him at the wharf with my Uncle Tony and Uncle Alec from Wingham.

Watching the ship come in was quite an experience for me. We were at Circular Quay, hundreds of people milling around, all in anticipation, as were we. I had wanted to make a good impression, so I wore my dark bottle green swing back coat with velvet around the edges and in the front; a black pillbox hat, black gloves, black shoes, and black skirt – and I think I had an umbrella (it was winter time after all).



*Nassim Farah, Lebanon 1949*



I was looking at the people on the ship wondering how I would recognize him amongst all those on board. And then I spotted him walking down the ramp – he was tall, looked handsome, and was beautifully dressed in a tailored coat, and he was walking towards Me!! Love at first sight for me! Just like that! And I thought to myself, “my God, he is gorgeous”.

Well, we got the welcomes and introductions out of the way, then went to Uncle Tony’s place to meet his family. Uncle Tony’s wife, Lorna, and the kids were beautiful people and were very happy to meet Nassim – the girls saying “he’s gorgeous, he’s lovely” etc, and my Aunty Lorna was agreeing, yes he is lovely. My heart was swollen with joy and excitement. Anyway, finally they said, “look, just go into the living room and sit down”. So we gathered in the lounge room and I was sitting there, looking very prim and proper (as was expected of me!!). Lorna was a beautiful person as was her sister, Julia, who was married to the other brother, Anees.

Nassim ended up staying with Uncle Tony and Aunty Lorna for a few months, and I used to come visit. Often I would go there straight from work, have dinner with them, and I was always happy to see him. He would always walk me to the tram stop in Coogee where I would take tram to Central and then the train to Strathfield. He would say you can’t go all alone on the tram, this hour of the night so I’ll come with you. “No, you’ll get lost – you won’t know what to do – and it’s too late in the evening”. Then from Strathfield I would take a bus or a taxi home, depending on the time and the weather. It took a lot of effort to do these visits and then the long journey home, but Nassim was worth it.

While Nassim was staying in Coogee, he learned how to go to the City and to get around on public transport and he would come to see me at work, and I remember one day when he came my work-mates were standing around me. I said to them, “here he comes”, and they looked around and I could hear, “oh, he’s cute”, “oh, how handsome” and so forth. Anyway I introduced him to the girls and he was so nice to them.



Walking down George St, Sydney, 1951

*JK: Before we continue, can you tell me about Nassim’s background?*

DF: Well, Nassim was actually born in Cuba. His father had a business there so he and his wife settled there, and he was about 12 years old when he went back to Lebanon to finish his schooling. He spoke several languages – Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Since French was known to be the language of romance, he wanted to teach me some words, and so taught me how to say, “Comment allez vous”, and “Je t’aime beaucoup, mon cherie” .... You know, all the important words!!

In Lebanon, he had worked with the IPC – the Iraqi Petroleum Company – a large and prestigious oil company at Tripoli. One had to have certain qualifications and be multi-lingual to work there. He was a Buyer and had a driver assigned to him. It was a really good job and he did very well with them. For a time his work was in Beirut, so he lived there during the week and went home on the weekends to spend time with his family in ‘Aaba (in the Koura). He was always very good to his family.

*(JK Note: In the 1930s the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) built a pipeline through northern Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, amongst other arab countries. In 1973 the Lebanese government had nationalized the oil refinery at Tripoli. Until 1976 Iraqi crude continued to reach Tripoli via the refinery and was used primarily to meet domestic oil requirements.)*

Then in 1951 he came to Sydney.

*JK: Very interesting! Now, to the next chapter in your lives.*

DF: After a while Nassim started meeting me after work, and we would have dinner together, and later we’d have dinner and a movie, and he would never ever let me pay, no matter how often I insisted. He was very generous, and courteous, and just a beautiful man. He was immaculate in his dress; and liked to look nice; we enjoyed doing the same things; we were obviously attracted to each other, and I felt we got on very well indeed. I still remember the first movie we saw together was “Destination Moon” – quite an omen !! It was still winter time moving into spring and the mornings and nights were still cold. One day we decided to go and see this movie, and so I was sitting there with my hand on the armrest. He put his hand over mine, then took it in both of his hands, and said “oh your hand is so cold” and he continued to hold my hand – My heart did a flutter, and I thought to myself, “geewhiz, this has got to be love”!! I lost track of what the film was about. Just his touch gave me the tingles. But, because I didn’t know his exact feelings or the direction we were headed in, I just kept my feelings to myself. I didn’t want to take anything for granted, I would just wait and see. He was very attractive and by now, had met many of my family and friends.





