

CAROLINE (CHAMPION) AND EDWARD HAWORTH

By Joyce Taylor

Tram to Central station, wave goodbye to Dad, train to Broadmeadow, steam tram to Wallsend, this was a common trip for us children. Grandpa was waiting at the town square at Wallsend, his face aglow with the pleasure of seeing us. He would load our luggage onto the sulky, hand Mum up to sit beside him and lift Paul and me up to sit in the back seat. We always knew what would be waiting for us in the picturesque cottage on the corner of Martindale and Irvine Streets – Grandma with hugs and kisses and, wait for it, Cornish pasty. No one even made pasties like Grandma. They were family size and filled with lamb, bacon, leaks, and other vegetables. How she managed to have the raw lamb cooked and juicy and keep the pastry melt-in-the-mouth is a wonder to me now.

At this time my grandparents would have been in their seventies. They looked very old to me. Edward was tall and spare, Caroline was short and a little plump. Edward's hair was grizzled, as was his beard. He was a handsome man and clearly master of the household (*he thought!*). He looked pretty good in his Sunday suit, and always had a certain "Presence". Caroline had been pretty with fine features and a trim figure, but life had dealt her a blow. She had been thrown from the sulky she was driving and suffered facial injuries, including broken cheekbones. She had lost most of her teeth in the accident and it was not possible to fit her with suitable dentures in those days. Somehow, we children didn't notice this, as it certainly didn't affect her appetite. She wore black silk dresses and a black bonnet when she went out and the inevitable apron over older black silk at home.

Their home was lovely with a flowering-vine-covered front veranda, a wide side gate for the horse, sulky and cart, a big family kitchen running the width of the house with a range always going, holding an iron urn with a tap, always on the boil, and a dish of milk being turned into clotted cream. There was a parlour kept spic and span for visitors, a master bedroom, which I never entered and two other bedrooms. I loved my bedroom. It had flowered wallpaper, a nice soft bed with a patchwork quilt, a wardrobe and dressing table and a washstand complete with a pretty basin and jug and a cabinet for the matching pretty chamber pot. The bathroom consisted of a round tin tub in front of the kitchen fire, where it was Caroline's duty to wash Edward's back. We children had a weekly bath together while we were there for most of the school holidays and relied on the facilities in our bedrooms the rest of the week. After dark we read, or were read to, by lamplight. The kerosene lamps were so pretty and polished to the nines. The house was never-painted timber.

The garden was full of flowers and vegetables grown by Edward. I stayed with them for a few months one spring and it was my task to pick a big bunch of sweet peas and arrange them in a rose bowl in the parlour every morning. The "dunny" was reached by a path through the garden and was serviced by the Council. Of course there was a stable for the horse (I think his name was "Dobbin") and cover for the vehicles, a sulky and a cart. There was a wide back veranda where the collie dog, Leo, slept. Their lives revolved around the church, about a quarter mile walk away in Thomas Street.

All the foregoing was childhood memory. But they must have worked very hard. Edward had the horse to feed and groom and the vehicles to maintain, as well as a half-acre of garden. As well as doing lots of cooking, Caroline had the house to maintain and the washing to do. The flat iron was heated on the kitchen range. There

was a fuel copper on the back veranda, and I suppose, a tin tub. The floor coverings in the house were lino with homemade hooked rugs. I seem to remember a carpet square in the Parlour. In those days floors were washed on hands and knees and the rugs were hung on the line and beaten. She had a local girl in occasionally to help and spoilt her a little. They came pretty cheap. When we were visiting Mum would have helped with the housework.

But in his younger days, when they lived in the “Bush” a mile or two from their Wallsend home, with a much larger house, Edward would attend church on Sunday morning, then go on foot (it was the Sabbath) to Broadmeadow and hold a service there, then return home in time for the evening service. He would often have been involved in all three services. In those days they had a small farm in South Wallsend, where there was a small chapel and a creek where Edward and Caroline and later their family and many others were baptized.

Edward was a studious man. He had been christened in St. James Church, King Street, Sydney, but while living in Victoria he and Caroline had become members of a sect whose ideal was to have all things in common. They subscribed wholeheartedly to this concept and put everything they had into the venture. Sadly it collapsed and they lost everything. They started life again in Wallsend, Edward as a miner and small farmer and Caroline as a farmer’s wife and local midwife.

Edward was converted to the gospel as presented by the Reorganized LDS Church but Caroline was wary. Edward waited for three years for Caroline to be convinced. She was suffering from severe arthritis in her feet and had to be carried into the water. She walked out of the water and never had a return of the arthritis. Straight after Edward’s baptism and confirmation, he was ordained to the office of elder. He served as a respected self-sustaining minister for the rest of his life, at one time being in charge of the Australian Mission while waiting for some months for the appointed Apostle-in-charge [Apostle Smith in 1888] to arrive by ship. His son, Walter, later served for some years as Australian Mission President.

Here is my memory of the grace Edward always said before meals: *“Accept our thanks for these thy mercies and help us at all times to remember thee and keep thy commandments, Amen”*

Caroline was a busy farmer’s wife, with cows to milk, or see that it was done by her sons, chooks and pigs to feed, and six children to bring up. If that wasn’t enough, she was the local midwife, and even in her old age, was often visited by people she had brought into the world.

My mother, Ruth, told me that the children never knew if their mother would be there when they got home from school and she would sometimes be out all night attending to a birth. The Wallsend women traditionally did not avail themselves of the services of a doctor whose fee was One Pound. I wonder what the midwife charged? But as well as a midwife, every new mother employed a housekeeper to care for her husband and children while she convalesced for two weeks in bed.

