

## **REGINALD STANLEY PAYNTER-**

Reg was born after Lou had lost two still born male babies, both weighing 10 lbs or more, the first being named Wilfred who was born circa 1911. Bert and Lou had been trying for over five years to start a family and imagine how depressing it would have been for them to have lost two babies after all that. Unfortunately though Lou had plenty of milk she was unable to feed her babies so Reg was a marasmus baby which means he was just skin and bone and could not thrive due to the inability to absorb protein nutrients. He nearly died until goat's milk was used and he started to put on weight. The medical term for starvation is marasmus and this reduces babies to mere skin and bone with concomitant lassitude, gross energy deficiency, slow growth and subcutaneous muscle and fat loss. So Lou was very attached to Reg and he adored her and it upset him in his later teenage years when his father came home drunk and would throw the plate of food at the wall which in turn, upset his mother. As a child Reg attended Sunday School at a Methodist Church close to the house in Carlisle where they were living, and always read his Bible even as an adult. He never had a good relationship with his father and he never drank or smoked, as Bert did freely. When he was about seventeen, they had a blazing row, and Bert picked up Reg's bike and smashed it over his knee. So Reg left home and rode to Katanning where he got a labouring job on Emiel Hettner's farm at Cherry Tree Pool some 20 miles out of town.

Emiel had three children and Betty, the eldest, developed a crush on the new working man who was 19 years old, ten years older than she was. Because Emiel rarely showed any affection to his children, Betty found Reg's attentions very flattering and the relationship developed into love as Betty was very mature from the age of eleven years.

Whilst still attending school, and only 15 years old, Betty fell pregnant but managed to conceal it from everyone by wearing a very large coat. Eleven days before the baby was due, they married at Katanning and spent a brief honeymoon of one in Albany. Baby Alison Dorothy was born on 30th August, 1939, a day before the outbreak of World War 2.

After a long and hard labour of three days, Betty suffered an epileptic seizure and was placed on Phenobarbitone. She was to suffer from this for the rest of her life, in later years taking Dilantin. Alison was born at "Coleraine", a private hospital in Beaufort Street, Katanning, attended by Dr W.E.Caldwell M.B.B.S and Sister D.M.Harris.

Emiel bought Betty and Reg a block of land in Boddington and they lived in a tent while it was getting built. It was bitterly cold and Betty developed pneumonia just six weeks after the birth, and Reg looked after Alison by feeding her bottles of milk in which were dissolved milk arrowroot biscuits.

Reg had a job working in the timber mill at Boddington but it was closed down after a few years and the little family was relocated to Witchcliff, near Margaret River.

A son had been born on 21st November 1940, Irwin Stanley, but because Betty had caught rubella he was to suffer from mental retardation all his life. An epidemic of rubella had swept across the whole of Australia in 1940. Irwin only ever attained the mental age of a six year old, and Betty was warned before his birth that he would be intellectually retarded, have a hole in the heart, or be blind/deaf because of her having contracted Rubella. But she found this very hard to accept, particularly as he was to be institutionalised when he was in his early teens owing to his difficult behaviour and lack of comprehension

In Witchcliff, the family lived in a little wooden house with a latticed back verandah, enclosed by a wooden picket fence. As it was wartime, every night the little windows were covered with a blanket to keep out the light so Japanese bombers wouldn't be able to see where they were flying. The noise of the planes was often heard in the night. As Witchcliff was not far from the coast Reg used to ride his bicycle and catch some fish which were very welcome. Reg applied now to go into the Forces on the 20th January, 1942 and sat for a Medical Test. He signed up for part time duty on 31st August, 1943 with Army Registration number-W87609. On the 24th January, 1944 he was enlisted but only part time and his duty was deferred. By now the family had moved to Broomehill, to Norman Beeck's farm "Etticup", on the advice of Betty's doctor because the damp climate at Witchcliff had caused severe attacks of asthma so a drier climate was required. At the new farm Betty's asthma attacks seemed to improve, but she developed an allergy to broom bush pollen, all types of grasses, particularly rye grass, which grew prolifically on the farm. She suffered a series of miscarriages here until Bevan Bernhard was born on 13th April, 1945, the year the W.W.2 ended. Whilst here Alison was put onto correspondence as there was no school and in 1946 she and Irwin were sent to live with Emiel and Ivy and attended school in Katanning.