*At the Trocadero Club, George Street, Sydney - in 1952*

My Uncle Alec (in Wingham) who was also a really lovely man, had sponsored Nassim to stay. I didn't know his reason behind that. I thought to myself, Uncle has two lovely daughters, so maybe his thoughts lay in that direction. Anyway, Uncle invited him to visit Wingham and he went up a couple of weeks later. By this time, Nassim and I were open with each other and knew how we felt towards each other, however, before he left, I felt it important to say to him that, since Uncle had sponsored him, and since he had two lovely daughters, if he, Nassim, took a liking to one of them, he shouldn't feel obliged to me. He said, "don't be silly, you are the only one for me". I said, "I'm just saying, he can open a business for you, give you a home and all that. I've got nothing really, just a few pounds I've saved. He could open doors for you". I was a saver, always, ever since I could remember, I always put some money aside as a stand-by. I had inherited my share when Uncle Stan sold my father's business, around 200 pounds, which wasn't all that much even then. I had been too young to know about assets and such, but Uncle looked after that side of it. So I didn't want to stand in Nassim's way if those opportunities appealed to him.

So he went up to Wingham for a couple of weeks. Meantime I am here in Sydney feeling a little nervous and fretting that he might choose to stay there. It was not unusual for a person to change their mind faced with such opportunities presenting themselves; he might like one of the girls and so forth and so on. And I told him so. He came back and said to me "not interested Darling, you are the only person I'm interested in". He really loved me. And we decided to get married. You know what? We worked together and we achieved so much in our life, and we started from nothing.

When Nassim had first arrived my Uncle Stan had offered him a job in Blayney which he decided to take as his money was running out. This was not good news to me, and I thought what will he do in Blayney? So he went up there and we wrote to each other every day except on Sundays. On Sunday he would call me on the phone. I still have all his letters in a

box – all love letters. Poor Nassim, he went from Beirut to Blayney in the early 50's, and from working in the IPC to a store in a country town.

Well, he felt that at least he was earning some income, so stayed there for a few months. Then Sylvia became sick and was in and out of hospital. He had wanted to come to Sydney for a weekend but couldn't. But after a while he saw the opportunity and came to Sydney for the weekend, but instead of going back to Blayney on Sunday, he decided to stay an extra day and went home on the Tuesday. Uncle was very upset and showed it. That had been the first time Nassim had taken time off, and he had felt that one day extra was not too much to hope for. There was a disagreement, and Nassim after a while decided to leave. So he thanked Uncle for giving him his first work opportunity and said that he wanted to go back to Sydney. And so when he eventually returned to Sydney, I couldn't have been happier!

He started looking for work and found a job at Bennett and Wood in Zetland. They were bicycle manufacturers and a very large and well respected company in the 50's. He started as a costing clerk, then he did all the books. He was very good at bookkeeping. As time went by he was promoted to Chief Accountant. He was always happy to help family and friends when they were looking for work, and if it was possible at the time. When his brother, Ron, came to Sydney he got him a job at Bennet & Wood. Whenever friends asked for his help he always said yes, and so children of friends would find themselves also working at Bennet & Wood. And that's where Nassim was working when we got married.

At that time, the early 1950s, there weren't many rental places available, and so we had to wait to get married for around two years until finally we found a flat in Maroubra.



*Doreen and Nassim's wedding day, taken on 1st August 1953 at St Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, Paddington, with Father Hussney and Maria Malouf*

We got married on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1953. The Orthodox Church in Redfern was still being built, so we had the wedding in the Greek Church, St Sofia, in Bourke Street, Darlinghurst. However, our priest, Father Malatius Hussney, officiated at the ceremony and his family also attended the Church along with some family and friends. We didn't have a big wedding with a reception. My parents were gone, and Nassim's were in Lebanon. We didn't have much between us, and didn't expect anything from relatives. My uncles didn't come, which hurt a little at first, nor did they offer to give me a wedding. It didn't matter in the end because we just wanted to get married. So a friend made me a beautiful outfit. Mavis had given me a beautiful Shower Tea and she and her friends made a fuss over me and gave me lots of presents. After Church we went to dinner at the Cecil Hotel in Cronulla, which is where we had our honeymoon. At the dinner were my brothers, Norman and Phillip, as well as Waddy and Maria Malouf, who were our best man and matron of honour. That was all, just six of us.



