From Macedonia to Australia

the journey of
Louie and
Tina Mitsopoulos

by Norm Mitsopoulos
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Cover Photo: Mum and Dad’s engagement photo in May 1951
Introduction

I have always been fascinated by the events that led to my parents, Louie, my dad and mum Tina, and their respective families’ journeys that started in villages in Aegean, Macedonia (hereinafter referred to as Macedonia) and finished in Perth, Western Australia.

My goal was to document their respective journeys so that current and more particularly, future generations of our family would understand their roots and appreciate the sacrifices and the hardships experienced by mum, dad and their families and how we were fortunate enough to be able to live in this wonderful country called Australia.

The problem I faced was finding the time to achieve my goal. I had my own family to raise as well as working in an extremely busy job that required constant travel around Australia. In late 2007, my employment status changed and it freed me to do this book. Consequently, I had a number of discussions with mum and dad that spanned from October 2007 to April 2008.

During this period, mum and dad were in their mid to late seventies, were both very lucid and were willing to share their experiences with me even though at times it was obviously an emotional rollercoaster ride for them and they were dragging up some repressed memories.

It is important to note that this book is based almost entirely on the memories of my parents. When they could not clearly remember a particular issue, we relied on other relatives to fill in the gaps. There was no research involved with this project and therefore if there are some inaccuracies, it was not deliberate but it was a result of a fading memory.

This project was a wonderful labour of love and I sincerely thank mum and dad for the countless hours we spent together recording their memories and I hope they weren’t too mad at me for probing into issues that they may not have wanted to revisit. Their patience throughout this process was invaluable and much appreciated.

I hope this book will give future generations of Mitsopoulos’ that originated from mum and dad an insight into the kind, loving, humble and beautiful people they come from.

This book is for you and a legacy for my beautiful parents.
Chapter One

Mum’s Family Tree

My mum, Tina Tsallis, was born on the 29th July 1932 in a village called Dumbeni which was located in Macedonia. She was born in her parents’ home and delivered by the village’s midwife.

She was the daughter of Blagoi, her father and Sofia, her mother. Blagoi was born on the 28th July 1900 in Dumbeni and passed away in March 1986 in Western Australia. Sofia was born on the 4th May 1901, also in Dumbeni and passed away in July 1985 in Western Australia.

Blagoi’s parents were named Phillip and Dana who both passed away when Blagoi was very young. Blagoi had 3 brothers, Lumbro, Yanni and Stavro and a sister Daphne. Blagoi brought Lumbro and Stavro to Australia after the Greek Civil War (which is canvassed in more detail further in this book) whilst Stavro moved to Bitola which is located in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Lumbro married Stavroula and they had 2 children – a son Phillip and a daughter Crici. Phillip married Louda and they had 2 boys and a girl. At the time of writing Phillip and Louda live in North Perth, Western Australia. Crici married Phillip and they had a son and daughter. Phillip has passed away whilst Crici lives in North Perth, Western Australia.

Yanni married Daphina and they had 2 daughters – Dana and Dina and a son Phillip. Dana lives in Macedonia and Dina in Canada. Mum has not met them as they were both born after she had left Macedonia. Phillip married Dragitsa and they had 3 sons. Phillip passed away whilst this book was being written and Dragitsa lives in Koondoola, Western Australia.

Stavro married Olga and they had 4 sons, Angelo, Vasil, Philip and Kosta. Angelo married Menka and had 3 daughters. They live in Kingsway, Western Australia. Vasil married Georgina. They had 2 daughters and a son and live in Morley, Western Australia. Phillip and Kosta are both single and live in North Perth, Western Australia.
Daphne passed away in Dumbeni as a result of complications associated with a miscarriage. At the time her husband was working in Canada. They had a daughter Dita who then joined her dad in Canada. Mum knew Dita when they were very young.

Sofia (mum's mother) parents were Lazo, her father and Tina her mother (who mum was named after). Both Lazo and Tina were born in Dumbeni. Sofia had a sister Daphena and a step brother Staso who was Lazo's son from his first marriage.

Staso left Macedonia whilst he was single and settled in Bulgaria. Whilst there he married Daphena (not his step sister, it was just a coincidence they had the same name). They had 3 sons. Mum never met Staso as he had left Macedonia before she was born.

Daphena married Naso Kondas and they had 4 sons – Risto, Vasil, Kole and Illya. All 4 sons were partisan soldiers during the Greek Civil War. Risto moved to Russia after the war where he met and married Tsena. They had 2 sons and shifted to firstly Czechoslovakia and then to Bulgaria. Risto and Tsena both passed away in Bulgaria. Vasil was killed during the civil war at the age of 19. Kole relocated to Czechoslovakia after the war where he met and married Tina who was also a Macedonian who had relocated to Czechoslovakia. They had a son and a daughter. Kole joined the Czech Secret Police but passed away from post traumatic stress associated with the civil war. Tina passed away a few years after Kole due to an illness. Illya was killed during the civil war at the age of 17.

Mum’s Sisters

Mum had 2 sisters, Vicki and Daphne.

Vicki, the eldest sister married Vasil Skivinis in Dumbeni and they had 2 children, a son Jerry and daughter Gloria who were both born in Dumbeni.

Daphne married Nick Rhondas in Perth in 1971 and they have a son Vince and 3 daughters, Connie, Phyllis and Sophie.
Mum’s parents – father Blagoi and mother Sophia.

The christening of my cousin, Sophie. Back row (left to right): Mum’s brother-in-law Vasil, her sister Vicki, Dad, Mum, Mum’s younger sister Daphne and her husband Nick.
Front row: Mum’s parents Blagoi and Sophia and mum’s nieces Phylis and Sophie.
Mum’s parents Sophia and Blagoi in Salonika in 1938.
My dad, Louie Mitsopoulos, was born on the 28th October 1930 in a village called Nivitsi which was located in Macedonia. Like mum, he was born at his parents’ home and was delivered by the village’s midwife.

Nivitsi was the Macedonian name for the village. Its name was changed by the Greek government to Psardis around 1925.

The government also forced a change to the family’s surname. The surname was originally Mircheff but in 1936 the Greek government ordered people with Macedonian surnames to change them to a Greek name. As the Macedonian name commenced with an M, the government decreed that the name should be changed to the Greek equivalent name of Mitsopoulos. Upon settlement in Australia, a number of Mitsopoulos immigrants reverted back to the Mircheff surname whilst my grandfather stayed with the Mitsopoulos surname.

Dad’s father’s name was Spase who was born in Nivitsi on the 14th of May 1910 and he passed away in Perth, Western Australia on the 4th of April 1990. Spase’s parents’ names were Noume and Dosta. He had a brother named Tran, who was the eldest of the siblings and a sister Tronda who was the youngest.

Tran, who died in Perth at the age of 49, married Fannia and they had 2 daughters, Gera and Fortia. Gera married Stavros and they had 4 children, 3 daughters Fortia, Anna, Faye and son Tom. Fortia (Tran’s daughter, not Gera’s) died in Nivitsi at a very young age of an unknown illness.

Tronda married Stefo and they had 3 sons, Nick, Spiro who passed away at the age of 13 and an unnamed son who was still born. Nick married Helen and they had 3 daughters Margaret, Rosie and Vicki.

His mother’s name was Veza who was born the 14th of May 1911 (exactly 1 year younger than her husband) and she passed away in Perth, Western Australia on the 21st of January 1983.
Dad could not remember Veza’s parents’ names. However, she had 2 brothers, Mial and Tome and a sister. Dad could not recall the sister’s name. She passed away at a very young age. Tome left Nivitsi aged 20. Apparently he was a very handsome man. A wealthy Turk took him to Turkey to marry his daughter. Tome made 1 call back to his family in Nivitsi to let them know he was well and this was last time his family heard from him. Mial married a woman named Lefteria. They had 4 children, Pasqalina, Socrates, Arisitella and Vangelia. At the time of writing, all 4 were still alive. The first 3 live in Czechoslovakia, whilst Vangelia lives in Greece. Dad had not seen any of his first cousins from his mum’s side since he left Macedonia in 1947.

**Dad’s Siblings**

Dad had a brother George who was born in Nivitsi in 1939 and a sister Kathy who was born in Perth in May 1952. There was another brother Vangel who was still born in Nivitsi in 1935.

George married Doris Peos and they had a son Tom and 2 daughters, Nadia and Leanne. Kathy married Tom Papadopoulos and they had a son Mark and 2 daughters, Christy and Natalie.
Dad’s father Spase, Mother Veza and son Angelo in 1961.

Dad’s brother George and his wife Doris on their wedding day.
Dad’s sister Kathy and their parents Veza (left) and Spase (right) at Kathy’s wedding to Tom in 1970.

Dad’s sister Kathy on her engagement to Tom.

Dad with his father Spase (right) and uncle Tran (left). The photo was taken after Dad had just arrived in Australia in 1947.
Chapter Three

Mum’s Childhood (pre World War 2)

The House

Mum was born in her parent’s house in Dumbeni. It was a 3 storey house built with rocks by her Dedo (grandfather) Lazo in the early 1920’s. The house stood alone but Blagoi (mum’s dad, my grandfather) owned 10 acres of paddocks which were located outside of the village. On average, the paddocks were a half to three quarter hour walk from the village. Blagoi would get to them either by walking or riding on a donkey or mule.

The house had no electricity. All rooms had kerosene lamps. Kerosene was purchased in large tins from a village shop.

The top floor of the house consisted of 3 bedrooms and a large hallway. There were two balconies that provided sweeping views of other villages in the district.