The bus left at 7-00 every morning, taking almost two hours to navigate the badly corrugated roads. Alison was a year older than her classmates and was mercilessly teased because Irwin used to wet his pants all the time. She had little confidence as her teeth were all decayed and a group of nasty girls would gang up on her, forcing her to recite the alphabet backwards during which she developed a stammer as she was terrified of these bullies. Apart from school, the years spent here with her grandparents were very happy with Doreen playing games all the time and Barb looking after them as well as Ivy. They played in the yard, making their own fun out of little bottles, pegs, sticks, lids and other discarded stuff. So the rest of the family lived here at Beeck's where Reg was a farm hand, from 1944-8. It was during this time that another child was born, Dawn Elizabeth, on 14th April, 1947. Reg seemed to adore the girls and carried them around everywhere with him, whilst he seemed to ignore the boys. This may have been because he did not get on with his own father and there was some sort of communication barrier there. But he was a good father and did the washing for Betty who often suffered seizures as a consequence of her epilepsy

Around 1948, a year after Dawn's birth, Reg, Betty and Bevan moved to

Piawaning to Schell's farm where they lived in a small asbestos cottage. Alison and Irwin lived at Fair Monte with their grandparents. Before they left for Piawaning, Emiel bought a car for them, going to Broomehill with Harry Watts who was to marry Doreen, to finalise the purchase. This was to be the Paynter's transport for many years to come. The house at Schell's was two roomed with a small verandah and iron roof. Emiel had purchased part of this farm for Reg to develop as a poultry farm but this did not happen as Reg sold it which made Emiel very unhappy. Reg did not share his father-in-law's ability to make any money and it slipped through his fingers, so it was always a struggle for the family to make ends meet. In 1949, Nelson was born, and when only a few weeks old, Dawn accidentally tipped the pram up causing him to fall out and hit his head and about a week later the family took him down to the farm so Betty could take him into Katanning Hospital. He was very ill diagnosed with severe meningitis and Reg and Betty stayed with pastor Alf Lienert while Nelson was in hospital. One night pastor had to baptize him as the Doctors said he wouldn't survive the night, but the little baby pulled through. So they all returned to Piawaning and it was still very hot so Reg painted the roof with whitewash to try to make it cooler in the severe wheat belt summer. While he was on the roof, Betty saw a snake and yelled out which caused him to slip and the paint splashed into his eyes. Desperately trying to wash it out as he could hardly see anything he was referred to an Eye Specialist and had to wear dark glasses and an eye shade for the rest of his life. Reg had spent three weeks in hospital in Goomalling and his vision was permanently affected., so the little poultry farm which Emiel had bought, was sold, as Reg had let it become very unprofitable and run down which made Emiel furious. So they returned again to Fair Monte on a grain train which seemed to have square wheels as the journey was so rough.

Back at Fair Monte Reg was now unemployed again so after a short time he now found another job working at Les Cheetham's at East Katanning, and for the first time the family lived in a large and comfortable house at Datatine., called Mart's House which was built not far from a river. They all moved there from the Hettner farm and from 1950-52, Alison, Irwin and Bevan went to school in Dumbleyung on a little bus. The bus stop was a distance away from the house so they rode bikes to get to it. Life in the big house was comfortable and uneventful until Alison fell off her bike, breaking her collarbone and was off school for six weeks while it healed. Reg took the family on drives down to the south coast through the Stirlings to Albany in his new car which was a 1934 Chevrolet Coupe, and he built a cover over the back seat to shield the kids from the weather.

These were much happier times now that the family was all together but it wasn't to last as in 1952, they had to move again. Over the years Emiel helped them out with produce from the farm but it was a losing battle really and Reg never saw eye to eye with him over anything. But despite this, Reg was also religious and read his Bible as well, and would give his coat to a beggar, leaving his own family in need often. Such is life and it was a bitter pill for Emiel to swallow to see Betty so often in these circumstances of dire poverty .

In 1952, the Paynters had to move house again, from Les Cheetham's comfortable one to a little asbestos shack which was built by his brother, Bob Cheetham, and was a few miles away from the other house. Karen Louise had been born the year before on 26th July, 1951.

This house was a far cry from what they had lived in. It was virtually a shack with tiny, poky rooms, unlined and made of iron and asbestos and was stiflingly hot in summer and freezing in winter. Reg had enclosed a portion of the front yard to make a garden where he grew beautiful carnations, pumpkins, tomatoes, silver beet, and watermelons. Six foot high wooden saplings and chook wire was used to keep the rabbits and foxes out.