*Doreen on her honeymoon 1953 Cronulla*

Waddy and Maria had been married just a few years and had a couple of children. They had a lovely home on the corner of Maroubra Road and Cooper Street. Next door to them on Maroubra Road was a block of flats, four units, owned by a Yugoslav lady with whom they

had become friendly. When she found out we were looking for a flat to live she asked to meet us first, so the Maloufs invited us to dinner along with the Yugoslav lady. She liked us very much and so offered us the vacant flat she had, and so we moved to Maroubra, and we were very happy there.

We were married for three very happy years and living in Maroubra when our little Helen was born in 1956. We were so thrilled, and Nassim became a most doting and hands-on father, changing nappies, bathing her, singing to her. And then later, when my boys came along and he did the same for both of them. This was a very special time of our lives. We had a nice home, good friends next door, we had started our family and were both working. Our group of friends was growing. Nassim liked to be involved in the community so he was on the committee of our church, St George Antioch Orthodox Church; he joined the Australian Lebanese Association; he became a Mason, and over the years had become involved with other associations.



*In their flat in Maroubra Rd, Maroubra in around 1955. From l to r. Evette Lattouf, Georgette Simeonides, George Lattouf, Honriette Hadar, Doreen Farah, Eleanor Taleb and Nouha Hussney*

Having Helen was a blessing and we thoroughly enjoyed our new-found parenthood, but eventually I had to return to work – so with much difficulty I had to learn to leave her at kindergarten. I was offered a job in a dress shop just down the street in Maroubra Road. I would drop her off before going to the shop and she would start crying. Her crying was in my ears all the way to the shop, and I felt awful. Later, Mrs Mullar told me that she stops crying after I leave and that I shouldn't fret about her. It still worried me, but I was working again, earning a reasonably good wage and saving it.



*JK: You were offered your own business, is that right? How did you manage work and family?*

DF: Yes. About five years later, around 1959, a frock shop in The Spot at Randwick was up for sale. They sold everything from babywear to maternity clothes to wedding dresses – a bit of everything. They were selling it for 500 Pounds (\$1,000) to walk in and take over. By then we had a little savings behind us so we decided to go ahead with the purchase. While working at the dress shop in Maroubra, I met the people they bought from; and big manufacturer in Redfern. Max was very nice and encouraging when I contacted him about my shop. He said to me, “now Doreen, you can take whatever stock you want from me and I will give you two months to pay”. This was heaven sent because most places only gave you one month’s credit terms. I thanked Max and then set about arranging a big sale to get rid of the old stock from the shop and introducing my new ladies wear line. Eventually I became established and well-known as Doreen’s Fashions. There was an assortment of other shops at The Spot and the Prince of Wales hospital nearby, so the nurses became good customers. Eventually my customers would be coming from all over Sydney. We didn’t advertise, just by word of mouth it became a successful business. Over the years, the quality of clothes was improved, so by the time I closed up I was selling beautiful Italian suits, pants-suits and other beautiful clothing and accessories.



*Doreen outside her dress shop, at The Spot, Randwick in 1976*

Five years after Helen was born, Glenn came along in 1962 and Helen had started school. Nassim was concerned that with two children, how would I cope with the shop and home, and thought perhaps we should sell the shop but I assured him I could manage. Because I had my own shop, I decided the baby would come with me to the shop.

Beside one of the dressing rooms there was some office space which I turned into a room for him. It had a window and curtains. So I put a bassinet in there and made a cosy room, and I even breast-fed him for nine months. I knew most of my customers by name, so when they came in I would call out for them to have a look at what they want and try it on, and I’d just put the baby down and come out to help.

When he started getting out of the bassinet, I took it out and he slept in a cot, and when he started getting out of the cot, I put a small playpen in the shop. Then he started getting out of the playpen, so I put a harness on him so he could wander around the shop and on the footpath to the curb but no further, and I didn’t have to worry about him running on to the road. The customers loved it and of course, made a few jokes, but I was happy that I could look after him myself, and keep him safe. Another five years on, Martin was born and he also spent his first years in the shop. And I repeated the same program I had set up for Glenn. By now I had someone helping in the shop, and I could take time off whenever I needed to. And I was there for 35 years.

In the 60’s we saw the birth of the large shopping centres and people flocked to them which affected the sole shopkeepers. However, that didn’t affect my shop too much because I had a loyal base of customers who continued to come. I got to know my customers very well, and when they were buying for their mother or an aunt, I would say take home what you want to show your mother, and they would always come back and buy the chosen item. Often they would return to buy two or three other pieces. It was comfortable for them to try things on in their own home and surroundings. My customers came from various parts of Sydney. One such customer lived in North Sydney. She would park her big white Mercedes outside the shop, and I knew I would have a roaring business that day – she always bought several things at once!

