

Eileen Lucy LEE, nee HEAD & Norman Alfred LEE

Biography as published in 1995

Eileen Lucy Head, b. 10/12/1906.

Parents : Mary Christina Head (nee McLean) & Edwin H Head

Grandparents : Maryanne McLean (nee McIntyre) & Hughie McLean

G-Grandparents : Christina McLean (nee Black) & Hugh (the elder) McLean

G-G-Grandparents : Christina McLean (nee McPhee) & Donald McLean

Marriage: To **Norman Alfred Lee**. - b. 17/9/1913, at Clare SA. Married at Alice Springs. N.T,

Present Residence: 1/5 Downing St. Hove, S.A. 5048.

History: The following interesting contribution on her life has been supplied by Eileen:

"Recollections of Eileen : "While I was at home my sister Thelma went to Teachers Training College, and I decided to go to Alice Springs for a six month holiday. I was offered a position as bookkeeper (which I had been doing at Kingston where we lived). I married in 1938 and my first daughter Jennifer was born in 1939, my second daughter Susan was bom in 1946. My husband (Norman Lee) was Telegraph Supervisor at the Post Office, and he took the messages in morse code from Darwin on the day of the bombing, Evacuees soon began arriving from Darwin by any available means. Many of them camped on our verandahs. Norm asked if they thought it advisable to send the women and children down south, to which they agreed it was desirable. We travelled on the next goods train out, which had one passenger carriage. It was packed. One poor little pregnant girl sat up straight for four days. There were children and babies sleeping on the floor and the smell of dirty nappies was dreadful. The mothers with bottle fed babies had to go the train engine for hot water.

Every time the train stopped we would all get out to get some fresh air and the flies were terrible. We went back after a few months down south and I enjoyed Alice Springs both married and single having lived there for nine years.

After leaving the Alice, we spent a short time in Adelaide before moving to Tarcoola which were the hardest five years of my life. In summer we would get months with the temperature over 100 degrees (up to 114). During that time we saw refrigerators using kerosene advertised so we sent for one and that was one of the most exciting things of my post office life.

Following Tarcoola we moved to Cuwamulka, Loxton, Naracoorte and Port Pine. In 1969 our final move was to Glenelg until retirement in 1976."

Background to Mrs. Eileen Lee's story:

On the morning of the 19th February, 1942, the Japanese bombed Darwin. Plane spotters from Bathurst Island had signalled ahead but their warnings went unheeded.

The air raid alert was still sounding when the first bombs fell. Mr A. Halls, 49. A returned soldier, and supervisor of Telegraphs at Darwin, who had only arrived in Darwin the previous Saturday, was communicating with Norm Lee, supervisor of Telegraphs, in Alice Springs. He signalled that the raid had begun and that he was heading for a

shelter. The shelter for male telegraphists and other Post Office personnel was some distance away. Norm warned him to be quick. Mr Halls signed off with a Morse signal laugh (- - .) and went to the nearest trench shelter. This shelter had been made for the Post Master, Mr Bald, his wife and daughter and the female telephonists. The Post Office and the shelter took a direct hit.

Two hundred and forty three people died in Darwin and the Harbour that day.

Mr H. Hawke, the postal engineer in charge in Darwin, and Mr W. T. Duke. A telegraphic supervisor who later received a British Empire Medal, had found the broken line and set up equipment south of Darwin.

They sent the tragic news through to Norm and he passed the messages on to the Colonel, later Brigadier, Loutit. When more information about the devastation became available Hawke and Duke transmitted details of the damage through to Mr O'Grady at the G.P.O., Adelaide.

On the 19th of February, 1992, at a Dedication Ceremony, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the bombing of the Darwin Post Office held at the G.P.O. Main Hall, Adelaide. Norm Lee decoded a Morse Code message from the Northern Territory Administrator and handed it to Dame Roma Mitchell, Governor of South Australia.

Children:

1. Jennifer Lee b. 24/8/1939 at Prospect, S.A. Married: Comelis Betten (b. Holland 1934). They had no children together, but Comelis had 2 children (Maria & Willem) from a previous relationship. Divorced. Occupation: Teacher, librarian, earthmover, mail-contractor. Completed Diploma of Visual Arts at North Adelaide School of Arts in 1994. Inaugural Member of the Hindmarsh Woodville Council. Residence: 2/5 Downing St. Hove, S.A. 5048.
2. Susan Hamlyn Lee b. 10/8/1946 at North Adelaide, S.A. Married; Ian Malcolm Coles (b. United Kingdom). They had 3 children – Amanda, Andrew & Megan. Divorced. Occupation: Administration Officer at Mansfield State School. Residence: Wishart, Brisbane

- SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 210 & 212.
- COLONIALISTS : Christina and Donald McLean and their ten children migrated from Argyllshire to South Australia in 1837. This was in the earliest years of the colony. The McLeans initially settled near Adelaide where they grew the first wheat crop in SA. Then in about 1840 they pioneered the Strathalbyn area. There are now well over 20,000 descendants spread across Australia and elsewhere.
- CHANGES : Please contact us with additions, corrections or suggestions about any part of this family tree.
- CONTACT : Visit our website www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com or Strathalbyn Museum phone 08 8536 2656 to discover more about your family – and about privacy and copyright.