The middle floor was a split level with stairs to the top floor. Whilst it was the middle of the three floors it was actually located at ground level. The third floor was a basement. The middle floor was bisected by a hallway. On one side was a large kitchen and dining area with a balcony on the outside. There was an open wood stove with a hot plate on top. The stove was also used as a wood heater for warmth in the cold weather. There was a trough in the kitchen that was used for washing dishes. Water was pumped from a well in the back yard to a storage tank in the kitchen which was located next to the trough. It was then pumped into the trough by hand. Dishes were washed in hot water which was boiled in a kettle whilst the cold water was used for washing hands and rinsing dishes.

In relation to drinking water, it was provided from within the village. Water was piped into taps in the village from underground reserves located in hills outside the village. Mum and her parents would go to the village once a day with copper and clay basins which they would fill with water and take back to their home. To keep the water cold in summer, rope was attached to the
handle of the basin and lowered into their well which was then hoisted back up when required for drinking.

Dedo Lazo, who was a carpenter, lived and worked in America from 1910 until he returned to Dumbeni in the early 20’s. On his return, he built the house and brought with him the latest designs for tables, chairs, cupboards, etc which he used to build the furniture in the house. The centrepiece of the dining area was a magnificent extended wooden table that he built. The wooden dining chairs he built were covered by cushions weaved by Baba (grandmother) Sofia (mum’s mum, my grandmother).

Dedo Lazo made a purpose built cupboard that was used to make and store dough that was used for baking bread for the family. When the loaves were made in the kitchen they were taken to a furnace that was located in the backyard for baking. Twelve loaves were baked each week.

On the other side of the hallway, there was a big room that was rented out as a general store selling groceries and haberdasheries. It was one of 3 such stores in the village. It was only closed on Sundays. On the other days, it was opened from 8am until noon. It then closed until 2pm as the village generally shut down for a siesta. It then reopened until 6pm. An uncle of the family ran the store.

The bottom floor or the basement was a multi purpose room. Amongst its many uses was that it stored firewood for winter heating. The winters were bitterly cold with frequent snow and ice. A round copper basin sat in the basement that was used as a bath tub. Water was taken from the house well, heated in an outside fireplace and put in the bath.

On one side of the basement there was a cool room that was used to store food for winter such as feta cheese, cottage cheese and pickled vegetables such as cabbage and capsicum. The room was not powered by electricity but was kept cool due to it being underground and built in clay.

Blagoi made his own wine and grappa (brandy) that he stored in barrels in the basement. He had 2 vineyards in his paddocks that consisted of thousands of vines. People from the village were hired to pick the grapes. The wine and grappa was either used for family purposes or as a currency to trade for meat and cheese with other families in the village. The grapes were also used to make sweets that were stored for the winter.

The cool room was also used to store other fruits such as apples, quince and oranges. Hay was spread over the fruit which kept it fresh throughout winter.
A hole was dug in the corner of the basement and was lined in clay to store cabbages and leek which was also for use in the winter. Onion and garlic were hung around the store room. Blagoi grew all the vegetables and fruit on the property.

During the summer months, Blagoi was a farmer come market gardener. In addition to the produce already mentioned he grew wheat, rye, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkin and peas. The tomatoes, apart from feeding the family, were also used to make tomato paste which was used for cooking purposes. Everything that was grown on the property was used primarily to feed the family or to trade for other goods with other villagers.

Another side of the basement was used as a wheat silo. When the wheat was harvested it was tied into bundles and transported on a cart pulled by a donkey to a shed located just outside the village. Blagoi owned the shed and it was surrounded by sheds owned by other villagers. Outside the shed, 2 bulls owned by Blagoi were harnessed by a rope to a post. All the wheat stalks were put on the shed floor. The bulls would walk around the post trampling the stalks. They would walk in one direction around the post and when the rope was nearly completely around the post, the bulls were led in the opposite direction. This was done until all the wheat fell off the stalks.

The stalks were taken into the shed where they were bundled into baskets and taken back to the stable at home. They would be used to feed the animals in winter.

The wheat kernels were tossed in the air using a wooden shovel. This was done to remove the wheat from the chaff. The wheat was then placed on mesh and shaken in order to remove the dust. Once clean, the wheat was transferred home, placed in bags and put in a cupboard located in the store room. The wheat was primarily used to make bread. When bread was required, the wheat was taken to a windmill located at a river that was an hours walk from the village. The wheat was placed on a stone that ground the wheat into flour which was then used to bake bread.

The whole process, starting with the bulls trampling the wheat and then taking it home took in the vicinity of 2 weeks. Generally, all of July was used to harvest and strip the wheat. Once the task was completed, the entire village would celebrate to recognise the hard work undertaken. The celebration consisted of traditional Macedonian dancing. The village had its own band. Walnuts, cheese and olives were served whilst plenty if wine and rakia (white brandy) was drunk. The celebration was held on a Sunday commencing just after lunch and finishing around 8pm. This was considered a very special occasion as it meant the villagers had food for the winter months.
The animals the family owned were extremely important assets for family survival purposes. In addition to all the animals previously mentioned, Sofia had a cow whose milk was used to make butter and ricotta cheese.

Blagoi also kept chickens primarily for their eggs. He also had pigs that were purchased when they were piglets. Dedo Blagoi fed them well so that could grow to a large size. Just prior to Christmas the pigs would be slaughtered for a variety of reasons. Some meat was cooked, salted, put in the pigs lard and then placed in the basement's store room. When required, the meat would be taken out of the lard and cooked for the family to eat. The pig meat was also used to make sausages. They were kept in hessian bags, dried and eaten later on.

The Backyard

In the backyard of the house, there was a trough that was used to wash clothes. It was set above ground. Close by was an area that was used to light a fire so that water could be boiled in a large steel pot that was placed on a tripod which sat over the fire. Two posts were erected with string attached between them and this was used as a clothes line.

There was a furnace that was used to bake bread. A toilet made out of wood was also located outside. It sat above a deep hole dug into the ground. There was no running water for flushing purposes. The toilet was enclosed by a brick building that had a wooden floor and a tiled roof. Any paper that could be found was used as toilet paper and was housed in a small wooden container.

The family’s 2 bulls, cow and donkey were housed in a stable. Next to it was a pig sty. The sty was covered and above it stood a chicken coup. The chickens were housed in the coup at night whilst during the day they roamed the backyard.

To complete the backyard there was a grapevine and quince and peach trees.

People Who Lived in the House Whilst Mum was There

Mum’s grandparents (Sofia’s parents) lived in the house. Her grandmother was Baba Tina who passed away when mum was very young. Her grandfather was Dedo Lazo. He died in Czechoslovakia as a refugee in 1949. In 1948 the communists took all the elderly and young children out of Macedonia to protect them from the Greek Civil War. (There are chapters further
in this book that canvasses the civil war in more detail). They were initially taken to Yugoslavia (at
the time of writing it is now known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Mum was one the children there with other Greek and Macedonian children. They were housed in an army
camp until the communists could find a suitable place for them to settle.

Mum had heard that elderly people from Macedonian villages were arriving by train. Mum and
the other children went to the station to see if they could find relatives. Mum saw Dedo Lazo
and called out to him. As the train was only on a stop over, Dedo Lazo was not allowed off the
train. However, Mum was allowed on and she ran and embraced him. She spent about an hour
with him. Dedo Lazo would not let mum go but had to as the train was going to depart. He told
mum she had to get off but mum did not want to let go of him and said she wanted to go with
him. As the train was starting to pull out of the station, mum had to jump off and landed without
a scratch.

That was the last time she saw Dedo Lazo alive. As mum was recounting this story, tears
were streaming down her face. Dedo Lazo must have been a huge influence on her life and
someone she loved dearly. Mum said he was a very gentle man who was loved not only by his
immediate family, but by the entire village. He was always helping someone out. Mum has those
characteristics and I now know who she got them from.

Mum’ father, Blagoi, lived in the house for 5 of the 15 years mum lived there. For the other
10 years he was in various parts of Western Australia working and earning money to send home
to support the family and ultimately to bring the family to Australia.

Sofia, mum’s mother lived in the house for the entire time mum was there. Her sister Vicki lived
in the house until she married in 1942. Mum was 10 years old at the time. Vicki moved in to her
husband’s family home which was also in Dumbeni. Mum’s younger sister Daphne also lived in
the house.

The Village (Dumbeni)

The village mum was born and grew up in was more than 500 years old. The majority of homes
were 3 stories made of stone. In area the village was about 46 kilometres and the townsites was
about 2 kilometres long and 1 kilometre wide. Approximately 296 families lived there in 250
homes. Its population was in the vicinity of 1600 people.
Prior to World War 2, the village could be considered well off. It was self sufficient and the villagers were comfortable in terms of having life's basics such as food and shelter.

From a political perspective, the village was governed by a Lord Mayor who was elected by the villagers. An election was conducted every year. Only the men voted and it followed that only men could nominate as a candidate. No one in mum's family ever nominated as a candidate. The village was governed by the laws decreed by the Greek government.

There was a police station, a primary school and high school which were both housed in the same building. There was no university. These were located in major cities such as Athens, Kostur and Salonikia, etc.

The village had 4 general stores that all sold the same goods. They were strategically located apart from each other and the villagers frequented the store closest to their home. Therefore there was no competition between the stores.

There were 2 coffee shops but these were only frequented by men as no ladies were allowed. It was meeting place for the men to play cards, drink Turkish coffee and rakia and eat Turkish delights. My dad still goes to the Macedonian club in Perth, Western Australia every Thursday to do the above. It was a tradition that followed them from the old country to Australia with the exception that ladies are permitted in the club.