I opened the shop in 1959 and closed it 35 years later, in 1994. During that time Nassim decided to go into real estate, so he did a course at night to get a certificate to conduct a real estate business.

Helen had to learn to take the bus, when she was as young as seven years old, from Maroubra straight through to Randwick. The bus stopped on the corner and she would walk the length of two shops and into my shop. Those days there was safety in letting the young children use public transport on their own, unlike today where even adults have to be careful about using busses and trains.



*Family holiday, Canberra 1967 Doreen with daughter Helen (11 yrs), Glenn (6 yrs) and Martin (15 yrs)*

Five years after Glenn, Martin was born and we were so happy to have our new baby. However, I did wonder if I could manage having two little ones and still run the shop. Then I decided maybe it will be alright. When Nassim said, "darling, I think you had better sell the shop", I said, "darling, I'm going to try and manage it". If it didn't work out, then I could sell up. And so Martin spent the first few years in the shop, just as Glenn had done, and I just repeated the routine.

At one time I started having mannequin parades in the shop to raise money for the Church. In fact I used to do quite a lot of my house work in the shop, like doing my ironing, scooping the kousa and preparing other vegetables, washing and preparing the parsley and mint for tabouli, paper work, etc, etc. I also used to watch on TV the Bold and the Beautiful and Days of our Lives.

One day a lady came into the shop and excitedly told me that she had just obtained her driver's license. And I thought, if she can do it why can't I? So, I made a phone call and booked some lessons. I failed the first time, but got it the second time. Now I didn't have to ask anyone to drive me or to take taxis, and it made my life much easier.

I had a lot on my plate, but somehow everything got done as it needed to. We just do it, don't we?

*JK: How did Naseem get into real estate?*

*DF: One day, the phone rings and it is Nassim telling me that we have won a car! How beautiful, I said, but I couldn't believe it and started crying. He assured me it was true. At that time we had an old bomb of a car which served us well enough. Nassim was now ready to leave Bennet & Wood and was thinking about starting out on his own, and we decided*

this was our opportunity. For some time past, on the weekends, Nassim had been working in Maroubra Real Estate to make some extra money. We kept our old car and sold the new one and that paid for Nassim to open his own office.

It was 1962, the year Glenn was born, that Nassim left Bennet & Wood and opened small shop on Anzac Parade Kingsford. He had the rooms upstairs and he was a sole trader. I would help him whenever I could, in between home and shop. My brother Phillip would also help whenever he could, because he too was working full time. We were all helping each other and that's how we started out. Soon he got his first block of flats to manage. His plan was to establish a solid property management base and grow into sales from there.

*JK: Did the children take an interest in the Agency?*

*DF: After Glenn finished his HSC Nassim asked him what he would like to do. Since he hadn't yet decided, he told his father he would like a holiday first and then decide. The following year when all business had returned to normal after the summer break, Glenn returned home and told us he wanted to join the family business. Helen had also worked with her father for about three years.*

When business blossomed, Nassim moved to a larger shop, just up the road in the shopping centre in Kingsford, with the name of N.G.Farah.



*Outside an early NG Farah Real Estate office, in around 1986, Martin aged 20, Nassim aged 60 and Glenn aged 24*



When Glenn took his next holiday, we expected him to return in a few weeks but he was away for over a year, so he was obviously enjoying himself. We think he only came back to be a groomsman at the wedding of my cousin Souhaila's son, Eli! However, he did return to the business and introduced some new ideas to improve the business. One day he told his father that they needed to bring computers into the shop. Nassim said, "I didn't have them and I have managed well without them, why isn't that good enough for you?" Glenn persisted with his argument that computers were now necessary to have in a business, and finally Nassim agreed, and he got right into it when it was up and running. Technology changed our lives drastically, but if you don't keep up, you get lost.

Martin also decided to join the business when he finished school, so Nassim was very proud and happy to have his family working with him. And the business continued to grow, and new branches opened up. A couple of them weren't successful, or the building was sold, and so they were closed, but now there are four shops that are well established – Kingsford (the head office), Coogee Beach, Little Bay and Mascot. And the property management portfolio has grown to about 3,000.



Martin, Nassim and Glen Farah at N.G Farah Real Estate

One day Glenn came home and said, "guess what, Dad, we just bought a bank!" Nassim was shocked and said "we can't afford to buy that" and Glenn said, "Dad, we can't afford not to buy it, it's a good deal". The old two-storey building used to be the Bank of New South Wales in Kingsford, and then something to do with a football club.