By 1953 Alison was boarding at Fair Monte attending Katanning Junior High School and only came home during the holidays three times a year. Another baby Leann Audrey had been born on 20th February, 1955, but was to die from an accident and was buried almost a year after birth on 20-2-1956. She was a very forward baby and was walking at a year old and whilst Betty turned her back to put the kettle back on the Metters stove, Leann reached up and pulled the boiling jug of jelly all over herself and despite being rushed to Dumbelyung Hospital was left to lie on a table and caught pneumonia, passing away a few days later. Betty was very upset and blamed herself for the tragedy.

Before Leann was born there was a flood as summer rainfall had been unusually heavy and the Warren Road which led from the Cheetham's farm to Katanning was under water for one mile and was four feet deep in the middle so it was not possible for any vehicles to cross it. So a boat was moored on the farm side of the flooded road and a truck was parked on the other side to take Betty to hospital where she could give birth to Leann.

When Irwin was going through puberty around 1953-4, he started to become very obsessed with things and one night he came in trembling all over and saying he had seen the devil! Reg was worried so because he was hard to manage in the way of personal hygiene and was becoming quite violent threatening to chop the house up with an axe, he took him to Katanning Hospital where he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, a result of his exposure to rubella before birth. So he was taken away and placed into various mental institutions in Perth.

Irwin was to spend the rest of his life away from his family and he called himself Peter. Unfortunately, he stayed at a developmental level of about 6 years intellectually and was to pass away with undiagnosed diabetic ketosis on 14th November, 2008 just one week before his 68th birthday. After Leann's death, as part of the inquest, a Mr Hill from the Social Welfare department visited the family in the shack house which was immediately classified as unfit for human habitation. So Reg and family moved back to Mart's house on Les Cheetham's property where they had lived before in 1952. But they only were able to stay until a flood came and swirled through the place so it was back to Fair Monte again. If this had not happened the

children - Bevan, Dawn, Nelson and Karen were to be placed in foster care. And so it should have been condemned with only one bedroom, an unfinished bathroom, hessian bags covering windows and asbestos verandah which was unlined where Reg and Betty slept. Emiel realized that Betty had been through enough with losing a baby, so he bought her a large house, "Rookwood", at the end of 1955, just a few miles from Katanning on the Kojonup Road, which had been built for a local railway worker, Mr Plumb.

Another baby, Martin Emiel, was born on 23rd May, 1956 but died shortly after wards on the 24th, as he was a blue baby with a hole in the heart. Now Reg went back to working for Emiel and his son, Johnny, taking Betty with him to see her mother every day, as she was very depressed at the loss of both Leann and Martin. Rookwood was a beautiful home, situated on three and a half acres, with a verandah on two sides and French doors opening onto this from two bedrooms and a lounge. There were fireplaces in the bedrooms and the lounge as well as very large windows. Parts of the verandah were enclosed with white lattice from top to bottom. A fern house opposite the stained glass front door had a beautiful purple bougainvillea, Magnifica Traillii, covering it with weeping growth, whilst pink allamandas flowered on the verandah lattice. Some fowls were put into the fowl yard at the back, adjacent to the outside toilet. There were many large water tanks, adjacent to an outdoor laundry with copper and cement troughs. The inside rooms had twelve foot high ceilings, a very large lounge and huge bedrooms. A third bedroom and the kitchen were smaller with a Metters Wood stove. There was also a small bathroom.

While Betty and Reg went to Fair Monte every day, nine year old Dawn had to feed and clothe the remaining kids and they had to walk to school, having their lunch at the Mayfair Hostel in town. This was a tough time for all. After a couple of years, Reg left the farm after being accused of stealing petrol and went to work for Norman Rae of Greenhills Estate, Broomehill, staying here until 1962. On the weekends Reg went to the Katanning Rubbish Depot collecting scarp metal, and he decided to ask the Shire for a job here as his eyes were not very good. So in 1962 he began work at the landfill site at the Saleyards as a full time over seer. A year after moving into town, Betty gave birth to Owen Herbert on 14th August, 1958. Seventeen months later on 23rd January, 1960 another son, Steven Elliot was born. But a few months later Betty suffered a nervous break down as all the grief of the past three years descended upon her. Bert was a little ratbag as he terrorised Steve who suffered from continual ear infections and never thrived until Bert got off his back in his late teens. During 1969, whilst working at the dump, Reg picked up a severe urinary infection which resulted in hospitalisation as he developed severe nephritis.