There was 1 blacksmith, 1 saddle maker who also doubled up as the village barber and 3 tailors. One of the tailors was Vasil, who was married to mum's sister Vicki. The tailors also made women's clothing.

From a religious perspective, the main church was located in the village and 2 smaller ones were located on its outskirts. They were Macedonian Orthodox churches. The villagers were religious and most attended church every Sunday. All school children attended church every Sunday with their teacher. The main church was used for Sunday services, weddings, christenings and funerals.

The smaller churches were used for specific celebrations relating to the birthdays of Saints Nicholas and Sveta Petka. This means they were used twice a year. They were built over 500 years ago specifically to celebrate the abovementioned Saint's birthdays. Relatives and friends from surrounding villages would come and join the celebrations. It is said that these Saints were responsible for miracles. Neither mum nor dad could specifically explain the exact reason for the celebrations but it was a tradition that had lived for hundreds of years.
The village’s cemetery was located just outside the village. All graves had headstones and crosses. There were family plots that were centuries old. The tragedy of this was that in the 1950’s, the Greek government bulldozed the cemetery and all the memories it contained were lost forever. It was converted into a soccer ground. There was a village square that was used for celebrations such as weddings, Christmas, Easter and New Years’ Day.

Before World War 2, a number of villagers left the village to seek safer and more prosperous havens for their families. This exodus also continued before the civil war commenced. The population also started to decrease significantly during the civil war. The elderly and the children were taken by the communists to communist countries in order to protect them from the war. A number of villagers were also killed during the civil war.

In 1949, the village was burned and bulldozed under the orders of the Greek government. The only buildings to survive were the church, school and a coffee shop which still stand at the time of writing. The consequence of the bulldozing for the villagers who still lived there was that they were moved to countries outside of Europe or moved to communist countries in the Balkan region.

Of the 1,600 population, 67 were killed in the civil war. Mum lost 2 first cousins and 2 uncles. Her sister Vicki was a partisan whose husband Vasil was arrested and jailed by the Greeks as he was accused of aiding the partisans. His own cousin reported him to the police. He was innocent but only got out of jail as a result of the Greek government giving him amnesty in 1946. Mum’s dad, Blagoi, who was living and working in Western Australia at the time, sent Vasil money to join him.

In 1955, the Greek government built a new village next to where Dumbeni stood. They named it Dendrohoroi. It was occupied by shepherds and their families. The new villagers continued to use the church, school and coffee shop that were still standing from Dumbeni.

**Mum’s Childhood Memories**

Prior to the war, mum had a happy childhood. She was part of a close, loving family. In fact, the entire village was one big happy family. The village had numerous celebrations and everyone from the village would attend. There was always enough food and mum lived comfortably in a three storey house.
During the summer months, all the children played together either at the school, church or village centre. They use to play marbles and a game that resembled hockey. They played netball at school.

In winter, because it was so cold outside, mum would have other children come over to her house or she would be over their houses playing indoor games.

Mum's schooling started in 1937 in the school that had over 100 students. The school hours were 8am to 3pm Monday to Friday. After school, mum had to help her mum with the housework. Homework used to be done in the evening under a kerosene lamp. Mum recalled having lots of homework to do. Her favourite subjects were geography and history.

The school was run by the Greek government and therefore only the Greek language was taught and spoken. She was not allowed to speak her native Macedonian language. This was only spoken at home and in the village. However they needed to be careful speaking their own language in the village as the local police would caution the villagers not to speak the Macedonian language. The police were Greeks – Macedonians were not allowed to hold this position. Notwithstanding this decree, the police were fairly tolerant on this issue particularly as the majority of the elderly villagers could not speak Greek. There certainly wasn’t a zero tolerance policy.

Mum’s happiest time at school was in May as spring had arrived and meant the harsh winter had come to an end. On the 1st of May each year, the students went for a picnic in lush green paddocks outside the village. However, during one of these picnics, mum went to pick a flower for the teacher and was pricked by a thorn from a raspberry bush. By the evening, her leg had swollen considerably and she was taken to a hospital in a city called Kostur. Mum had to be taken by donkey. The trip took about 2 hours. Mum had a severe infection and spent 3 weeks in hospital. I could just imagine how painful the journey to the hospital on a donkey must have been.

Mum’s grandfather, Dedo Lazo, was friendly with a Jewish family in Kostur. They used to visit mum every day and bring her food and drink.

In summary, mum’s early childhood prior to World War 2 was a happy and joyous time. Living in the village was like living with a huge, happy, loving extended family. The village was free from crime and the villagers loved, respected and supported each other.
Mum (right) and her younger sister Daphne in Dumbeni in 1941.

Mum (left), her brother-in-law Vasil, his wife and mum’s sister Vicki. In the front is Vasil and Vicki’s son Jerry and next to him, his mum’s and Vicki’s younger sister Daphne. At the back is mum’s cousin Risto. The photo was taken outside mum’s house in Dumbeni in 1944.
Mum (left) and her elder sister Vicki in Dumbeni in 1939.
Mum’s village Dumbeni in 1935.

All that stands at the village today is the church.
Chapter Four

Dad’s Childhood (pre World War 2)

First House

For the first 5 years of his life, i.e. 1930 to 1935, dad lived in a house in the village of Nivitsi with 19 other people, all members of his extended family.

He lived with his mum Veza, dad Spase, his uncle Tran, (Spase’s brother), Aunty Fannia, (Tran’s wife) and his first cousins Gerra and Metodia, (Tran and Fannia’s children). Metodia passed away in 1932, aged 7 from measles.

Dad’s grandparents on his father’s side (i.e. Spase) also lived there. Their names were Noone and Dosta along with Noone’s 2 brothers Vasil and Sotir.

Vasil’s wife, Sophia and their sons Stocie and Alexo also lived there as well as Stocie’s wife Fannia and their daughter Slava. The remaining people who lived in the house were Sotir’s wife Sophia and their children Mitre, Donka and Jordana.

Their house was located in the middle of the village. The village itself was located next to a lake called Prespansko. It was a two storey house built of stone in the early 1800’s.

The ground floor consisted of a cellar that stored wine, food and flour. There was also a stable that housed a mule.

Three bedrooms were located on the upper storey. They were big open rooms. The family slept on the floor on mattresses made of straw. Dad slept in a room with his mum and dad and his uncle Tran and Aunty Fannia and cousin Gerra.

There was also a kitchen on this floor that had a low round table where the family sat on the floor to eat its meals. The house is still standing at the time of writing but is vacant.
Second House

In 1935, dad moved to a new house that was built on a hill overlooking the village. The people who moved in besides dad were Noone and Dosta (dad’s grandparents), Spase and Veza (dad’s parents) and Fannia and Gerra (dad’s Aunty and first cousin). Dad’s uncle Tran (Fannia’s husband) moved to Australia in 1933. He went in search of better life, worked hard and sent money back to the family that went towards the building of the new home.

Dad’s younger brother George was born in the house in 1939.

Spase managed the building of the house. Tran returned to Nivitsi in 1938. He and his wife Fannia had another daughter Fortia. Unfortunately she passed away when she was six from an unknown epidemic. There were no doctors in the village to tend to the sick. Tran returned to Australia in 1939 primarily to avoid the war that was looming in Europe.

The house was built with stone. It was 2 storeys with the upper storey having balconies on both sides and both storeys had large hallways. The kitchen was located on the ground floor. A wood stove was used for cooking and heating in the winter. As with the previous house, they had a low to ground table where they sat on the floor to eat their meals. There was also a bedroom which was used as a spare room as everyone slept upstairs. There were 2 large bedrooms upstairs. Dad slept with his mum and dad and brother George.

A bakery was located outside which had a wood furnace. There were also a stable that housed a mule and pigs and a chicken coup.

There was no electricity in the house and therefore kerosene lamps were used for lighting.

Drinking water was taken from the lake. The ladies of the house carted the water by bucket from the lake to the house. The water was then tipped into large clay pots which were kept in the kitchen and used for drinking and washing. For bathing, there was a big tub on the ground floor. There was a fireplace outside made of cast iron (it was like a tripod). A fire would be lit and a copper basin full of water was placed on top. When the water boiled it was taken into the house and put into the tub for family members to take a bath.

On average, the householders bathed once a week usually on a weekend. However, during the summer months they would bath in the lake. The copper basin and cast iron fireplace was also used to wash clothes.
In the backyard, the ladies of the house grew chillies, spring onions, tomatoes, garlic and peppers. Approximately 2 miles from the village, the family had a vineyard and land that was used for herding sheep and goats. There was a shed on this land that housed the shepherd who tended to the animals. The family paid for the services of a shepherd. However during World War 2, the family had no money so for 4 years dad was the shepherd. He started when he was 12 years old and he rarely returned to the family home during this period. One of the ladies of the family used to bring food to dad every day.

The role of the shepherd was to protect the sheep from wolves that roamed the area. Dad had a dog named Charlie who became his best friend during this part of his life.

Butter, milk and cheese were produced by the sheep and goats and their meat was used to feed the family. These products, along with the sheeps’ wool and goats’ hair were taken to a market in the nearest city to Nivitsi which was called Lerin. This was the capital city of Prespa. The products were loaded on to mules and it took approximately 7 hours to reach Lerin. Spase was the family member who made this trek. With the money he received from the sale of the products, he would buy food and clothes for the family and return to the village.

Spase also earnt money by buying fish from the local village fishermen via an auction. He would then sell the fish or trade it for wheat, corn, beans or other products the family did not grow themselves to villagers in surrounding villages. He would be away from home for 3 to 4 weeks.