*(In the early part of the century until about the 60's, bank managers used to live in the residential premises above the bank)*

Well, Glenn completely renovated it, and made it beautiful and new. Upstairs, where the residence was, there is now a big boardroom with a large table, and it's very comfortable.

With both Glenn and Martin doing a good job of managing the business, Nassim could cut back his workload, and it was time for me to close my shop, so we became semi-retired, and

started to spend time up on the Gold Coast where we eventually bought a unit. We could spend two or three months at a time and not worry about work. It was a lovely and wonderful time for us. We just loved it up there. We found a few Lebanese families and had a nice social life. Over the years we had travelled to Lebanon on several occasions, early on taking the children with us, and then they started going there on their own.

*JK: I want to ask you something about yourself. You were born here of Lebanese parents, and all these years later, how do you identify yourself. Do you think of yourself as Lebanese, or Australian. Do you cook Lebanese food?*

DF: Well, I think of myself as an Australian but I am proud of my ancestry. I have had a bi-cultural upbringing, and after my parents passed away and I lived with relatives, we maintained quite a lot of Lebanese customs. My husband was from Lebanon and we continued the traditions in our daily lives, and that included our children and our grandchildren - they have a good sense of their heritage. All the grandchildren were christened in our Orthodox church. My oldest granddaughter, Stephanie, one day said to me she was wanted to attend the Palm Sunday Church service at our Church. No one prompted her, it was just something she felt she wanted to do. Of course, I said, "that is beautiful, darling". Her mother is English. We have always encouraged the children to make their own decisions, so it was particularly heart-warming to see that they chose to keep up traditions.

At home, I cook Lebanese food as well as European. It was just natural for us to live with two cultures, and we feel we have the best of both worlds.



Doreen and Nassim holiday in Lebanon

My life was perhaps a little different from some of those of my generation because I worked all my life. While I was having babies and rearing three children, I was running the shop, running my home, and helping Nassim whenever I could. I never had the time to enjoy going shopping and looking around at beautiful things, or to do the daytime activities of friends. But it didn't matter because we would do a lot of socializing in the evenings. I enjoyed it when friends visited me in the shop. Later on more and more women worked during their marriages, and everyone just adapted to their own way of life.

It was usually Nassim who got involved in community activities with the Lebanese organisations and our Church (although I had some fashion parades in the shop), as well as joining Rotary and becoming a Mason, and various other activities as well. He did these things very well, and he was very well loved and respected.

I had one day off work a week, and I would pick up my cousin Souhaila and we would do our shopping for the week. That was my routine.

And I am still working! I have an office in the N.G. Farah head office at Kingsford, and I still get involved with discussions, and I love it.

*JK: Tell me about Nassim's health*

DF: Well, to go back a little – Nassim had a few health issues in the few years before he passed away, but he was always well kept, even in his hardest days when it took its toll on him. However, the change was taking place in front of me and I did what I could to help him. As he got older, severe rheumatoid arthritis took hold of him, and he had a lot of pains and aches, as well as having a heart operation. At one time he was in hospital for a long time – I don't know what happened, but he nearly died. Finally he became well enough to leave and he said "I want to go to Queensland, let's go up there. I'm feeling really well". I was happy to see his energy back and agreed and made our arrangements. It was a Monday, I remember, and as we were driving past the office in Kingsford he looked up and said, "I suppose when I'm dead and gone, the name (N.G. Farah) will still be up there". And I replied "where are you going? You are not going anywhere!" Next day, Tuesday, we went to Queensland. We caught up with some friends and went out to the casino together the next day. Helen called to say she was coming up with a friend this Friday, and for us not to worry about pick-up; they would find their way. This was quite unusual as Helen always waited a few weeks after we went up, to join us. But I was always happy to see her and said okay. We had a lovely dinner with the girls at home that night, happily chatting and catching up, and Nassim was so happy.



*At Jupiters Casino, Gold Coast*

Now Nassim also suffered with sleep apnoea. When he woke up next morning, I helped him take-off his mask, and he said he had the best sleep ever! I was already up and about, and he said he was going to get up too. I told him not to worry and just rest and relax, and that I was going out to open the blinds and windows and do some washing. I did that and when I returned to the bedroom, the bed was empty and the blankets were pulled back. I thought he must be having a shower and made up the bed. When I realized I hadn't heard him, I called out, "darling, are you alright?, Nassim are you ok?" No answer. I went to the ensuite. I tried to open the door but it would not open fully. There was Nassim lying on the floor unconscious. Helen and her friend were out walking on the beach. I called her to come home quickly saying Dad's collapsed. The ambulance was called and had arrived by the time Helen got home. They were trying to resuscitate in the room and none of us was allowed in. He was already gone. Just like that! It was such a shock – I shall never forget that day. He had been so well and happy that week. And Helen happened to be there with me. Luckily, I wasn't on my own. It just makes you wonder how and why things happen sometimes.