South Wallsend seems to have been a real community also. When someone killed a pig, the neighbours were invited. Some people, who liked it, would catch the blood and use it for black pudding. Edward killed his own meat and while living at home Ruth couldn’t eat meat, as the beast had been a family pet.

All the South Wallsend period was well before my time, but my grandparents seemed to carry on their way of life into their old age.

Naturally, I had more to do with Caroline, who petted me, giving me “humbug” lollies, and later on, towards the end of her life, a gold sovereign every visit, and taking me wherever she went. This was frequently to Newcastle with her in

the sulky, or sometimes the cart if there was a big load. Paul went too, but never Mum. Grandma kept a little “shop” selling Manchester in a cupboard at home and went to town for supplies. She kept her money in the depths of her underwear and used to go to a private place in a back alley to fish for it. She entertained quite a bit, with ladies coming for afternoon tea, and she also visited in Wallsend and surrounding suburbs. In those days everyone seemed to make seed cake and didn't I get to hate seed cake! She shopped at the Co-Op in Wallsend, of which they were members and got around everywhere per favour of good old Dobbin the horse.

She and Edward were very hospital. They kept a good table and shared it generously with invited guests and “drop-ins”, including their own children and grandchildren. Looking back, I never, ever heard voices raised by them in anger in their home.

Caroline never missed church. She had a good voice and sang with a will. The Wallsend congregation was largely made up of Welsh people whose families had come there to work in the coalmines. Caroline's people had come from Cornwall. They all had wonderful singing voices. Nearly every Sunday someone would request to sing the First Psalm, which had somehow grown from extemporaneous singing into a tune they used every time. An outstanding singer was Dave Roberts who had a glorious tenor voice. I really enjoyed the singing and the fervour of the preaching.

Although they were both committed to “The Work”, I have no memory of family worship with the Head of the House leading in prayer and scripture reading. This was usual for most Christians of our acquaintance at the time. They let their light shine in good works. Edward was very gentle and protective of us children. I think he would have laid down his life for us. He might have given me a peck on the cheek but never ever any sort of a cuddle and he would shake hands with Paul. One night we heard a dreadful cry from Leo. Edward went out to see what was happening and came back and said everything was all right. Next morning he broke the news that Leo, whom we adored, had died. He had hidden the body so we couldn't see it and buried it the next day.

Once we had been to a picnic at The Lake, West Wallsend, and were coming home in the steam tram. There was an awful accident. A sulky had collided with the tram, the horse was badly injured and one little boy had his leg badly gashed (it had to be amputated). Edward lent his help, calming the horse, which had to be shot, and returning to us in the tram and telling us everything was all right. The horror of that night stayed with me for years. He had “Second Sight”. They were expecting his mother from Victoria for a visit. Caroline had gone to meet her on Newcastle wharf and alas she had suffered a heart attack and died on the wharf. At the moment of her death Edward, who was working in the mine, saw her distinctly, clad in white.

In his retirement Edward gardened every day and set aside time each day to read the bible and other “good books”. He drank gallons of tea in a cup that looked almost like a chamber pot. He liked to tell yarns and had one that he told over and over and I still couldn't tell you what it meant. It was about a Roll of Leather and probably to do with an Irishman. Thinking back, I guess both my grandparents had accents with a flavour of the Old Country learnt from their migrant parents.

In 1932 the family gave them a Diamond Wedding celebration in Balmain church, organised by Ruth. Their eldest son Walter conducted the “service”. A reception was held in the hall opposite with about 100 guests. It was catered for by Gomer Parkes, a professional caterer.

Some time in the late 1920s their daughter Ada had begun to more and more take over the reins of management. She was a war widow and supplemented her

pension by housekeeping in different homes, coming home to stay with her parents at fairly frequent intervals, She employed local girls to do the housework and cooking. Two of these girls, Molly and Georgina, were to marry Caroline's and Edward's grandsons, Jim and Albert (Abbie) Haworth.

Finally Ada pulled the pretty old house down and built an ugly but certainly more up-to-date house on the site. I hated that house and never felt at home in it. It still stands and is still ugly. This was from the standpoint of Youth but I still don't like it. By then the old house was being held together by all that pretty wallpaper. Grandma never felt she was mistress of the new house and the atmosphere was very different. There was now electric light and a bathroom, but the food wasn't so good and certainly not in the same abundance.

Even as a child I was aware of the respect my grandparents, and indeed our church, were held in the Wallsend community. When George Lewis, the church's self-sustaining bishop died, the funeral cortège stretched from the church to the cemetery with people on foot the whole of the distance of over a mile. Edward died at the age of ninety-one, after taking to his bed for a week. (Four days before he died his great-grandson, Edward Raymond Haworth was born. He became a successful builder, a good athlete and a leader in the church). I was working as a bookkeeper at Compton Parkinson and the boss wouldn't give me time off to attend his funeral, saying he didn't believe in young girls going to such things (I was twenty).

When Caroline died at 93, I certainly was there. She lay in state and her little great-grandchildren were made to kiss her in the coffin, a Wallsend custom. I thought that was awful for the poor little things. All Wallsend came to that funeral. There were dozens of handmade wreaths, made in a circle of white and pink camellias. We walked to the cemetery where Charles Davies conducted the service. He talked of "The Little White Gate" she had entered.

She had truly been one who lived for others. Her warmth, integrity, cooking, support of her husband and gentle management of her sphere of activity, will be with me forever. Edward too, lived for others, a man of action, strong physical and mental capability, and in short, by any standards, a gentleman. Let's hope they have passed on some of their genes to their descendants.