

# HOMELAND

*We came from many lands. We left cities ageless in their architectural grandeur; towns nestled in lush green valleys and villages that merged into the backdrop of magnificent mountains. Many of us were surrounded by the shimmering beauty of the sea.*

We left a country of magnificent mountains and the sea and came to a place of heat, dust, tin houses and toilets. It was a big shock for us! Rudolph Alagich OAM

When I was a child in Italy, we had a shack in the mountains; it was the stable for the cows and chooks. I remember when I was very young there was one particular cow that was mine to take to drink. They grazed on one side and drank on the other side. Dina Spagnol

I grew up in South Africa during the apartheid years. I saw a lot of injustices. Adelaide De Main

Italo and I were in orphanages for eight years. I went in when I was six and I came out when I was fourteen, to come to Australia. Silvana Michi

We were starving at that orphanage. I remember going out to the garden with the boys and collecting snails; scraping them out of the shells with a bit of wire and heating them over the drum of rubbish and eating them. Italo Martini



Marianella Cester with family and friends, Italy.

*I came from a city of one million people where I attended concerts and cultural functions all the time.* Vera Silicich



Abdul Ziadulla Fazulla — Afghan elder stepping out!

We came from the northern part of Norway and the winter over there was very hard: snowing began in October; storms and snow and frost and long hard winters. I don't miss that. Dagmar Kanck

Life in Lebanon at that time was very harsh compared to life in Australia. People had little or no money. They lived by trading whatever produce they could generate for the essentials required for survival. Ramon Ware

My grandfather Emanuel Pedernana was born in San Bernardo, Rabbi Tyrol, Italy on 11th November 1883. That region of Italy was under Austrian rule until after the First World War. Reginald (Reg) Pedernana

After World War Two, the whole of industry in Italy was migrating; originally to Switzerland, France, Belgium and then Australia. John De Franceschi

*In Yugoslavia we were working on a farm and my husband was a blacksmith. The work on the farm was very hard.* Margarita Silicich

*The surname Dal Santo is an ordinary name, common to the North of Italy around the Vincenza area and in particular in the township of Caltrano.* Clara Dal Santo

Greece was spoiled for many years after the Second World War; the economy was in ruin and there was a lot of unemployment. It was not a very easy life at that time because our country was so poor. Veatrike (Vickie) Drosos

My father, Joze (Joe) Ravlich was a soldier in the Army. He fought for Yugoslavia to become united and in my heart I am a Yugoslav—that is the best way I can describe it. Olga De Franceschi

We actually came from the Campagna district of Italy. Campagna was mostly mountains and hills and scrubby grounds; utterly different to what poor old mum faced in Broken Hill. Anna Murphy

Italy was not a good place to be during the Second World War. I remember our father pushing us out of the ways so we wouldn't get hit as airplanes shot at Germans! Jack De Franceschi

*During the war, the German command in Italy was based in our town. We were bombed from all sides. Our town was bombed every day because the highway came from Milano to Trieste and we had the river there. The Americans destroyed the bridges and then the German or Italian troops worked through the night to rebuild the bridges; the trains would go along and the planes would come again. That went on for about three years; no let-up.* Luigi Zanetto



Arten, northern Italy.



Home of Anica (Begovich) Ravlich in Yugoslavia.

*Giuseppe (Beppi) and Monica Toigo were born in the town of Arten in northern Italy. Arten is approximately one hundred and fifty kilometres from Venice and located in a region of green mountains and crystal-clear streams, two hundred and fifty kilometres from the Austrian border.* Noris Bises

# THE REASONS

*Our lands were ravaged by war. Our people were politically oppressed. There was no work; we were often without food and clothing. There was no future for us or for our children. We left our homeland in search of a better life.*

My father was fighting at Gallipoli. When he was wounded he was looked after by the Australians. He got so attached to these people — 'I want to go to Australia!'. We looked around and said 'Well, where is this Australia?' We didn't know where, but we came anyway. Igor Caplygin

'We should go to the New World' she said to her husband Jacob, 'so we too can make lots of money and raise our children in better conditions than we have here!' Ramon Ware

Carlo had migrated to Australia in 1956. He was only twenty years old when he left Italy and like all young men, he thought he would be in Australia for only a short time, make a lot of money and return home to Italy but life is not like that. Filomena Tormena

I said to myself, 'What am I going to do here? There is no future for myself; no future for my family. I am going'. I didn't like leaving my home town but that is what I did — for a better life. Luigi Zanette



I spent two and a half years in a displaced persons camp in Italy. There was nothing at home. Rose Cetnich

*Ten of us left school together; a few decided to go to Australia and we were like sheep; we followed one another.* Paul Sultana



Carlo Forner, World War 1.

The Slav men that came to Australia returned to Blato and picked a wife and they always picked the best. The ones that were not chosen at that time believed they were very lucky if they eventually came to Australia. Kata Andrich

My father told me he was willing to allow me to go to Australia as he had first cousins here in Australia that would sponsor me, so I told him I was ready to migrate. John De Franceschi

I came to Australia in 1962 because the people in Yugoslavia couldn't get jobs after the Second World War. I came to Australia for a better life. Ivan Pippin

I came here for a change of life and to see another world. Giuseppe (Joe) Franze

Dad told mum he had to leave Italy because of what the Fascists could do to them. He decided to come to Australia. Louis (Lou) Forner

*My two brothers, Marin and Slavka, and I left Makarska and the beautiful Adriatic Coast of Yugoslavia in 1932 to join our father Joe in Broken Hill. He had migrated to Australia in 1924 and was working on the Line of Lode.* Rudolph Alajlich