This was a big shock for me, you know, and I was heartbroken. He was the love of my life and we had such a happy life together. He died in 2002. He was 75.

We had a lovely doctor, Dr Freeman, a heart specialist. He said to me that it was a blessing the way Nassim went because he wouldn't have felt anything, as it would have so gentle and so quick a jolt. He said that would be the way he would like to go himself when the time came. And he assured me that Nassim wouldn't have suffered any trauma.

Well afterwards it was difficult – for me and for my children. I have been a very strong person all my life because I had to be. To lose both my parents and be separated from my brothers within two years was awful, and I was so young, but I always knew I had to be strong to overcome these difficult times. Then learning to live with relatives in different places until I was old enough, I had to be strong and stay positive and look to a different future. And now, I said to myself I've got to be strong for my family. They don't want to see a broken down old woman, all the time crying, they are not going to be happy.



One day Glenn came to me and said, "Mum, why don't you come to the office". That was some time after Nassim died. Even before Nassim retired, I never went to the office because I had my own business and home to run. He often used to say, "come and have lunch with me today Darling, I'm taking a couple of girls for lunch". And I'd say, "no, you take them - I can't, you go". And so I didn't go to the office at all.

So, I started going to the office every day, and I still go in, but only three days a week. That was 14 years ago. Until I turned 90, I was still driving myself in. After that Helen drives me in three days a week.

It is lovely atmosphere in the office, and I know all the staff very well. They are lovely and so happy to see me there. Recently, on my 92nd birthday they took me to breakfast and then bought me a cake and wished me a happy birthday. We have about 30 on staff at the Kingsford office. My son Martin also works in the business and that day had brought in his young son, Nathan, who was 13. Nathan came to me and said "Taita can you give me some money. I want to get something". I said okay and give him a note, \$20, from my purse. I didn't know what he wanted to buy. He came back with all the party things, hats and stuff. He even wanted to give me back the change of \$7 or \$8. I told him to keep it in his pocket as I didn't want it. Then he set about putting up the Happy Birthday decorations in the office everywhere. I said oh my god that kid is funny.



Doreen at the NG Farah office

*JK: Doreen, with all the setbacks you had in your early life, how did you survive these difficult times without help of some kind? How do you stay so positive and strong?*

DF: Oh, well, I just had to stay positive and strong through all these challenges that life has dealt me, the set backs, etc. As I said before, I just knew I had to be strong even before I got married. I don't know where it came from, but probably from my parents and our way of life, our culture including religion, changing towns and learning new things. I had to live with relatives and they gave me a good home and security, which I appreciated. And they were good to me. I was sad but did my best not to show it, and made myself useful, and learned as much as I could. I had two brothers whom I loved dearly and was so happy to see them and it was easier to be positive. Norman would come for holidays. Phillip I saw more often as we were in the same city. When my brother Norman had a stroke he came to spend some time with me, and had wanted to help by tidying up after himself, but I refused and just wanted to do things for him. He was married and was used to helping out, but I insisted that when he was with me he would do nothing but enjoy himself. I would cook him his favourite meals, like baked dinners and schnitzels. He was always saying that he had the best sister in the world. And Phillip always said that too. And I wanted to be strong for them too. I just didn't have time to get sick, or depressed. It doesn't mean that the events didn't affect me. I remember when I went to live with my uncle in Blayney, the house was small, a 2 or 3 bedder, and they had two kids. There was a sunroom in the back which had glass all around, and it had a bed in it and that is where I slept. When I went to live with them, I would cry every night in private in my bed. The toilet was outside in the backyard, and it was awful going there, especially at night. I was young, and it was difficult, and I wondered if that's how it was going to be for the rest of my life. There was no point in crying all the time and feeling sorry for myself, so I would just deal with it.

Other than the time I had the breakdown when I was working in the dress shop in town, I just get on with what I had to do. Until now I don't take any medication.