An irony in this story is that Spase, on one of his journeys, went to mum’s village of Dumbeni in about 1938. Little was he to know that his future daughter-in-law lived in that village. There was a joke in Dumbeni that they sold Spase a crazy mule. However Spase managed to tame the mule because he claimed he was crazier than the mule.

Spase left Nivitsi in late 1939 and travelled to Australia. His brother Tran sent him money from Australia to make the journey and also organised a passport for him. The intention was for Spase and Tran to make enough money working in Australia so that they could return to Nivitsi and live a better life with their families.

Spase left for Australia with his cousin Spiro who was also from Nivitsi. They left the village and walked to Lerin. Dad and his mum Veza walked with Spase to the end of the village to say goodbye. Dad can recall crying as he was sad to see his dad leave.

Dad was 8 years old at the time. The next time he saw his dad was in Australia when he was 16 years old. That’s another story for later in this book.
The Village (Nivitsi) and Childhood Memories

Nivitsi was primarily a fishing village as it was located on Lake Prespansko. There were approximately 110 houses occupied by 770 villagers. This was the population figure in 1940 when it was at its peak. In 1976, the population was recorded as 180. This had further reduced to 144 in 1991 and was more than likely smaller still at the time of writing.

The village had a school which was 2 storeys. It had 4 teachers and 4 classrooms. It was a Greek school and only taught the Greek language and subjects. The school had a library which was useless for dad as he was never taught to read. He was only taught family values and cultural issues. He was not taught the 3 Rs. Dad taught himself to read and write after he arrived in Australia.

Dad went to school in 1938 and 1939. However his second year, i.e. 1939, was interrupted by World War 2. The Italians were bombing the village and as a consequence the villagers were moved to a village called German which was located approximately 12 miles from Nivitsi. Dad moved back to Nivitsi 4 months later.

By that time the teachers had either joined the Greek army or had returned to their own villages. This meant that dad had less than 2 years schooling in his entire life. The school reopened in 1942 but dad was told by the local mayor that he was too old to go back to school. This was very surprising as he was only 12 years old. Dad was never given a reason for this but he assumes there may have been some political motivation.

The school closed again in 1947 due to the Greek Civil War. During this period, the children in the village became refugees in various Balkan countries.

The village had 2 churches. The main one was located in the village and there was a smaller one located in the hills on the approach to the village. Dad was not a regular church goer. He mainly attended on the major holy occasions such as Christmas and Easter.

There was a café, 2 general stores and a boot maker (who was the son of the local priest). The boot maker, who was a very good friend of Spase, was tragically killed in a hunting accident in 1943. He accidentally shot himself with his own shotgun.

All the above were located around the village square. This was the meeting place for the villagers for major events such as weddings and Christmas and Easter celebrations. An interesting sideline is that people who married in the village did so on only one day of the year, that being the 15th
of August. This was considered a holy day as it celebrated the birth of the Virgin Mary. Residents from other villages travelled to Nivitsi to join in the celebrations.

The village also had army barracks that housed about 12 soldiers. Their main duty was to monitor border movement. Nivitsi was close to the Albanian border.

There were no doctors or dentists in the village. If treatment was needed, the villagers travelled to a city called Florina which was a 5 hour walk from Nivitsi. However, there were people in other villages who weren't qualified medical practitioners but were able to apply herbal remedies to a number of ailments. Dad can remember having severe conjunctivitis when he was 6 years old. He was taken to a village called Ostima which was also a 5 hour walk from Nivitsi. He was treated by a friend of Spase. She applied a herbal remedy and it was cured in 3 days. During this time, dad stayed with the family of the lady treating him.

Dad had 2 close friends in the village. Their names were Lumbro Trptsef and Nicola Ristanof. Lumbro became a partisan and died when he was 16 years old from a disease that he contracted during the civil war. Nicola was also a partisan and was killed in action during the civil war. He was also aged 16.

There was very little sport in the village. During the summer months the younger villagers swam in the lake. They also used to play a primitive form of hockey. They would roll rags up into a ball and use a lump of wood as a hockey stick. The first organised sport dad saw was a game of soccer in Florina when he was 15.

When dad was 12 and living as a shepherd on the family farm, a Greek partisan came to dad's living quarters in the middle of the night and ordered him to take him to a village he needed to get to. He also stole dad's food. Dad can recall being very scared as the walk back to his home was through woods that were habited by wolves and bears.

It appears that dad, whilst coming from a poor family, was very happy in his family environment. They were self sufficient and they all supported each other. In his childhood, dad had to survive a number of diseases that swept the village and also survive a world and civil war. I cannot comprehend what he lived through.
The family home dad lived in Nivitsi.

Dad’s cousin Gera who lived with dad in their house in Nivitsi.
Nivitsi at the time this book was written.
Mum’s Life during World War 2

Mum was 8 years old when World War 2 came to her village in 1940. The Italians were the first enemy to occupy the village. The villagers knew a war was on the horizon as the Greek government had conscripted young men from the village into their army. Before the Italians arrived in the village, mum's village could hear the fighting that was occurring at the Greek and Albanian border.

The village was occupied by the Italians without the need for a battle. However, the village was bombed by the Italians prior to occupation. The reason for this was that soldiers from the Greek army were stationed there. The bombs were meant to hit the army barracks but they always missed their target and landed in other parts of the village.

Two villagers were killed as a consequence of these bombings. They killed a young girl on her way home from school and an elderly woman carrying water in a clay pot to her home. There were also a number of villagers injured. Fortunately members from mum's family were not hurt.

The Italian captain and some other soldiers took over the top storey of mum's home purely for somewhere to sleep. They did not harm mum's family or any other villager. As far as practicable, village life proceeded as normal.

Mum could recall that the Italians were very generous towards the villagers. If a villager asked an Italian soldier for food they would give it to them. She also recalled when the Captain placed her on his knee and talked kindly to her. He told her that she reminded him of his daughter whose name was Santina. He was crying as he was telling mum his story.

According to mum, the Italians were happy, kind and respectful to the villagers, particularly the women. The only disturbing incident during the Italian occupation was the capture of 6 partisans from the village. The partisans were attempting to recruit other men from the village to join them in the fight against the Italians. They were captured because one of the partisans
became a traitor and informed the Italians of the identity of the other 5 partisans. They were subsequently arrested and taken away from the village. They were court-martialled, found guilty and then forced to dig their own graves and were shot dead.

When this news reached the village, it caused sadness and despair. Mum said that it was important to note that the traitor was captured first and thought by giving the other names that his life would be spared. It wasn’t and he was executed with the other 5 partisans.

Schooling for mum ended when the war started. The Italians used the school as their barracks. During this period, mum’s dad was already in Australia and mum was looked after by her mum and grandfather. Apart from closing the school, the only other major change to mum’s life during the Italian occupation was that a curfew was imposed on the villagers whereby they needed to be in their homes at night. This actually suited the villagers as most of them were too scared to go out after dark.

It is fair to say that mum felt safer under the Italian occupation and that the war, apart from the partisan incident, did not overly impact on the village.

The Italians occupied the village for approximately one year. They suddenly left and were never seen again. From that point onwards the village remained unoccupied but that did not mean it did not feel any further effects from the war.

The harsher realities of the war arrived at the village after the partisans become more organised and as a consequence the German army came to fight them. The first time mum saw the Germans, she was unsure of the year, was when they came marching into the village to fight the partisans. The partisans were from a number of villages, not just mum’s. They fought the Germans from houses in mum’s village and from the hills surrounding the village.

Mum could recall that the Germans came to fight the partisans at her village on 4 to 5 occasions. Fighting would last for 8 to 10 hours, always during daylight hours and never at night. Therefore, the Germans never stayed overnight in the village, they would come during the day, fight the partisans and then return to wherever they were based.

The Germans issued an order that they would kill 3 captured partisans for every one German killed. Mum and the other villagers were forced by the Germans to witness the execution of partisans captured by them. This was generally done by hanging the partisans in the schoolyard. Mum said that the elderly women in the village would pull their scarves over their eyes to avoid
seeing the executions. The Germans would see them; put their rifles under the ladies chins and lifted their heads thereby forcing them to watch.

Mum was forced to watch executions on 3 occasions. She said that this was a frightening time which is an understandable emotion for an 11-year-old girl. Mum could recall the Germans finding out which houses the partisans were fighting from. The Germans set fire to those houses. The partisans in there were burnt alive and preferred this to being captured and executed.

Partisans that were killed in battle or executed were buried by the villagers in a beautiful site located on the outskirts of the village. It was a green, grassy area with a pond. All the graves were marked unknown on the cross as the partisans killed were not from Dumbeni.

The Germans did not execute villagers in retaliation to partisans killing German soldiers.

However, they did take some villagers to cities they occupied and ordered them to work on various tasks they were assigned. Men from the village, who were not partisans, would flee to the hills when they knew the Germans were approaching the village so that they could take them away to work for them. The villagers that were taken away all returned to Dumbeni when the Germans left Greece in 1945.

The only other soldiers mum and the other villagers saw were Scots, English and Africans. Mum and the other children were amused by the Scots’ kilts and would run after the soldiers. In relation to the Africans, it was the first time the villagers had seen people with a black skin colour. The English soldiers’ accent was also a source of mirth. Mum’s grandfather could speak English and brought some soldiers home for coffee and grappa. They were only in the village for a day and this was after Greece was liberated by the Allies in 1945.

Mum felt relief and was happy that the war was over in her village but little did she know at that time that a civil war was about to commence that would have greater consequences for her.
Chapter Six

Dad’s Life during World War 2

Dad was 9 years old when the Italians occupied Nivitsi. Prior to the occupation, the Italians had bombed the village. All the bombs landed in the lake and no lives were lost. The only damage to homes were broken windows. The only structural damage to the village was the destruction of a bridge that joined 2 lakes around the village. This was done to prevent the Greek army from using it.

