

Alfred Sargeant

I began school in 1924.

Our family lived in Perkins Street then we moved to Newcastle East.

The early part of my school years sped quickly. There isn't much to say, only it has been an honour to be associated with a fine old school.

The headmaster while I was there was Mr. Ryan. Other teachers included Mr. Morton, Miss Bacon, Miss Fitness. There were others who made up the numbers.

Just a few mates I had as classmates included A. Brew, T. Coleman, D. Fuller Fenton, J. Rodgers, D. Robinson, Miller, F. Timbury.

Some of the above and myself were

members of the choir up at the Church of England Cathedral. The girls were Irene Frew (my future wife), N. Barnes, G. Chichester, D. Boyle. There were others, too many to mention..

At school we had desks and mostly sat together. There was no talking unless required.

My sports were football, cricket and swimming. For athletics, we went to King Edward Park or to Watt Street Oval at the Mental Hospital.

We had no canteen, we shopped next door or down Bolton Street at Pikes where they had good pie; threepence each plus sauce.

Discipline was the cane or getting kept in to write words. But on the whole the conduct was pretty good.

There was no uniform, as long as you were clean and tidy, you were accepted. Our football color was maroon.

I remember a time when I was only a little bloke and "poop catchers" (baggy trousers) really lived up to their name! I was half way home from school when I was caught short. I had to continue walking home, very carefully, with legs wide astride!

We were issued with magazines, writing books, pencils and pens with nibs when required.

We had small gardens around the playground, we had turns to water them and also ring the school bell.

Lunch times, most of the boys played marbles, "Saddle the Hag" or cigarette card swapping. Cricket depended on the weather as the playground was a dust surface. During the break I always went home for my lunch. Living close, there were four of us who went home together.

Being a swimming family, a sister, brother, myself and my wife all

represented the school in this sphere. Later on my three sons had the honour to do the same.

While my boys were still at school, there was a period that there was no one with a bronze medallion to take the swimming class to the Ocean Baths on the Friday. So both myself and my wife were deputised to take them, provided we taught them to swim and returned them back to school. Some of the swimmers turned out to be Australian champions.

After school everybody naturally headed for the surf. When we had enough, it was "Door Knock Time". This was always good for a chase. The right time to do this was near dark. We would tie cotton to the old style knocker on the door, throw the reel over the wires, then pull the cotton from the other side of the road. When someone would come out, if they went to come across, then it would be "last home lousy".

On the weekends we would jump on the

Chinaman's cart. Here we were always certain of action.

When the old steam trams were running (it was a bit dangerous) this was another way of getting chased.

When the morgue was located down near the harbour (near the pilot's station) we used to stand on a box and look through the window to watch the Sergeant sew the bodies into hessian sacks.

Holidays were similar as today and were always welcome, couldn't come quick enough!

The worst event was on the day the late Jack Canning was taken by a shark down at the Newcastle surf. I had been over at the Baths with the school class. It was just about the time our class finished when the shark alarm went off. By the time we ran around, Canning had been rescued and taken to Newcastle Hospital. But the shark returned. It swam across the bank whereit became

stranded until a wave came and it floated free. It was very large and black.

A little bit about Black Harris - his nickname was "Doonyω. Well, there had been a fatality on the Newcastle Beach. The body had never been found. As he was a member of the new surf club, the members suggested to "Doonyω, that he swim out in the surf and look for the body - he being black, the sharks wouldn't touch black people! Doony replied saying, "Paint yourself black, and go yourself!ω.