When Reg first went to work for Emiel in 1932, the little hut made of asbestos had windows of louvres covered with hessian bags and inside were shelves where he kept all his odds and ends used to make wirelasses. This was called the Wireless Hut and he indulged in this hobby which consumed his spare time for almost all his life, often making little sets for people, some of

which still work today. Herbert Wanke who owned a wireless shop in Katanning was in later years to become a good friend, and instead of paying him money, every Christmas he would give him a couple of fowls. He was also a keen photographer and many of the photos of life on Emiel's farm were taken with his trusty old camera. Later in life he collected car badges and steam train photographs from over seas. Whilst working on Emiel's farm he also taught Johnny much of what was to be learned about farming, but Emiel never gave him any recognition in later years for this. When Rookwood was bought, Emiel put the title deeds in Betty's name only and Johnny was to pay all the rates and upkeep, etc. This was because Reg just couldn't handle or save money which was his biggest failing.

In 1964, after Dawn married Domenico Schiano Dicola, Karen aged 13 years had to take over the role of Mum, as had Alison and Dawn before her, looking after Bert, aged 6 years, Steve 4 years and a new baby, Julie Ann, 2 years. The newest baby, Desmond Franklin was born on 13-9-1963, and Betty was kept flat out looking after him as she was an undiagnosed diabetic and he was a very large baby of 10 and a half pounds . After three days in labour he had been born intellectually disabled due to being starved of oxygen. In 1966 Karen left to go to Perth and Betty was now finding it almost impossible especially as her last child, Christine Grace was born on 20-10-1966. Betty had become increasingly obese due to lack of exercise and being zonked out on her anti-epileptic medication, making her very sleepy. The diabetes that had developed in the fifties took a toll on her eyesight from diabetes damage to the retina. After Reg's death, Betty battled on until it was decided she go into Bethshan Nursing Home about two years later. Here she suffered severe depression, diabetes, obesity, hypertension and ulcers in her lower legs. In 1993, she was taken to Albany Hospital where she underwent an operation for removal of a lymphoma, a rare cancer that was blocking her stomach. Part of her stomach and liver was removed and she lived another eight years after this operation which no one expected her to survive.

In 2000 Betty was transferred to Kerry Lodge, a nursing home attached to Katanning Hospital, as she was in the early stages of dementia and didn't like being left alone in her little room at Bethshan. She became increasingly bedridden and developed a chest infection that became pneumonia, passing away on 13th July, 2002. Betty had had a very difficult life, especially in her latter years, and through it all she maintained as cheerful an attitude as she could, despite the debilitating side effects of the Dilantin medication for epilepsy. It is generally believed that only very highly intelligent people get this illness and Betty was highly gifted with a quick mind and good memory like Emiel. The burdens she carried were spread out amongst Reg, her relatives and children, who were always there for her. Reg in later years was a little ashamed of her and never let her go out to the shops in case she had a seizure. So she had a very reclusive existence in some ways and the babies were her reason for living as she was a very caring, loving mother to them all.

Nearly all his life Reg had taken pain killers like Bex, Veganin, Codeine, Codral, Andrew's Liver Salts and De Witts Antacid Powder and these must

have affected his kidneys as well. This was because he had severe lumbago, or lower back pain, made worse with movement. But he kept away from doctors as much as possible. But in 1985 he suffered severe head aches and was given a script for hypertension but he never got it filled out and suffered a massive stroke a year later in the first week of May, 1986. He was rushed to Katanning District Hospital from where he was transferred to Royal Perth Hospital. After his condition had stabilised he was returned to Katanning. After a few weeks he developed pneumonia and died, five weeks after the stroke, on 15th June, 1986, aged 72 years. The medical staff said it was the highest blood pressure they had ever seen in a living person, twice the normal pressure. People found it hard to believe he was 72 years old as he looked like a man in his fifties he was so physically fit. Everyone has faults and it does no good to dwell on them to the exclusion of the good points in one's character. One has to sometimes look at one's upbringing and Reg's was very hard as his own family was not well off and had to struggle with his father's addiction to alcohol, so he never really had a good role model to emulate. His father never got on with him and that is why he left home in his teens to find work and make a new life for himself. It was sad that Reg found it hard to relate to his little sons as well, and they lacked the paternal discipline as they grew up which spawned a whole saga of rebellion and anti-social behaviour, Eventually, they grew out of this. But men in his day were never taught how to express their emotions, and we should not be too harsh in passing judgement. One cannot choose one's parents but should respect them no matter what. Reg Paynter will never be forgotten by his children and grandchildren, remembered always as a pious man ready to help those less fortunate, a non-smoker and non-drinker and a loving father and husband who tried to shield Betty from the world because of her epilepsy. He also grew lovely carnations. May he rest in peace.

Alison.