As a consequence of the bombing, the Greek army moved dad and his family to a village, ironically called German, which was located 12 miles from dad’s village. The only exception was dad’s grandfather who stayed behind to look after the family animals. Not all Nivitsi villagers went to German. Some went to villages where they had relatives living. Dad stayed in German for 4 months with some distant relatives.

When the Greek army pushed the Italian army back into Albania, the bombing raids stopped. However, the Italians mounted a ground offensive, overwhelmed the Greek army and occupied a number of villages in the Prespa region, Nivitsi and German included. As German was now occupied by the Italians, dad and the other villagers returned to Nivitsi.

Dad can recall that when he was staying in German, he went to a hill that surrounded the village to watch the Italians drop their bombs on fields located miles away where crops such as wheat and corn were grown. The reason this area was being bombed was that the fields housed the Greek armies anti aircraft gun shelters. A number of civilians were killed as a result of these bombings. These civilians were from a nearby village called Kobe and they were killed whilst working in their crops.

A cousin of dad’s was a casualty. He was killed whilst collecting firewood. His name was Stefo Mitsopoulos.

When dad and his family returned to Nivitsi in July 1940, the Italians were there and in control. Dad recalls very little change to village life during their occupation. The Italian soldiers were
decent people and gave the villagers food and clothing. Dad can recall eating spaghetti for the first time. The Italians cooked it up with frogs fished from the lake.

The Italians left the village in November 1940 after being defeated by the Greek army. There were no battles in Nivitsi. The only sign of war during this period was the bombing of the bridge.

At the end of 1940, dad left the family home to become a shepherd on the family farm which was located about 5 miles from the village. Dad lived on the farm 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. He had the company of 2 other shepherds who were looking after surrounding farms. The other 2 shepherds were both Mitsopoulos, one aged 16 and the other was about 50.

The first German dad came into contact with was in December 1940. He was in civilian clothing and had walked to the farm dad was staying at about midnight one evening. He wanted directions to a village called Vineni. Before requesting this information, dad was forced to give him whatever food he had. Dad then had to go out in the middle of a cold, snowy night and walk the German to the top of a hill located about an hour’s walk from the farm. He pointed out to the German where Vineni was and then dad was allowed to return back to his farm.

Remembering that dad was only 10 years old, the trek back to the farm was frightening. He virtually ran back as the woods were home to wolves and bears and it was pitch black.

The next Germans dad saw was in 1942. He was walking back to the farm from the village when he came across 2 German soldiers in uniform. This scared dad and he instinctively saluted the soldiers. He was shaking with fright as he did this. The soldiers smiled and saluted back and dad continued on his way.

A couple of months after this incident, the Germans took occupation of Nivitsi. The local German command took over the second floor of dad’s family home. The women of the house, i.e., dad’s mum, aunty, first cousin and younger brother George, left the house to live with other relatives in the village. Dad’s grandparents remained in the house.

The house was used by the Germans as a command and operational centre for the entire Prespa region. There were about 15 Germans in the house. Dad was still on the farm working as a shepherd during this time and therefore had very little contact with them.

Village life did not change a great deal under German occupation. However, the villagers were scared of the Germans and they were not generous like the Italians were. No villager lost their life during the occupation.
The strategic advantage the Germans had by being in Nivitsi was that it was used as a lookout for spotting partisan fighters coming in from across the lake. On the other side of the lake and mountains stood the Balkan countries where the partisans were based and mounted their attacks from.

The Germans left the village when they surrendered to the Allies in June 1945. The village was then returned to Greek rule. Dad returned to the family home after the war finished. The reason for this was that his father had sent money from Australia which enabled the family to employ a shepherd.

Dad had lived away from the family for 5 years whilst he was working as a shepherd. He went from a 9-year-old boy to a 14-year-old teenager in that time.
During World War 2, the partisans were actively fighting the Germans and Italians. When that war finished in Europe in June 1945, a partisan army called the Democratic Army of Greece (hereinafter referred to as partisans) was formed. They fought the Greek Government army. Partisans who were fighting the Germans during the world war either joined the Democratic Army of Greece partisans or the Greek Government army. This meant that partisans, who were fighting side by side against the Germans, were now fighting each other.

This was a civil war. Brothers, sisters, husbands and wives were fighting on opposite sides of the war. It was compulsory for all males to join the Greek army from the age of 18 for a 3 year period. This applied to all citizens living in the cities and the villages.

The Democratic Army of Greece grew from the World War 2 partisan movement and they declared war on the Greek Army. They started to claim territory from the Greek army but this was mainly villages in northern Greece.

As this war intensified, the partisans started compulsory recruitment of all villagers, men and women, boys and girls, aged 16 and above in the villages they occupied. Up to this point, the majority of partisans were volunteers. The partisans were heavily supported by European communist countries, led by the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The support was in the areas of weapons, ammunition, clothing, food and money.

From mum and dad’s memory, the civil war commenced in 1946. Mum was 14 at the time. When the partisans first came to Dumbeni, the only Greek presence in the village were 10 Greek policemen. The partisans came at night, when the villagers were asleep, and started to fight the police. Partisans entered mum’s house and started to shoot at the police station which was located opposite mum’s house.
Whilst this going on, mum and her family were in the cellar of their home and they were petrified by the gunfire. Mum was in there with her grandfather, mum and younger sister Daphne. Mum can recall they were all terrified and it was one of the longest nights in her life.

The partisans fled the house prior to sunrise. They did this because the police had the communications to call in reinforcements. After the skirmish, the Greek police went to mum’s grandfather and told him they understood that they were forced to surrender their home to the partisans.

Prior to leaving the house the partisans actually apologised to mum’s grandfather for occupying the house but claimed they had no choice as they were following orders.

Mum’s grandfather was told by the police to brick up the windows that were used to launch the attack so that they could not be used in the future. The police could see how terrified mum and her family were and reassured them that it was not their fault and therefore had nothing to fear.

A few months later, the Greek Government removed the police and in their place they brought in a battalion of Greek army soldiers who took over the village school for accommodation. When this occurred a number of villagers joined the partisans.

Towards the end of 1946, early 1947, the partisans started to fight the Greek army occupying the school. The fighting was localised to the school, which was on the far side of the village, and it meant that it was not close to mum’s house.

Mum and the rest of the villagers were generally sheltered from the death that was occurring around them as both sides discretely took their dead away from the battle zone. The pattern of fighting was that the partisans would attack for one night only and then withdraw. Overall the partisans mounted 3 attacks over a 4 week period.

After the last attack, the Greek army soldiers withdrew from Dumbeni and the partisans took control of the village. When this happened, the partisans made it compulsory for villagers aged 16 and above to join them in their fight against the Greek army. Mum was only 14, nearing 15 and therefore did not have to become a partisan.

Whilst the civil war was being fought, mum’s dad who was living and working in Western Australia was making arrangements for his wife Sophia and mum and his other daughter Daphne to join him. This process started in late 1945 but by the time it was finalised it was 1947 and the civil
war was in full flight. The permits to enable mum and the other 2 family members to travel to Australia were in a city called Kastoria.

However, the civil war complicated the family’s ability to travel to Kastoria. There was an order by the partisans to the villagers not to leave the village. Mum’s grandfather tried to explain the situation to the partisan leaders. Their response was that they were lucky that mum’s dad was in Australia and not fighting the war. They refused to give the family permission to travel to Kastoria and instructed them to stay in the village and assist in the war effort. They were also told that if the family tried to leave the village, they would be in trouble which was taken to mean that they would be shot as traitors. Mum said there were no words that could appropriately express their disappointment.

A partisan organiser, who was mum’s uncle, was approached to see if he could do anything to assist the family in this matter. Mum’s family had friends in Kastoria that they could stay with until they left for Australia. The uncle wanted to help but felt he could not break the rules because it could have lead to the execution of, not only him, but all of mums remaining family.

The partisans took the position that only traitors left the village. Consequently, mum lost the opportunity to come to Australia in 1947. It would be 3 years later before she eventually was able to travel to Australia.
Chapter Eight

Mum’s Journey from

Dumbeni to Australia

In order to protect the younger children and elderly villagers in Dumbeni, the communists made an offer to the partisans to take them i.e. the children and elderly, to communist countries and shield them from the war. The plan was to take children aged 1 to 15 away from their parents and village. A lady from each partisan controlled village was designated to travel and live with a group of about 10 children each. Younger, stronger women were selected for this task.

Mum’s younger sister Daphne, who was 9 years old, was in the first batch of children to leave Dumbeni. This was in April 1948. Her group was taken to Romania and she would stay there for the next 7 years. She wouldn’t arrive in Australia until 1955, the year I was born.

Sophia – mum and Daphne’s mum – knew that whilst she would miss Daphne enormously, she understood that this was the best course of action as Daphne would be safe, receive an education and be sheltered from the horrors of war. These things would not have been available to her had she stayed in the village. Whilst the children were crying and naturally upset, it was understood by the parents that this was the best option.

Mum would not see Daphne again for 7 years. Vicki, mum’s elder sister, was fighting with the partisans. Vicki was 7 years older than mum. She married her husband Vasil, who was also from Dumbeni, when she was 17. She had moved out of the family home when mum was 10 and moved in with Vasil’s family.

