

**Ivan Welsh  
1945 - 1952**

**Living at 18 Zaara Street, Newcastle East, (with my sister Judith, mother Laurel and father Ivan), I walked to school.**

**Friends I went to school which included Lionel Crossley, Ross Brown, Coral Forbes, Susan Townsend, Graham Sargeant, Colin Stone, Robert Glenn, Barry Jordan and George Duncan.**

**Teachers at the time included Mr Fraser who was kind and easy going, and Mr Roach who was always "on the ball".**

**I liked my teachers, although time has tempered the memories in some cases.**

**My best memories are of "Free milk" and what we could do with the lead milk caps.**

**Empire Day was always a special event and I can remember getting a lovely big hard covered book to commemorate some big event. It may have been 50 years of Federation or, earlier than that, perhaps the anniversary of 150 years for Newcastle. Perhaps we got one for each event.**

**Rounders was the popular game played on the top quadrangle. This was usually teacher organised. Red Rover Cross Over was played on the lower playground and marbles on both, when no other games were organised.**

**I can't remember the class rules, but I can be sure that I broke most of them. This accounts for the involuntary visits to the headmaster's office; a trip I made often.**

**Uniforms consisted of Stamina shorts. I remember the Stamina shorts because they always had packets of collectable picture cards in the pockets when you**

**bought them. The shirts weren't so memorable.**

**Sports consisted of "Rounders" and organised team sports on the oval at Watt Street Mental Home (as it was then). A Mr Brown-Parker tried to teach us the fundamentals of Australian Football on a large oval. All I can remember of it was that I was so far away from everyone, when he positioned me, I thought it would be three months before the ball got round to me.**

**In Summer, we spent most of our time on the beach or at the Baths. We spent a lot of time in the old concrete bunkers on the other side. In Winter, we played hockey or football in the small park in Parnell Place. This had some natural obstacles to contend with. One was a concrete pillar in the middle of the sealed path that dissected the park, and two, being so small, a strong hit or kick would send the ball whizzing across the road into a house or shopfront, with any**

**luck, missing the windows.**

**In the early years pocket money consisted of sixpence, now and again. This bought 3 & 3 with vinegar, (threepence worth of chips and threepence worth of scallops with vinegar from a little shop in the Arcade next to Ell's - now Angus and Robertson's). Later, this amount increased to ninepence, then a shilling - to go to the movies on Saturday and buy a packet of Jaffas to roll down the aisle.**

**There were many colourful characters within our community, but the laws of libel prevent me from outlining their deeds here!**

**My most memorable recollections are outlined below.**

**This picture was taken on the first day of school in 1945 and was published in the Newcastle Herald the next day. It shows Mrs Crossley with Lionel Crossley and I being signed up by Mrs Oswald.**

**Mrs Oswald was loved by generations of children who passed through her Kindergarten classes. She was a rare and wonderful person. She caused a bit of a stir when she remarried, and became Mrs Cameron. This was an uncommon practice back then and there was some concern about how the children would handle it. Of course, as usual, the children handled it much more readily than did their parents, though I must admit that I took a while to get used to referring to her as Mrs Cameron, having known her for so long as Mrs Oswald.**

**This picture caused me to be called Lionel, and he, Ivan for many years. Some people still make the slip!**

**The P&C, even back then, had factions; though probably different to those which exist today. The factions then were roughly divided into those who had to walk uphill to get to the school and those who did not. It seems the "nobs" lived on the "Hill"**

**while the less well-off lived down on the flat.**

**I lived in Zaara Street (though it was Zara Street back then) and Lionel lived in Alfred Street (though I can never remember approaching his home from Alfred Street; we always visited people in Alfred Street via their back gates, which opened onto the lane that ran parallel to Alfred and Scott Streets. There was another lane running parallel to Alfred Street and Military Road. Many ex-pupils of Newcastle East lived on either side of those two lanes.**

**The whole area was known as the "Sandhills" and all the people there were parochial "Sandhillites" and proud of it. All of us walked to school from the "Sandhills", many of us without shoes. The headmaster at that time was Mr Fraser, a very fair and kind man. I can remember nearly every child in the school crying when he left and, had I known how hard his replacement would turn out to be, I would have cried**

harder. Mr. Roach scared me. He had my number and he didn't let me get away with anything. I dodged him as much as I could. All the teachers were fair. Some times there were composite classes so my recollection of which teachers had which classes is hazy. But the order in which I went through them was, Mrs Oswald, Mrs Robinson, Mrs Forbes, Mr Cogley, Mr Fraser, Mr Roach. Mrs Forbes was another "no nonsense" teacher who was forced to give me the odd whack here and there but, to talk to my sister, she was the most gentle soul who ever lived. I guess psychological reciprocity enters the equation when remembering teachers. I remember Mr. Cogley for two things. One was his knowledge of our universe system and the other was for a fight he had with one of the pupils. We quickly found that Mr. Cogley could be quickly distracted, particularly in spelling class, when any word to do with the planets, stars or universe came up. To demonstrate what happened, he would have four children, each holding the four corners of a large wallmap of

***the world, start walking around in a small circle, another child holding a football would walk around the outside of them as the moon, and this could go on for as long as we asked questions or until the bell rang. The fight was through a lack of communications and frustration. Jerry and Arthur Shannos had just arrived from Greece. They were trying to settle in and learn the language. Arthur and Mr. Cogley started arguing, neither understanding the other. Next thing they grabbed each other and started rolling around on the asphalt. Mr. Cogley started bleeding and Arthur stormed out of the school. He took some getting back as I recall.***