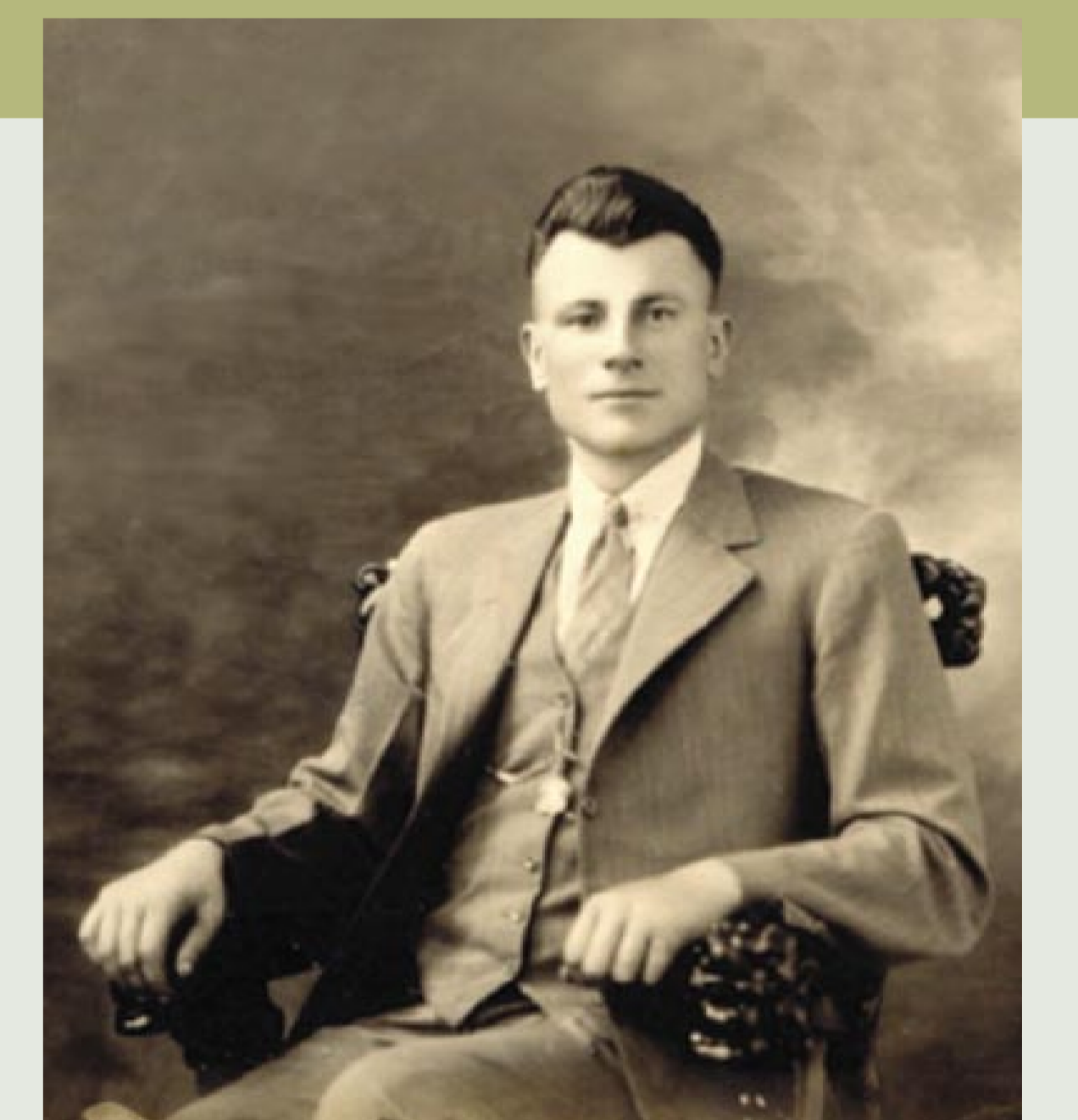
*My father came out to Australia with his brother-in-law and another relation. They all came and got jobs here in Broken Hill because mining was the only thing they could do.* Evangelia (Lily) Christakis

After the Second World War, Treviso, the area in Italy where I came from, was over-populated. We were a farming family that was struggling against poverty and landlord corruption. I believed the only solution to my family's problems was to emigrate and prepare the way for other members of my family to join me. Italo Dall'Armi

Dad came to Broken Hill from Blato, Yugoslavia in 1925. He was the eldest in a family of eight sisters and one brother so he came out here to work and buy land for his family in Yugoslavia. Vinka Bartulovich

You see we had nothing over there. People who had farms still survived. They stuck to farming and they ended up quite well. If you had nothing — well, you had to walk away. That's why they had to migrate. Somebody had to go, and they went. Lorenzo (Laurie) Cester

*Mum had been to Australia. She came back to South Africa and talked about the freedom. There was this awareness that people actually lived without these sort of restrictions and cruelties that were such a part of our lives.* Adelaide De Marin



My father Joe came to Australia in 1926. My mother and George joined him twelve years later. Olga De Franceschi  
«Emanuel Pedernana was eighteen years old when he emigrated from Italy in 1901. I believe he came out to better himself and get away from the turmoil that was in Europe before the beginning of the First World War. Reginald (Reg) Pedernana

*We understood Australia was beautiful; there were plenty of rabbits, sheep, horses and cows. I said to myself, 'You can't go wrong there. You would never starve'. That's why I chose to come to Australia!* Jack De Franceschi

*Spiros' family spoke to my father and he asked me if I wanted to go to Australia. We were poor people; a lot of girls like me came to this country in those days.* Vassiliki (Vickie) Niarmis