During the civil war, Vasil remained a civilian but assisted the partisans as an organiser in the village. Vasil and Vicki had 2 children, a son Jerry and daughter Gloria, who were both born in the village. Jerry was taken from the village in the same group as Daphne in April 1948 and went to Romania. He was 7 years old.
As Gloria was only a baby, she stayed with Vicki in the village. Gloria was taken from the village in late 1948. She was evacuated with the elderly villagers, including her grandmother from Vasil’s side of the family. They were taken to Czechoslovakia. The reason the very young and elderly were evacuated in late 1948 was that the Greek army was winning the war and it was expected that before too long they would take control of Dumbeni.

Once Gloria was evacuated, Vicki was conscripted to become a partisan and fought as one until the war ended sometime in 1949. When the war concluded, the communists gave the partisan fighters safe passage to communist countries. Vicki went to Czechoslovakia to join her daughter Gloria.

Mum was going to turn 16 in July 1948 which meant she would have to become a partisan. Her uncle, the one who was approached to see if could help the family get to Kastoria, advised Sophia to send mum to a communist country and therefore avert the possibility of being injured or killed as a partisan.

Therefore, in late April 1948, 3 weeks after Daphne was taken from the village, mum who was 15 years old, was going to be taken to Yugoslavia.

On the day mum was leaving, she and the other 19 in her group were given a blanket and a small bag containing cheese, eggs and bread.

The partisans’ main concern with the movement of the children was that the Greek army would find out about it and try and prevent it from happening. Therefore, there had to be secrecy associated with the movement, particularly as it was suspected that there were informers and traitors in the village. Consequently, mum’s group departed the village on donkeys and mules at sundown. The mothers of the children travelled with them for the first stage of the journey. They travelled in the hills for about an hour and slept the night in the hills on their blanket laid on the ground.

Just prior to daybreak the following day, the partisan leaders advised the mothers to say their goodbyes to their children. Mum started crying and hugging her mum. Mum told her mum not to cry as she would be back soon. The next time mum would see her mum Sophia was in 1956 when Sofia arrived in Australia, some 8 years later. In that time, mum had gone from a 15-year-old girl to a 23-year-old woman who was married with 2 children.

Anyway back to the journey, the partisans organised the children to walk in pairs (the mules and donkeys returned to the village with the mothers) and hold hands as they did so. As mum
started to walk she could hear her mum yelling Tina Tina Tina. It must have been so painful for a mother to let 2 of her children go in the space of 3 weeks.

Mum and her group marched for the next 24 hours and where possible, this was done undercover so that could not be spotted by Greek aircraft. During this 24 hour period, the group passed through another 5 villages. Whilst in these villages, they were given what food was available and water. They were also joined by children from these villages who were also being taken to communist countries.

By the end of the first day, mum's group had grown to hundreds of children.

The last village was close to the Yugoslav border. The group travelled at night to reach the border. They arrived in the middle of the night at a village called Luboino which was inside the Yugoslav border. It was raining, mum can recall being soaked and her feet were so swollen from all the walking. The children were put in a big hall, a fire was lit so they could get dry and were given a hot drink. They slept the night on the floor. As they were exhausted, sleep came easy.

In the morning, the Luboino villagers had made macaroni for the children to eat. Mum said the villagers were very nice. The children were billeted into groups of 5 to 6 and stayed with families in their homes. The people mum stayed with were very caring and friendly. She stayed with them in their home for 2 weeks.

At the end of the 2 weeks, the children boarded a train and travelled to a city called Bitola. The trip took about 12 hours. The group stayed there for a few days and were accommodated in a hostel type building.

They left Bitola aboard another train and travelled to a village called Brailovo. They were taken to an unused army barrack that was located just outside the village. Mum stayed in the barracks for a few weeks and then a group of elderly and very young children fleeing the war arrived in Brailovo. To make way for these people, mum's group was shifted into a monastery located in the village.

The new arrivals included mum's niece Gloria who was only 18 months old. As previously mentioned, she was travelling with her father's mother i.e. her grandmother. Mum's own grandfather also arrived in the village but his group was only using it as a stopover as they were on route to another location in Yugoslavia. As mentioned in a previous chapter, mum managed
to board the train and see him. She wanted to stay with him but he insisted that she should stay with the other children Mum only got off the train as it started to pull out of the station. She could recall falling on her knees when she jumped off the train and looked up to see her grandfather waving. Mum waved back and that’s the last time she saw him as he passed away soon after in Czechoslovakia.

As more groups were arriving in Brailovo, mum’s group had to make way for them and after a couple of months they left the monastery. They were taken to another monastery that was called Slepche which was located just outside a village of the same name.

After a few weeks there, they were taken to a city called Skopia which was the capital of the Republic of Macedonia within Yugoslavia. They stayed in a monastery called Matka for approximately 3 months.

The children did not have much to do in the monasteries they stayed at. There were no teachers, no organised games, just a lot of boredom. Notwithstanding this, mum could recall that the children would make their own fun.

Whilst in Matka, mum stayed in a room with 10 other girls who were all from mum’s village of Dumbeni. All the children became very close. It did not matter what village they were from. They had been together for about 9 months. Mum could not recall specific dates. This meant very little to them. They had no access to calendars or books. Birthdays became a thing of the past as the children could not remember their birth dates.

Matka was the last stop in the Republic of Macedonia. The head organiser of the Matka monastery called the children together and told them he had good news. The children were told they were going to be taken to a city called Osijek which was located in the Republic of Croatia. This was going to be a permanent move until they either returned to their own village or be reunited with their family somewhere else.

Mum knew that returning to Dumbeni could not be an option for her. This was because the Greek army burnt Dumbeni to the ground after they defeated the partisans. They did this because Dumbeni was always a partisan stronghold and the Greek government feared that if they left it there then it was possible that the partisans would pursue other uprisings.

Therefore, mum’s only hope was to be reunited with her family in a place other than Dumbeni. She knew her dad was in Australia and knew that her younger sister Daphne was in Romania.
She had also known that her mum was in Poland and her elder sister Vicki was in Czechoslovakia. The thought of her family reuniting was what kept mum going through this ordeal.

The children boarded a train in Skopia and travelled to Belgrade. The children were taken off the train and for the first time in mum's life she and the other children were taken to a restaurant. Mum could not believe the food, particularly the sweets. They kept eating until they started to feel sick.

They then travelled to Crikvenica in Croatia. At this location the group that had been together for 9 months were told that they were going to be split up. The girls were going to Osijek in Croatia whilst the boys were being sent to Czechoslovakia and Bela Crkva which was located in the Republic of Macedonia so that they could be taught trades.

The group was extremely saddened that would be split up. They had bonded closely since they started their journey together. They were given their final meal together which consisted of fresh bread and fetta cheese.

One of the boys whose name was Dimitri said to mum that he had his eyes on her ever since he first saw her and said that one day they would meet again and he was going to marry her. Mum had a little picture of herself and he asked if he could have it. He placed it in his left shirt pocket so it would be close to his heart.

Dimitri went to Czechoslovakia, received an education and worked in immigration. Seven years after mum and Dimitri said farewell, mum's sister Vicki was in the Czechoslovakian immigration office organising her travel to Australia. She was being helped by this gentleman who asked Vicki what village she was from. When she said Dumbeni, he told her he was from Kossinets which was a 30 minute walk from Dumbeni. He told Vicki he knew a girl from Dumbeni when they were in Yugoslavia. Vicki asked him if he knew her name. He took out a photo and said her name was Tina. The man was Dimitri. Vicki asked him if Tina was a good or cheeky girl. He said she was a beautiful, respectable girl. Vicki told him Tina was her sister. They then gave each other a hug and kiss. Vicki told Dimitri that she was on her way to Australia to reunite with Tina and the rest of the family.

Vicki told Dimitri that Tina was married to a beautiful man named Louie and they had 2 children. Dimitri told Vicki that when she sees Tina give her 2 big kisses from him. Vicki did this when she saw mum in Australia. Even then it was such a small world.
Anyway, back to the final meal together. Once it was completed, the boys and girls said goodbye to each other and mum and the other girls boarded a train bound for Osijek, whilst the boys boarded their train to take them to their new locations.

Osijek was to become mum’s home for 2 years. During this period, she went back to school for 4 hours every morning from Monday to Friday. In the afternoon, the girls were sent out to work for 4 hours each day. Mum worked in a sewing factory.

When mum first arrived in Osijek, she and the other girls were housed in an unused boarding school. The school had a cook and their laundry was done for them. Mum shared a room with 5 other girls. During their stay they were required to exercise every day and for entertainment, the girls would sing and dance to traditional Yugoslav music and songs.

Mum enjoyed her stay there. She felt it was a good life and she cherished numerous happy memories. The reasons for this were that she was free from years of war, there was always food on the table and she enjoyed the company of all the other girls she was staying with.

The Croatian community was very hospitable and used to welcome the girls to their social events. Mum experienced a completely different lifestyle and culture to what she was used to in Dumbeni. Mum felt very strange in the beginning because she had never seen freedom like this before. The local community were patient with the girls and made them feel at home.

This was a happy time in mum’s life. The only major concern was worrying about immediate family and relatives because she did not know where they were or if they were alive or dead. However, with the passage of time and as mum’s family resettled in other countries, the controlling communist governments set up structures to assist people with locating their loved ones.

Whilst in Osijek, mum found out that her mum Sofia was in Poland and then she moved to Czechoslovakia to reunite with her eldest daughter, mum’s sister Vicki. Mum also found out that her younger sister Daphne was living in Romania.

After mum had found out where the rest of her family members were, they would write letters to each other. In parallel with this, mum was also communicating with her dad Blagoi who was in Western Australia. Blagoi had managed to locate mum’s whereabouts, also that of his wife and 2 other daughters with the assistance of the International Red Cross.
Mum was in Osijek when she first heard from her dad. He sent her a letter that said he was happy to hear where she was and that she was well. He also mentioned that he was in the process of attempting to get her and the rest of the family to Western Australia. Mum was so happy to hear this news but in a way also sad as it would mean that she would leave her new family, i.e. the other girls, behind.