And later, I had to be strong for my family and help them through their hard times. Maybe I was born blessed with a positive spirit. And I pray every night. I pray for everybody. I would hop into bed and start praying and would have a good night's sleep. I used to get very upset if I fell asleep before I finished my prayers. I would thank God for all the good things that happen to me, but not mention the bad things. I would thank Him for the little things and the big things that happened to me. Even things like finding a parking spot close to where I was going as it made it much easier for me. I thank God all the time, quietly to myself, and that make me feel good. I have also been blessed with good health. So I thank God that he has given me a good constitution, and that at 92 people still recognize me, and that is something.

I didn't finish my education as I had to leave school when I became 15 years old. I ran my own business for 35 years. I have been on overseas trips often. Because of Nassim's involvement with the various associations, we were often in Canberra and mixing with

prime ministers and others in parliament. While in Lebanon, we also met a few people high up in government. One time we went to a function in the mountains and we were introduced to the President of Lebanon. I didn't get nervous, I just acted normally and naturally. So I feel blessed at how my life changed, and blessed that my husband was such a fine man.

*JK: How do you keep yourself occupied now, and do you have any regrets?*

DF: I read a lot. I love to know what is happening, so I read the papers every day. I do my crossword puzzles, and I keep myself busy. I go to the office three times a week. Helen is living with me but if she is out, I don't mind being on my own. I meet with friends. I get on well with everyone. So I thank God for what he has given me. I have had sadness in my early life and then I have had a beautiful life with my darling husband, and now with my kids and their children. They are such beautiful people and they do a lot for me. I adore them all, my children and grandchildren.



*Family at Doreen's 90th birthday party. From left: Mitchell, Glenn, Nadia, Doreen, Helen, Stephanie, Martin, and Nathan Farah at front*

The only thing I would change if I could, would be that my mum and dad had lived longer so I could appreciate them more; so they could see me and my two brothers grow up, and maybe see their children and mine. They never saw that. That is the only disappointment I have with my life. With my husband, I was happy with nothing. We had a little furnished flat, I was happy. I didn't want anything bigger. We had a silly old car, we were happy.

Before the car, we had friends who would take us out. They would come for dinner and then take us out for a drive. I was pregnant with Helen and we would be going along bumpity-bump in the car. I would say, mind the baby! Mind the baby! But I was happy with little. I never cared for big homes, money or jewellery. They all came later, but these things didn't make me any happier than I was already.

Unfortunately both of my brothers are gone now, and all my aunts and uncles are gone. It is sad but that is life, isn't it? My joy is in my children and grandchildren. Helen has a beautiful apartment which she should live in and enjoy, but she worries about me being alone. I tell her, "don't worry about me, you should be enjoying your own place." I mean, I love it when she is here because I know there is someone here, but as I said, I'm strong and I'm not nervous. I am in constant touch with my children and grandchildren. I tell myself, no, God is here with me. I read and I do my crosswords, and I love my social media, I use my mobile phone, and I do a lot of things. I'm learning something new every day, and I am very happy.

*JK: What are your plans for the future?*

DF: Well, I am hoping to get a letter from the Queen on my 100<sup>th</sup> birthday – and maybe I'll send her a card back to congratulate her because we are the same age. In the meantime, I continue as I always have. I have definitely slowed up, particularly with my walking. I don't walk well, but I'm careful with my steps because I don't want to fall. I don't want to be a burden to my children. I don't want them to be spending time with me because I have a broken arm or a leg. That is the last thing I want. So I am careful. There are many things, I would like to do, but I don't because it wouldn't be wise. But I am still busy.

I still go to the office; read my papers and do my crosswords; I watch my television programs (and often Helen joins me in that), and I do my social activities.

I can say God loves me. I don't know why He loves me, but I think He does, He loves me.

*JK: Before we end the interview, just a few more questions of a general nature.*

*Q: Food is an important factor in the Lebanese culture. You are a good cook. Who taught you, or, how did you pick it up?*

DF: My mother was a beautiful cook and my aunties were all great cooks. I used to watch my mother preparing food, but I was too young to be helping when she was alive. But in Blayney, Sylvia had the most influence on me because I was with them in my teen years. I would watch and learn, and I would ask questions. And then I would make things. When I got married I kept asking questions, looking in books and reading.





*Doreen's mother, with youngest son, Phillip.*

Also, it's in the taste – if it doesn't taste as it ought to, you add this or that. If you can dress and look nice and look after yourself, then you have taste. And so we have taste in our cooking. You keep trying different ways until it looks or tastes right. So I started cooking and with practice I became better at it.