# THE JOURNEY

*We travelled by truck, train, ship and aeroplane to reach this country. Often the trip was long and uncomfortable. We were apprehensive about the new life that awaited us.*

I left on the Orsova on the 22nd of May, 1961. The trip out wasn't very easy. The first few days were really sad, because we left our family. It was an English ship so we couldn't talk to anybody because we didn't know the language. Marija Zaknich

I left Messina, Italy at the end of July on the Toscana. The trip was rough and slow. The food was alright but because it was so rough, no sooner was it taken in than it came out! The ship took forty days to reach Melbourne. Giuseppe (Joe) Franze

On Dad's journey out to Australia, the ship broke its tail shaft and stayed in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) for a couple of months. Dad remembered going into the forests of Ceylon eating big snails. These were two or three inches in diameter and that's what they lived on. Louis (Lou) Forner

I paid for my own fare. When you have no money, you take the best you can afford. I slept in a hammock — there were fifty to a room. Luigi Zanette



There was not really any sadness when I left my country for Australia. I was happy to come here because I knew I was beginning a new life: starting again, and I would meet my father. Ivan Vlatko

*I can remember my grandmother dressed in black, waving her hanky at us.* Anna Murphy



Michelina Zahra in centre of Maltese migrants on the Columbia in the 1950s.



I sailed from Genoa on the Sydney. Jagoda Vlatko

I sailed on the Greek ship Tasmania. There were five hundred men and two thousand girls! I had a fantastic time and I didn't want the trip to end. Spiros Niarros

We were all together. There were two or three hundred people in one large room: pregnant women, babies, boys, girls. I think it was a magazine room — there were no cabins, just bunks. The smell was dreadful. Silvana Michl

I sailed on a German ship the Fair Sea, and celebrated my twenty-first birthday on the boat. There were five hundred Italian men on the ship, from twenty-one to thirty years of age, no younger or no older. There was not one Italian family or Italian female on board. Dino De Franceschi

One night water was coming to the level of the window and it was like mud. The ship was swaying and I said, 'We'll drown tonight!' The children were sleeping; it didn't worry them but I went into the passage and prayed the fifth mystery of the Rosary that the ship would not sink! Olga Zanette

*We came on the Citta De Geneva. Every table had two bottles of wine, but no tea or coffee! The tucker was alright but we were worried. We wouldn't eat and we got sick.* Emily Tonna

*I used to wipe up the dishes on the ship. They used to give us two hours a day, washing the saucepan and the plate. So, instead of spending money in the ship, I made money.* Italo Dall'Armi

We left from Trieste and sailed for Melbourne on the Italian ship, Aurelia. The journey was good, really like a feast to us. My brother had the clarinet and I had the trumpet and we used to play around and sing every night on the boat. A lot of ladies came over on that ship to marry in Australia. Jack De Franceschi

I came out on an English ship, the Orion. I enjoyed going to the lounge after dinner to watch the dancing. People came and asked me to dance but I was too shy. I remembered my father's words: 'Don't trust anyone; don't have a drink and don't get too excited dancing, because if anything happens I will jump in the river'. Vasiliki (Vickie) Niarros

Federico came to pick me up in Melbourne. We travelled by plane to Adelaide because Federico had driven the truck to Adelaide before coming to meet me. We travelled to Broken Hill in the truck and with no bitumen on the road — Oh my God! Anna Caon

*We flew from Melbourne to Mildura with the kids sitting on our knees. We sat all the way from Mildura to Broken Hill in the back of a truck on one of the dustiest days you could ever imagine! It was an all-dirt road.* Olga Zanette

*When we left for Broken Hill, we passed KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken). We stopped and bought my favourite food. 'Are we there yet?' It was Dubbo.* Linda McCubbin



Charlie told me that when they left Malta, they had so much bad weather between Malta and France, they almost drowned three times. The Mouravieff-Apostol was the ship that they sailed on from France to Fremantle, Australia. Rosina (Rose) Micallef



Karl Karthauer on board.

*There were about three hundred beds in one square place on the boat. We had bunks. Some were sick and didn't get out of bed for forty five days.* Faith Sultana

*My mother was on one side of the boat with my sister and I was on the other. Two-thirds of the boat was taken up by three hundred people and the other third was taken up by two thousand. The food was good but we didn't have the same as first class.* Lorenzo Costar

# ARRIVAL

*Many arrived and knew no-one. We were apprehensive, lonely and confused in a land about which we knew so little. Some were greeted by family and friends. We shared tears, laughter and a wonderful sense of relief that we had finally arrived.*

Carlo still tells me that he arrived in November, and that first Christmas he cried like a baby and if he'd had the money he would have gone home. Filomena Tormena

Spiros was waiting for me. I felt relieved in a way, that I had come and that there was someone waiting for me. Vasiliki (Vickie) Niarros

It really breaks my heart when I think of it: mum and dad seated at this little kitchen table in a little two-bedroom house that the farmer had built for us. They talked about Italy and about what they had left behind, then they'd cry. They would both just sit there and cry! Vita la Rovere

I was on the ship for four weeks. I travelled with other people on the boat and we docked in Adelaide on the 12th February 1936. My friends saw my future husband from the deck before they got off and were saying 'That's him! What do you think?' Kata Andrich