Once contact was established, mum would write to her parents and sisters every month. Six months after the first communication with her dad, a lady from the International Red Cross visited mum and another girl from Dumbeni named Alexandria and informed them that the appropriate paperwork was in place for them to travel to Australia.

One week later, mum was boarding a train to travel from Osijek to Zagreb. It was an extremely emotional time at the train station. It was hard for mum to leave the other girls that were her family for the past 3 years. The girls sang a Croatian song about farewells at the train station. They were all crying and hugging each other.

As previously mentioned, mum loved her time in Osijek. She had left Dumbeni as a 15-year-old and now as an 18-year-old she was about to embark on a journey to a foreign land to see family she had not seen for over 3 years.

Mum left Croatia with some education. She could read and write fluent Croatian, Greek and Macedonian. She stayed in contact with some of the girls she had shared those 3 years with. These girls moved to places like Skojpe in Macedonia, Greece, the United States of America, Canada and Bulgaria to reunite with their families.

Alexandria and mum were the second and third child to leave Osijek. Another girl had left before them. Her name was Lena and coincidentally she also went to Western Australia. They were the only 3 of the 100 girls in their group at Osijek that resettled in Australia.

When mum arrived in Zagreb, the Red Cross put her in a hotel with Alexandria and looked after them. They stayed in the hotel for one week. During this time some form of a passport was prepared for mum. It was a single sheet of paper with a tiny photograph of her on it.

For the first time in mum's life, she boarded an aeroplane and flew from Zagreb to Cairo. She stayed in a hotel at the Cairo airport for 2 days and then caught a flight to Sydney via an overnight stay at an Asian country mum could not recall to refuel the plane. A number of other refugees from various European countries were also on the same flights as mum. A lady from the Red Cross, who was from Yugoslavia, accompanied mum on the flights.
Mum stayed 2 nights in a hotel in a Sydney hotel. A number of the refugees ended their journey in Sydney and were picked up by their family. She then boarded a flight to Perth, Western Australia. On arrival, she was greeted by her dad Blagoi, brother-in-law Vasil and other relatives and friends.

This was November 1950. It was very emotional for mum seeing everyone after so long. Her father had a market garden in Wanneroo which in those days was a long journey from Perth city even though it was only 23 miles away.

Mum was taken to an uncle’s car and they stopped in the city for lunch. Her first impression of Perth was that she thought she was in paradise. She had never seen shops, restaurants and open spaces like this before.

After they left the city to travel to Wanneroo, mum’s uncle told her they lived in a palace. When they arrived, she saw that he was joking because the house had chaff bags for walls with an iron roof. However when mum was shown her room, she felt like a princess. She now had her own room for the first time in her life and it had a beautiful wardrobe, a jarrah bed and a big dressing table with a mirror. She thought she was in heaven.

The journey that began in April 1948 when she left Dumbeni in darkness ended in November 1950 when she was reunited with her father in Australia. What a journey. All that was left now was to get the remaining family members to Australia.
Mum in Osijek, Croatia in 1949.

Mum’s niece Gloria and nephew Jerry when they were reunited in Czechoslovakia.
Mum with her dad and brother-in-law not long after her arrival in Australia.

Mum and all the other girls who travelled from Macedonia to Osijek, Croatia as a consequence of the Greek Civil War. Mum is in the back row, 11th from the right.
Mum's passport photo in 1950.

Mum in her winter school uniform in Osijek.

Mum (seventh from left in boat) and friends in Ochrid during summer vacation in 1949.
Mum at her father’s market garden in Wanneroo in 1951, not long after her engagement to dad.

Mum and her father Blagoi in Forrest Place, Perth in 1950. This was mum’s first visit to the City after being in the country for one week.
Chapter Nine

Mum’s Family Members Journey
from Dumbeni to Australia

Blagoi’s Journey

Mum’s dad Blagoi first left Dumbeni in 1932 and went to Australia. Mum was actually born when Blagoi was in Australia. He worked clearing land in Boyup Brook in Western Australia. In those days the work he was doing and the conditions he was working under were extremely tough.

He worked hard and the working hours were long. He lived in camp conditions. Mum can recall him saying that they would put meat in containers and bury them in the sand so the meat would stay fresh. When they wanted to eat the meat, they would dig up the containers, take the meat out and then wipe the maggots off and then barbeque the meat.

The purpose of Blagoi’s journey to Australia was to earn enough money for the family to live comfortably in Dumbeni. He returned to Dumbeni in January 1938 with no intention of leaving. However, this plan was ruined as a war in Europe was on the horizon.

Consequently, Blagoi returned to Australia in November 1939. He was fortunate that he got out just before the Italians invaded and occupied Greece. The intention on this occasion was to see the war out and then return to Dumbeni. However with the events that transpired through World War 2, the Civil War, the Greek Government ordering the destruction of Dumbeni and his family being separated and taken to different European countries, his initial plan had to change. The plan had changed to finding out where his wife and 3 daughters were and bring them to Australia.

When he left Dumbeni for the second time, his wife was pregnant with their third child. As was the case with mum, Blagoi was not there for the birth of his daughter Daphne.
On his second visit to Australia, Blagoi worked as a market gardener in Wanneroo on land that was owned by some other European immigrants. In 1947, Blagoi leased some land in Wanneroo and started his own market garden. In that same year he brought out his son-in-law Vasil, who was married to mum's sister Vicki, to Australia from Greece. Vasil and Vicki were separated during the civil war. A traitor in Dumbeni informed on Vasil to the Greek army for a crime he did not commit. He was subsequently jailed and Blagoi managed to bribe a Greek official by sending him money from Australia. Vasil was freed and granted permission to travel to Australia to join Blagoi. Vicki became a partisan during the civil war after her children Jerry and Gloria were taken from Dumbeni.

I asked mum why she was chosen first to join her family. She told me that because she was living in Croatia which was a republic in Yugoslavia, it was easier to get her out of that country as its leader was closely aligned to the west and much more liberal than other communist countries. The rest of the family were in Eastern Bloc countries under the control of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. There were restrictions on movements for citizens in those countries.

Mum was first out simply because Croatia had less travel restrictions than the countries the other family members were living in.

**Daphne’s Journey**

Daphne was taken from Dumbeni in April 1948 when she was 8 years old. This was 3 weeks before mum was taken away. Daphne's exodus ended in Romania which was to become her home for the next 7 years. She lived in a home for children.

Mum found out that Daphne was in Romania via an aunty whose job was to travel to each country where Macedonian and Greek refugee children were taken to. This lady, whose name was Donka, spotted Daphne in the children's home in Romania. Donka, whilst checking on refugee children in Croatia saw mum. She then informed mum that she had seen Daphne in Romania. Donka took out a photograph of a group of children in Romania and pointed out Daphne. This was in January 1950 – some 18 months after mum last saw Daphne in Dumbeni.

Donka gave Daphne's address to mum. They then started to correspond on a monthly basis until mum left Croatia in November 1950. Mum continued to correspond with Daphne after she arrived in Australia.
Through the Red Cross, mum was allowed to leave Croatia without a passport. It appeared that the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would not allow the Red Cross do the same thing for their citizens.

However, this position changed in 1955. When this happened, Blagoi, with the assistance of Western Australian immigration officials, was able to organise a passport for Daphne and she joined her father and sister in Western Australia in June 1955. She went to live with her father in Wanneroo.

Mum was 22-years-old when Daphne arrived. By this time mum was married to dad and living with dad’s parents in Kensington. My brother Chris was 18-months-old and mum was 6 months pregnant with me.

Unlike mum who came to Australia by air, Daphne travelled via the sea and arrived at the Port of Fremantle. Mum can recall Daphne spotting the family that was there to greet her from the deck and they all started to wave feverishly at each other. When she came of the ship there were plenty of hugs and kisses. This was the first time that Daphne and her dad had physically seen each other. What a wonderful and emotional occasion that must have been.

Daphne went on to marry Nick Rhondas in November 1957. They had 4 children, Vince, Connie, Phyllis and Sophie who between them produced 10 grandchildren.

**Vicki’s Journey**

Vicki, who was 7 years older than mum, married Vasil who also lived in Dumbeni in 1941. Their son Jerry was born in 1942 and daughter Gloria in 1946. Both the children were born in Dumbeni.

Jerry left the village in the same group of children as his aunty Daphne in April 1948. Jerry was 7 years old, 1 year younger than Daphne. Jerry also finished up in Romania with Daphne. When Daphne left for Australia in 1955, Jerry left Romania to join his mum Vicki in Czechoslovakia.

Gloria was taken from Dumbeni in mid to late 1948 when she was 18-months-old. She left the village with her grandmother Stonia, Vasil’s mother. Their journey finished in Czechoslovakia. Gloria was reunited with her mum in 1952.
Once Jerry and Gloria had been taken away from the village, Vicki became a partisan and stayed one until the civil war ended in 1949. As the partisans were defeated, they could no longer stay in Greece so they had to flee to neighbouring countries. Vicki crossed the border to Albania and from there she travelled to Czechoslovakia.

She stayed in a refugee home and at this stage she was unaware that her daughter and mother in law were in the same country. It was some 3 years later that Vicki and Gloria reunited. Gloria told me that she could not believe that Vicki was her mum. The only mum Gloria knew from when she was 18 months old was another lady from Dumbeni who was looking after the group of girls Gloria was with since they left Dumbeni in 1948.