My mother cooked Lebanese food. She also made some ingredients herself. A lot of what we can buy today, ready-made, she would make herself. Drying the herbs like mint, making the preserves, making labban, the bread, etc. And when I got married I used to make by myself things like yoghurt, hommos. A friend brought me mint and I started growing and drying it, and so forth and so on. I made lovely cabbage rolls. Now, I don't measure or taste as I cook, it is all done by instinct. I have been doing it for so long that it all comes naturally. I make pasta with pesto – very tasty - and I add vegetables in it. I use a lot of garlic in the pesto and virgin olive oil and mix it all together, then I mix in the broccoli and cauliflower. Yummy!

*Q: It seems you make an occasion of whatever you do, that is, you make the most of any activity. And you don't live in the past. You like to make the food taste nice as well as look nice. Just as you make sure you are always well groomed and look nice. Would you agree?*

DF: Yes, exactly. That's right. Everything changes during our lives, and it is good to try new things. Now, for my health I eat a lot of onion, garlic and ginger. I think that is good for me. When I go to the office, I make myself a sandwich to take for lunch, and it usually has red onion on it. I can have avocado, cheese and tomato with it. Anyway, onion is on everything! And the same with garlic. Even my granddaughter Stephanie loves it. She puts the garlic on a sandwich.

*Q: Now that you have a bit more time, and as you said before, you have cut back on your activities, do you find yourself thinking about all the changes that have taken place in your lifetime?*

DF: It's a funny thing, right from the beginning, I never used to reflect on these things, I would just go about doing what I had to do. I was busy with children and work. But now I do think back. Now, more than ever. When I think about my childhood, about how three children had lost their parents so early on in the lives and how they had to be separated, I become sad. I didn't have mother when my first child was born. No one was around to help me. I never had any of that. You know, you miss that from your parents – your mother's love, your father's love.

*Q: Had your parents lived longer, do you think life might have been very different?*

DF: Who knows. But I think they would have been proud to see that we all made a success of our lives and are happy. However, throughout the rest of my life I had the love of my husband, of my children and grandchildren. My friends love me and I love my friends. My staff at the office loves me and I love them and show me their love in many ways.

I am happy. I've always been a happy person.

I sometimes think about how so much of what we do at home has been made easier. Cooking ingredients, housekeeping gadgets, and all that. I remember one time Nassim went to Lebanon by himself. I had my shop, and I had Helen and Glenn and I would help out help out at Nassim's office. Of course Phillip was in and out helping out. Laundry was real work in my early marriage days. I used to boil the nappies to clean them. I boiled water in a kerosene tin on top of the stove and boiled all the nappies.

I cut up an old sheet into small liners to put inside the nappy, so that when the nappy was dirty, I would pick up the 'liner' and throw it out. I would rinse the 'wet' liners and then put them into a white enamel bucket. In the morning when I got up, I would boil them. Then I would run to the outdoor laundry and put them in the ringer washing machine. We squeezed water out of the clothes by putting them through the ringer, and then hung them up outside on the line. That was our Spin Dry method! And then nappy service came in, and now the young mothers use disposable nappies.

Also I remember we used to have card nights at the flat. Nassim enjoyed these card nights, and we would have eight people here playing cards. I would cook up big suppers for them to have. We didn't have a handy dishwasher then.

But it never worried me. I was young and in love. Never worried me, I worked hard and I was running the shop and looking after kids and family, as well as all the socialising, but life was good.

*Q: Sometimes as we get older, we become a little isolated and lonely. Do you ever feel like that?*

DF: I won't allow myself to get lonely. As my daughter says, my phone runs hot! I like to keep up my social life. And yes, maybe over the years I have built up some brownie points. I like to help out family and friends whenever I can. Yes, good karma.

*Q: When we are born, we have a little of each parent in us. How do you see yourself? What part is like Mum and which like Dad?*

DF: Well it's hard to say because I never gave it much thought.

I know that my mother was a beautiful, gentle and loving person. My dad too was a hard worker and but I think I look more like my dad than my mother. My father must have been a good looking man really when he was young. I saw a photo of him when he got married and he looked really handsome. My younger brother, Phillip, looks like my mother, I think Norman was like Federer!



*Doreen's father, Norman, with eldest son Norman*

*Q: Well, the good genes came from both parents, and the work ethic. Perhaps also your strength of character, would you agree?*

DF: I always say I've got to be strong, I got to be strong, and I've needed to be strong all my life. You can't give up on things. Things happen and you have to deal with that. Also, I'm praying, praying all the time. I never prayed for anything material. I didn't care about those things and didn't want them. I just wanted everyone to be happy and healthy. That was my main thing in life.

\* \* \* \* \*



*Doreen aged 22 (1948)*