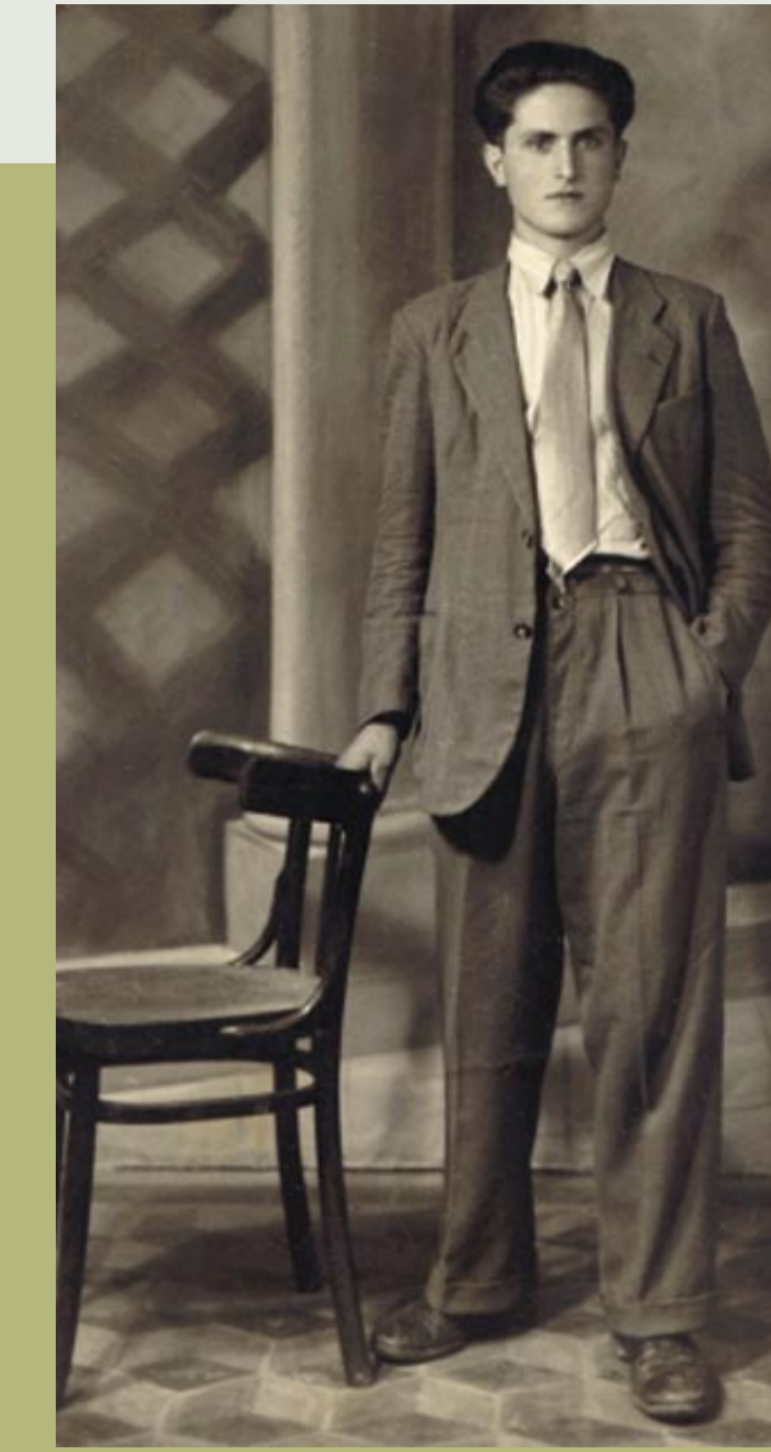
We had accommodation with the Buskariols for a couple of years, then we built our house next door. Luka Oreb

*It was very hard. I cried all day for eight months. I wanted to go back to Italy but we couldn't afford it.*

