

LOOKING BACK...with Molly

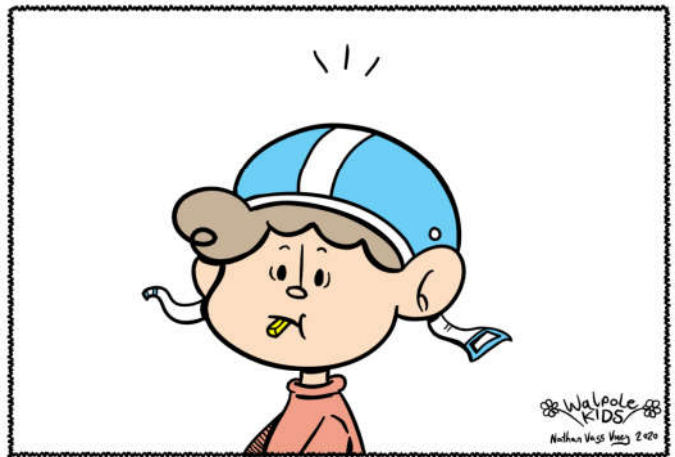


The story of the Galos family...

A recent visit to Bow Bridge proved to be a trip down memory lane for Charlie Galos. Charlie's father Jan, was one of the "displaced persons" working at the Bow Bridge sawmill operated in the 1950's by Jim Smith and his son Bruce. Recently Charlie made an appeal for information through the Community Resource Centre in Walpole and it was passed on to me. I recognised

the name and contacted Charlie.

Charlie and his wife Nola met me at my property which is adjacent to what was the mill site, along with president of the Historical Society Elizabeth Shaw and curator of photographs Don Burton. Kim Smith (son of Bruce and grandson of Jim) was on hand to identify the location of the mill site where Charlie could wander around the relics of the remains of some mill structures which were once part of his father's workplace. No doubt it was an emotional visit for Charlie who was only seventeen
continued on page 7...



...from page 6

months of age when he came to Bow Bridge with his parents and older brother to live in one of the little mill cottages.

We enjoyed morning tea at my place afterwards and Charlie provided Elizabeth with information regarding the Galos family.

Charlie's mother, Cecylia and her twin sister Helena, were born in a little Polish village some 300 kms south east of the capital, Warsaw in November 1922. They lived a very simple life with their parents and siblings in their wooden house consisting of a kitchen and two bedrooms which housed a family of twelve.

Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 and in 1942 whilst attending a funeral, Cecylia was forcibly taken and removed from her homeland, Poland, and transported to Germany where she was forced to work long hours under supervision at a variety of jobs on farms or in factories. Cecylia wasn't even given the chance to farewell her mother and didn't see her family for 28 years.

Germany surrendered in 1945 following defeat by the Allied Forces, and America and Britain set up displaced persons camps under the care of the International Refugee Organisation. Cecylia was taken to Wildflecken in Southern Germany - a USA zone for displaced people - and employed as a Nurse Assistant. It is documented that there were one million of these refugees at the end of World War 2.

Charlie's father Jan, was born in 1919 in a small country village north west of the district of Krakow in Poland. Charlie said that his father rarely spoke of his childhood or the war years, but he knows that Jan too, was forcibly removed from his home in Poland in 1942 and sent into forced labour at a German factory in Flossenburg. Many workers died as a result of the conditions in forced labour. Jan was arrested for political reasons in 1943 and subsequently detained in concentration camps until the war's end.

At the end of World War 2, Jan was also taken to Wildflecken where he met Cecylia. They married in March 1947 and their first son Wladyslaw (Wally) was born in April 1948 at the Wildflecken Hospital.

Arrangements were put in place for the little Galos family to migrate to Australia and finally they arrived in Fremantle in October 1949. They lived at the Graylands Migrant Hostel until February 1950 when they were transported to Northam and from

there to Cunderdin Immigration Camp. Charlie was born in Cunderdin in August 1950. From there in early 1952, when Charlie was 17 months old, the Galos family travelled to Bow Bridge where Jan worked at the Bow Bridge Sawmill. Information is lacking on their time in Cunderdin and the move to Bow Bridge... is a piece in the puzzle Charlie is yet to find.

Records indicate that the family moved from Bow Bridge to Albany where Charlie started school in 1956. Cecylia and Jan later had a third son, Peter. Charlie's parents lived in Albany until their deaths in 2008.

This information only scratches the surface of the cruelty and horror suffered by hundreds of thousands of displaced persons at the hands of the Germans. We in Australia can only try to imagine the enormity of their suffering.

It has been brought to our minds very simply with Charlie's plea for information.

Photo of Charlie at Bow Bridge with the mill site in the background where traces of the mill landing are visible by large logs and big timbers. With thanks to the Walpole-Nornalup and Districts Historical Society.

Information from Charlie Galos.

~Molly Smith



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Elizabeth Andrews