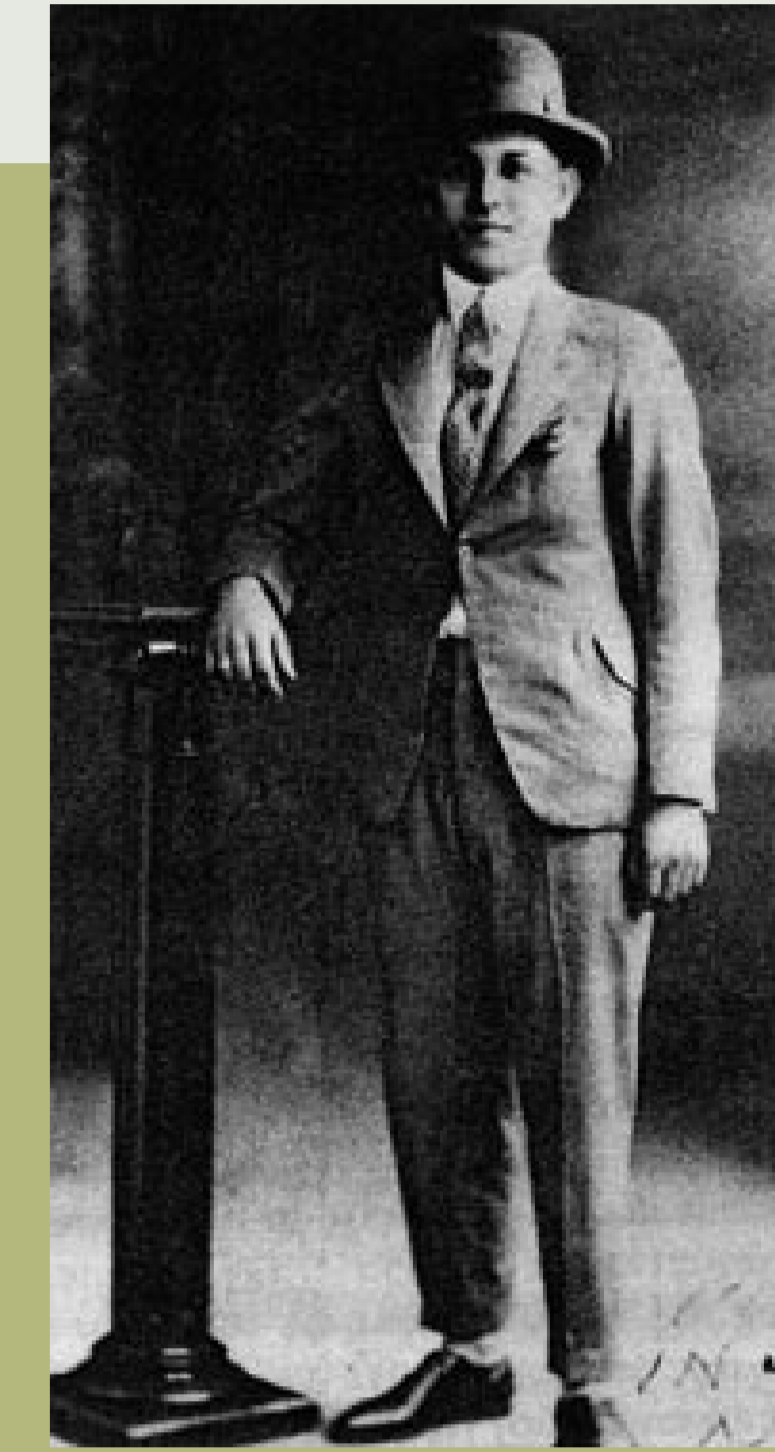
Caterina Barzelatto



Paul Zammit and son: new arrivals.



Giuseppe Franze.



Paul Sultana arrived 1925.



My parents and friends from Blato met me at the airport. It was the first time I had seen my father for twenty six years. Ante Zaknich



Mrs Velissarakas and baby Lily, c.1936. ▶

It struck me in the morning when I woke up to the sound of the crows outside the window. All I could see was sand and saltbush and next door was a yard full of old cars and rubbish. I sat down and I cried. I thought about the mountains and views from my bedroom window (in Italy). Filomena Tormena

I do remember dad telling me that when he came to Australia, he had to get on a bus from Melbourne to Mildura to Broken Hill. Anna Murphy

I ordered a cheese sandwich and they brought out Kraft cheese in white bread — something that didn't resemble anything like the bread and cheese I was used to! It was quite a shock to me. Elsa Kanck

It was forty (degrees) for two weeks when we first reached Broken Hill — oh sweet Jesus. My God! Nobody had an air-cooler at that time. Vera Sulclich

*When mum, Maria and I arrived in Melbourne, it was six years since we'd seen dad, so the reunion was wonderful.* Katica (Katie) Maxwell

*Every morning when I woke up, I was happy. I wanted the nights to be shorter and the days to be longer so I could talk to more people; to test the life. It was incredible.* Adelaide De Marin

I was really disappointed when I reached Fremantle. I liked the area but I couldn't understand anything. Then, as I was walking down the street, a child ran away from his mother and he crossed the footpath and he fell down. Blood was coming out from both knees and he started crying. 'Aaah!' I said, 'I'm happy now because they cry the same as what they cry in Italy.' I was happy after that! Italo Dall'Armi

We stayed in Sydney for one week when I first arrived in Australia and I enjoyed Sydney. I was really impressed and I thought Broken Hill would be the same too because I was told, Broken Hill was a city. Merita Nicholas

Carlottina was met by her groom Biagio, and his sister Maria in Melbourne. What a moment that must have been for both of them. Clara Dal Santo

During the first six months in Australia, if I had one hundred pounds in my pocket, I would have gone home to Yugoslavia. Ivan Pippin

*When the train was coming into Broken Hill I could see the mines and the slag heap. I thought, 'What's going on here?'* Nicholas (Nick) Drossos

*The town was a shock in a way, because there was not much stone for building but then I saw the Trades Hall and Town Hall as equal to the architectural part of Germany I would say, or craftsmen from Europe.* Karl Karthausser

*The houses reminded me of mountain shacks we had in Greece.* Vasiliki (Vickie) Niarros

*It was just after the flood of 1956 in Menindee and I was saying to myself, 'Where am I going?' There was a lot of water around Menindee and Ivanhoe. As the train came closer to Broken Hill, I'd never seen so many iron houses and iron fences, but I got used to it and I have loved it here ever since; best place ever.* Dino De Franceschi

# ACCOMMODATION

*How different housing seemed in Broken Hill. We did not leave mansions behind, but most of our homes were made of stone or brick. The 'tinny' was quite a contrast: so too the boarding houses in which our single men were accommodated.*

We lived in a shed that Ivan had built at the back of his father's house at 329 Piper Street. It was very nice — lovely bedroom. I had never had vinyl on the floor before and that was a lovely floral one. It was luxury. We had a lovely bed and furniture; everything was new. Ivan had it all organised for me. Ivan's step-mother and I used to cook together in the old house. Jagoda Vlatko

We had a room in a big boarding house — single men's accommodation which was owned by Mr Puccini. We had our meals in another place. Jack De Franceschi

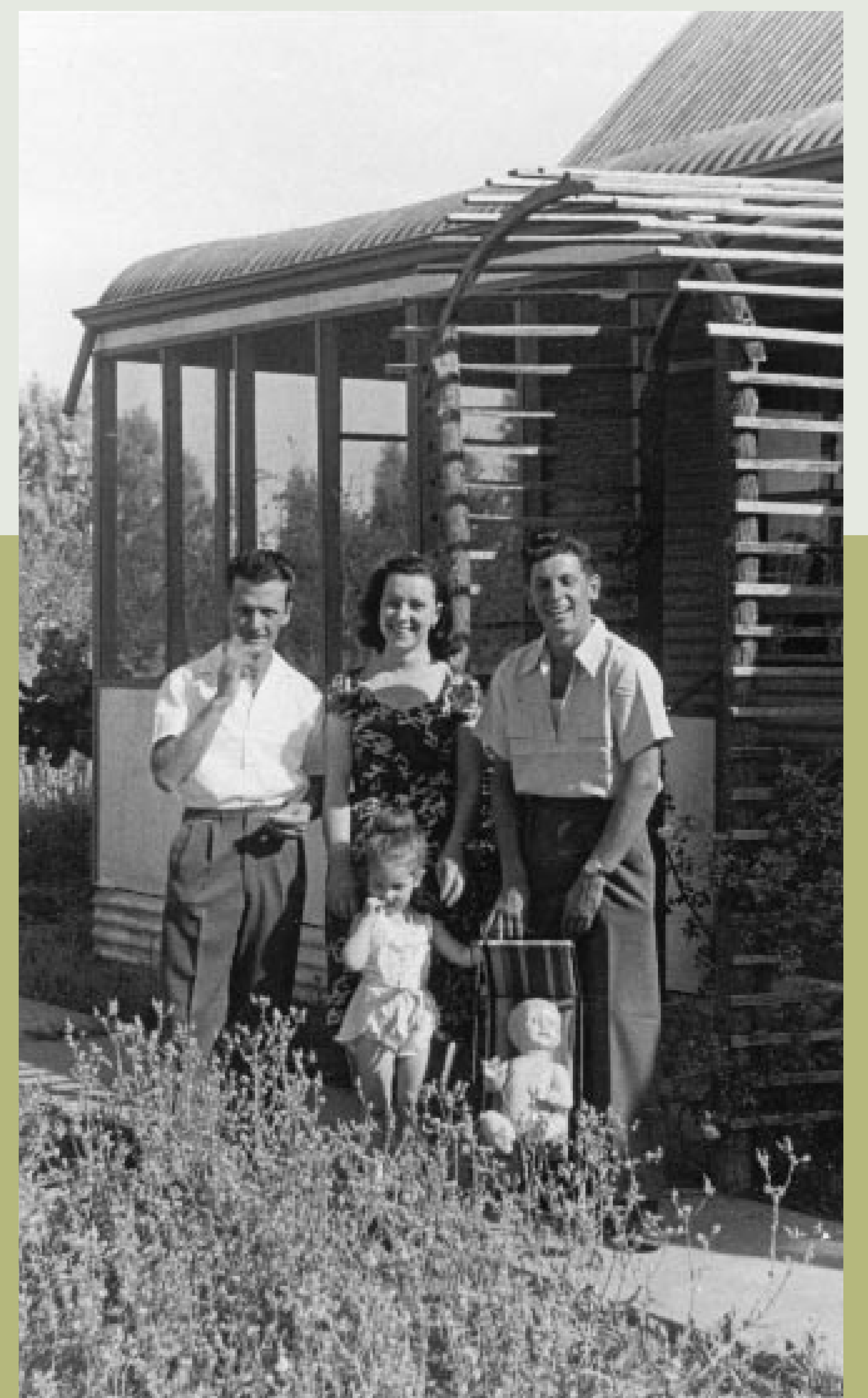
I stayed in two places when I first came back to Broken Hill from Wilcannia. I stayed at 9 Argent Street with Emilio Giobbi and then moved to 53 Argent Street. Luigi Zanette

We lived at Millie and Rudi Alagich's place for about six months. Millie is Nick's sister. Nick's parents came back to Broken Hill and we moved in with them for about a year. I had a child in that time and then we bought a house in Patton Street and have been here ever since. Joyce Ravlich



Red-roofed house — formerly Puccini's boarding house.

*I did the cementing for the foundations and I was always helping. The house was ready in 1954 and we have lived here ever since.* Dagmar Kanck



Barzelatto Merindee home.

There was no bathroom; the shower was only a hose outside. The toilet was outside in those days and we went to the toilet before the cart men came to change the pan because afterwards the smell of phenol would cling to you! Silvana Michl

I made about forty-six thousand cement bricks. I couldn't afford to put the roof on for about three or four years. Eventually I saved the money, bought the material and finished the roof and the inside of the house. Con Frangonasopoulos

Mum and Dad came back to Broken Hill and lived at 341 Piper Street until she died in 1991. I can remember the house having wall-papered hessian backed rooms, and dirt floors in the kitchen and verandah. Millie Alagich

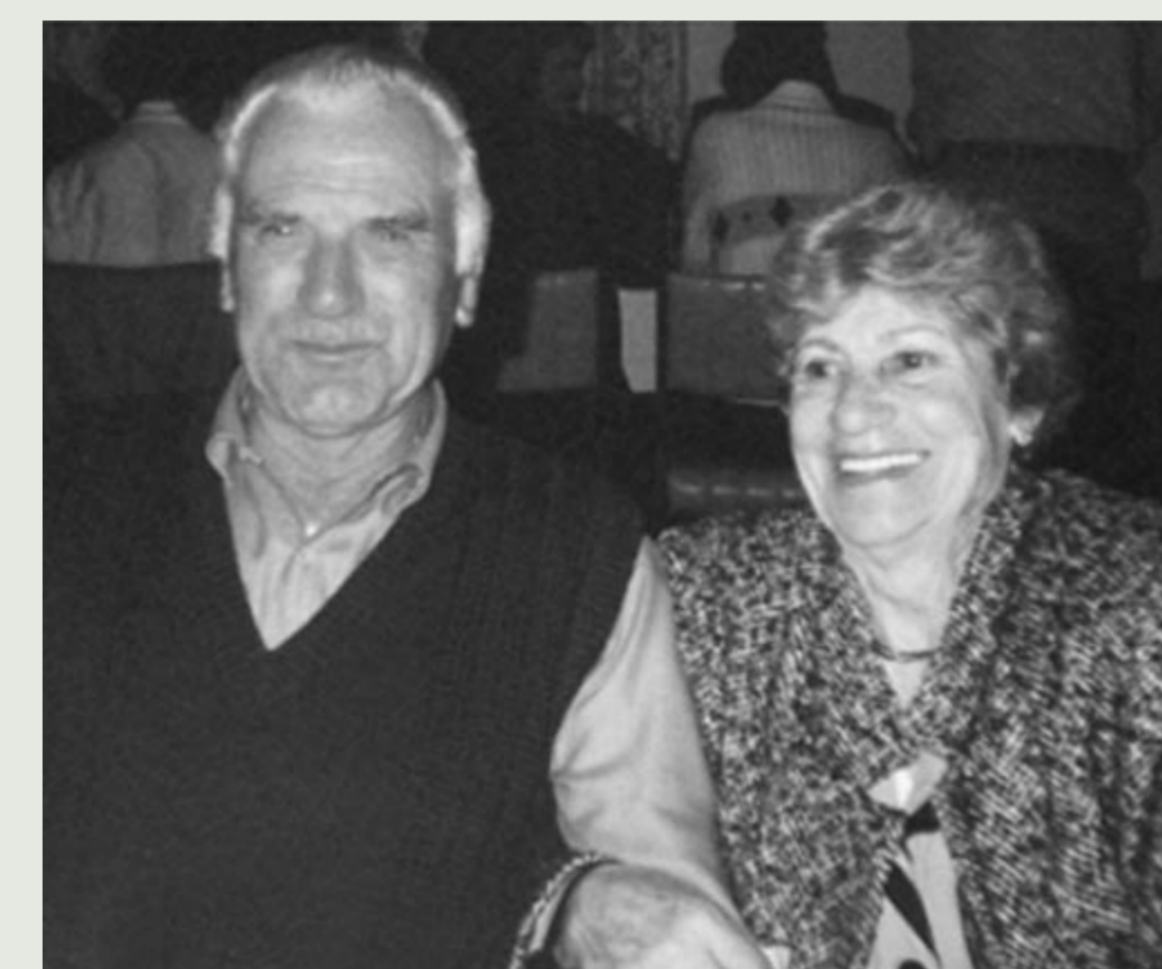
Dad had a house ready for us in Crystal Street. There were two or three houses with one big yard. No fences between us and we were all Maltese. Emily Tonna

*I lived in a boarding house for men at 131 Argent Street. There were a lot of boarding houses in Argent and Crystal Streets, but not any more.* Giuseppe (Joe) Franze

*I was happy when we reached Broken Hill because we had a house to go to. I had never had a house before. We shared with another family — it was like two apartments.* Olga Zanette



Ella Mushan, Millie Ravlich (Alagich) and Rudi Alagich at home, c. 1940.



Silvio and Dina Spagnol loved the home they built together.

*Silvio and I built our house. I left my children with friends each day and we would come up here and work together. We made all the bricks. I wheeled the wheelbarrow full of cement and he did everything else himself.* Dina Spagnol



Old tinny — many migrants settled in 'tinnies'.

*When we arrived in Broken Hill and lived with our grandparents it was no different to what it was at home in Croatia. Everybody lived in a big house. There were parents and grandparents and great-grandparents. Everybody was the one family.* Maria Patkovich

# SOMEONE TO LEAN ON

*There was always someone ready to help us when life was difficult: fellow country persons, religious leaders and school teachers, work colleagues, friends and neighbours.*

I loved to dance. It was a bit difficult, particularly going to ask a girl to dance because of the language and as Maria said, young ones could be cruel. They called you names, but we persisted. Petar Petkovich

I have lived here for forty years and had good neighbours, but we are also good neighbours; we are very quiet people. Veatrike (Vickie) Drosos

Sometimes people treated us badly. Some people had a good character and were good persons but others — they never thought of migrants. Con Frangonasopoulos

In the early days in Broken Hill when you went to work at a house, the women were very nice. They gave us morning tea which usually include Arnotts milk coffee biscuits. I loved those. Dino De Franceschi

We did have difficult moments when we were little, because it was just after the war and people were still angry. We were often called dagos. Gay De Franceschi

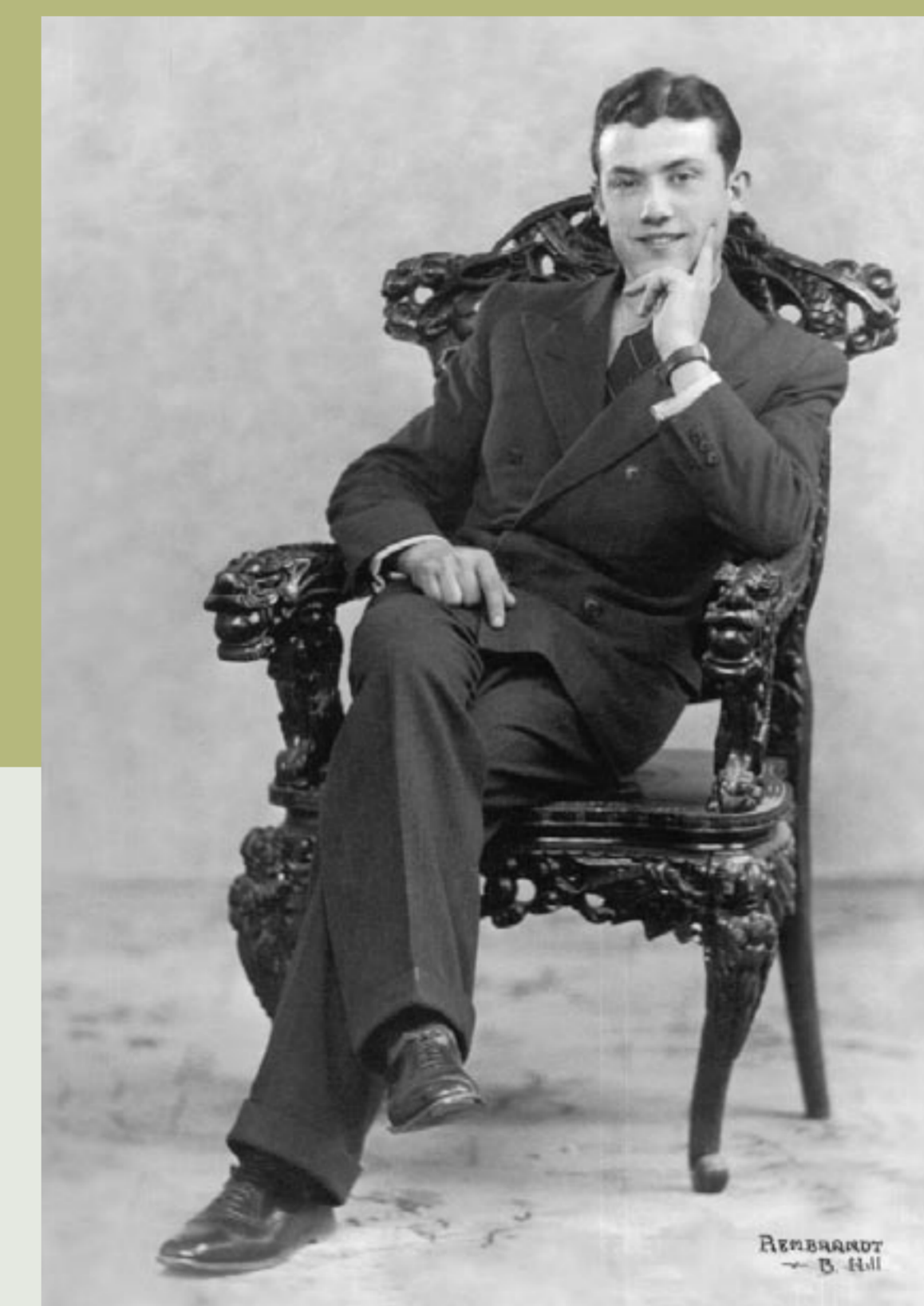


Three Begovich sisters: Manda, Mara and Anica Ravlich.

*It doesn't matter where you go, people are not all the same. It doesn't matter what country they come from; there are good people and bad people.* Spiros Niarros



Maltese priests and nuns supported the Maltese community.



Ivan Kolinac was born in the former Yugoslavia. He arrived in Australia in 1938 as a master painter. He settled in Broken Hill and married Mary Martinovich in 1939. He provided employment to many of his countrymen when they arrived.

Sport helped me mix with other kids and other cultures; that's what made Broken Hill a fantastic place to grow up in. Kathy Skiadas

People found us fascinating because of how close our families were. The Greek community back in those days was huge. We did not have any actual family here but lots of friends and family connections. Kathy Skiadas

When I went to work, the girls were really nice to me. They helped me and explained things. Silvana Michl

Mrs McQueen offered to be a grandmother for the day. I thought that was wonderful. She remained nana to all my children and when my mother and brother came to Broken Hill, she became his nana as well. She lived until she was ninety two and remained 'nana' until the day she died. Filomena Tormena

*Mario Gava was another man who helped me. We had to help each other.* Lida Onib

*Mum's doctor was Dr Franziska Schlink. This wonderful doctor was the 'women's doctor' of the town. She was so much loved and honoured by Broken Hill women that they named their babies after this lady of German descent.* Clara Dal Santo

My neighbour and I talked so much over the fence one day that a saucepan of milk boiled over on my stove! They were nice neighbours. I used to go in and help them sometimes and they helped me. Vasiliki (Vickie) Niarros

When we came, we were more exposed to the community because we were children. We were out there and kids can be cruel, so it was hard for a few years. Maria Petkovich

Dad worked pretty hard on the mine but he liked it. I think the miners were close to each other because, irrespective of nationalities, they shared common problems in the early days. They all helped each other. Louis (Lou) Forner

I also remember our Lane Street neighbour, Mrs James. She was very nice to us. She had children and we played with them and and I think that also helped us learn English. Dina Spagnol

*I joined the clubs here to meet people and to deal with the loneliness, and everything went well. Even now they remember me and they make contact with me. Generally I got on well with everybody. In the early days, some people were friendly; some people less so.* Igor Caplygin

*It's only natural that there was some conflict here. There was a lot of bitterness after the war. That was probably the hardest part. My father told me there was a place where you couldn't go and buy a beer. They wouldn't let you in the bar.* Lorenzo (Laurie) Coster

*Broken Hill people were used to other cultures. People from all over the world were here. The Broken Hill people got used to it.* Nicholas (Nick) Christakis