Even though Vicki and Gloria were reunited, they continued to live apart. Gloria contracted tuberculous on 2 occasions. This meant she spent a majority of her childhood in isolation as this disease was extremely contagious and deadly. She was lucky to survive the illness.

As previously mentioned, Jerry left Romania in 1955, at the same time Daphne went to Australia, and was reunited with his mum and sister in Czechoslovakia. By this time Sofia, mum’s mother, had also arrived in Czechoslovakia from Poland. This meant that all the family members were now in 2 locations. Mum, her dad and younger sister were in Australia and the rest were in Czechoslovakia.

Gloria continued to live where she lived when she first arrived in Czechoslovakia, whilst Jerry was placed into another home. Vicki, Sofia and Stonia lived in a house that was located close to Gloria and Jerry’s homes.

When Gloria saw Jerry, it was like seeing him for the first time because the last time she saw him she was only 18 months old. She was 10 now and Jerry was 14. Gloria thought he was a gypsy which was considered a major insult. They couldn't communicate with each other as Gloria could only speak Czechoslovakian, whilst Jerry could speak Macedonian and Romanian. Whilst in isolation with tuberculous, Gloria spoke exclusively Czechoslovakian and had forgotten how to speak Macedonian. I’m glad to say they have since become very close. Both of them are very warm and lovely people.

As the remainder of the family were now in the one location, the potential to get them to Australia become easier. Blagoi and Vasil worked with immigration officials in Western Australia to organise passports for the rest of the family to immigrate to Australia. This was achieved in 1956.
Unfortunately, there was a hold up with Sofia’s passport which meant that she could not travel with the rest of the family. Vicki, Stonia, Jerry and Gloria all travelled by ship to the Port of Fremantle. Their arrival once again triggered an extremely emotional reunion. It was the first time mum had seen her sister Vicki, nephew Jerry and niece Gloria in 8 years. Vicki met my dad Louie and her 2 nephews Chris and me for the first time.

Vicki passed away in 2003. She was a wonderful person. She was kind, compassionate and possessed a wonderful cheeky sense of humour. I felt like she was my kindred spirit as we had a lot in common, both in personality and our outlook on life. Her husband Vasil tragically passed away in 1975.

Jerry married Nina Michalidu in 1971 and they had 4 sons, Steven, Michael, Simon and Vic. At the time of writing, Jerry and Nina have 3 grandchildren. Jerry had a successful teaching and education administration career. He finished up being the Director General of the Western Australian Education Department. Not a bad effort for someone who arrived in Australia as a 14-year-old who could not speak a word of English. He went to the University of Western Australia, became a teacher and had a long illustrious career in the education field culminating in the abovementioned role.

Gloria married Chris Peovitis on the 10th of September 1967. They had 3 children, daughters Julie and Michelle and son Norman who between them at the time of writing have produced a total of 6 grandchildren. Chris and Gloria established a successful seafood business in Western Australia. Chris is also the owner of a hotel complex in Bitola, Macedonia.

Sofia, who was the only family member left in Czechoslovakia, arrived in Australia 1 month after the others arrived.

**Sofia’s Journey**

Sofia left Dumbeni in 1949 just prior to the civil war ending. By this stage mum, Daphne and Vicki’s 2 children Jerry and Gloria had left the village. When Sofia left the village she knew where the other family members were.

Sofia’s journey took to her Poland where she stayed for approximately 3 years. Sofia first made contact with mum in 1950 by writing her a letter and sending her a scarf. Mum continued to correspond with Sofia on a monthly basis.
In 1953, Vicki, who was in Czechoslovakia, had organised for Sofia to join her. As previously mentioned, Sofia's immigration to Australia was put on hold due to a passport issue. She had to stay in Czechoslovakia for another month before she was able to board another ship to Australia. She arrived at Fremantle where the rest of the family was there to greet her. This was the last of the emotional reunions. For the first time since 1939, i.e. when Blagoi travelled to Australia for the second time, that the whole family was together again.

It was the first time Sofia had seen her husband Blagoi in 17 years and her daughters Daphne and mum in 8 years. She also met her son-in-law Louie and grandsons Chris and me for the first time.

With the exception of mum, who was married and living with dad's parents in Kensington, the other 8 family members all lived in the house on the market garden in Wanneroo.

It must have been a rewarding experience to have the whole family together again albeit thousands of kilometres away from their birthplace.
Chapter Ten

**Dad’s Life in Nivitsi**

*during the Greek Civil War*

When World War 2 finished, dad returned to the family home in Nivitsi after the family employed a shepherd to take over from him to work the family farm.

Dad was 15, had no schooling due to the war and when he returned to Nivitsi he was told by the local official that he was now too old to attend school. Therefore, dad went to work for the family buying fish at auctions in Nivitsi and then travelling to Lerin, which was the capital city of Prespa, to sell the fish. There was a market in Lerin every Saturday where dad would set up a stall and sell his fish.

He would leave Nivitsi on a Friday night, sell the fish on the Saturday and return to Nivitsi on the Sunday. Dad used to travel with his uncles to do this every 3 weeks.

During the civil war, Nivitsi did not experience any actual fighting. The Greek army moved out before the partisans arrived in late 1945. People in the village who were 16 years old and above were required to join the partisans. This did not effect the majority of dad's family because they were either too old, i.e. dad’s mum and grandparents, or too young, i.e. dad and his younger brother George, or were out of the country i.e. dad’s dad was in Australia.

The only exception was his cousin Gera. The irony of this was that Gera's husband Stavros was conscripted into the Greek army. Consequently a husband and wife fought on opposite sides in the civil war. This wasn't by choice but rather it was based on who was in control of Nivitsi when the villagers reached the age of conscription. Spouses and relatives on opposite sides was commonplace due to this factor.

Whilst Nivitsi did not experience any fighting between the parties, the war still had a significant impact on the villagers. The major impact was the ability to access food and supplies from early
1947 as the Greek army closed the borders in major cities. The Greek army controlled Lerin and Nivitsi relied on getting its supplies from this city. The partisans would not let the villagers travel to Lerin as they were concerned for their safety as the fighting around Lerin was intense.

Notwithstanding this, dad’s family was fairly self sufficient and therefore starvation wasn’t an issue. The shortage was primarily in clothing and items such as salt, coffee, sugar, olive oil and fruit. However, there were families that weren't self sufficient that did experience starvation. Those who were self sufficient could not assist those that weren't because of the impact that it would then have on their own family.

Another impact was that the village consisted only of the very young or the elderly as the others were off fighting in the war.

It seems fair to say that Nivitsi was not affected by the civil war in comparison to other villages such as mum’s village of Dumbeni. Life had basically returned to what it was like prior to World War 2.
Chapter Eleven

Dad’s Journey
from Nivitsi to Australia

Around October 1946 dad received mail from his father that contained a permit that would allow him to travel to Australia. To make this happen, dad needed to travel to Lerin which was still under the control of the Greek army.

Dad, his cousin Gera, his mother Veza and his grandfather Noume left the village in April 1947 to travel to Lerin. The reason for the 6 month delay from the receipt of the permit was that dad was waiting for a visa from the Greek government.

On the trip to Lerin, dad and the others were stopped by the partisans at a village called Psoderi which was a 5 hour walk from Nivitsi. The partisans started to question Dad and dad’s grandfather Noume stepped in and explained they were taking Dad to Lerin so that he could travel to Australia. The partisans told Noume that they could not go to Lerin due to the battle that was raging there. They were told to return to Nivitsi.

After being told this, Dad and the others went to have a coffee with a friend of Noume who lived in Psoderi. Noume’s friend invited them to stay the night at his place and he would think of a plan to get them out of Psoderi and into Lerin.

At 5am the next day, the friend and dad’s group snuck out of the village under darkness. The friend took them to a road that would lead them to Lerin. The friend left them at this point and returned to his home. After a 3 hour walk the group reached Lerin’s border which was manned by Greek army guards and there were also Greek Orthodox priests.

Dad and the others were questioned as to whether they had seen any partisans close to Lerin. They said no, even though they had seen a number of them but were too scared to say so. The priests refused to believe them and told them they were liars. However, once the guards were
told of the purpose of their visit and were shown the visa and permit, the group was allowed to enter the city.

Whilst reviewing the documents, a customs officer noted that dad had not paid tax on fish he sold on a previous visit to Lerin. The tax was duly paid and they entered the city. You just can't escape the tax man.

The group went to the home of an aunty of dad's, the same person he stayed with when he went to Lerin to sell fish. Her name was Ristana.

After 2 days, dad's mum, grandfather and cousin left to return to Nivitsi. Dad was sad and upset to leave his family and favourite dog Charlie behind. He was also anxious in relation to how he was going to settle in Australia. He had only known the life of a peasant villager. Dad's mum was crying with sadness but was also relieved that her son was leaving a country that was at war and travelling to a country where he would be safe.

After 1 week, dad left Lerin by train and travelled to Solun which at that time was the capital of Aegean Macedonia. Dad spent 2 weeks there in a hotel and fell in love with the place. He said it was very beautiful.

He then travelled to Athens by train. Dad stayed there for 5 weeks in a hotel. He had a cousin named Pando who lived there and they saw each other every day. Pando showed dad around Athens and acted as a tour guide. Dad could not believe the size of Athens and the large population. It must have been a real culture shock for a villager like dad to experience Athens.

On the next leg of the journey, dad travelled by ship to Cairo. He left from the Port of Piraeus, made famous in a movie called Never On A Sunday, and after approximately 1 week at sea arrived in Egypt. Whilst on the ship, dad was given a banana to eat. He had never seen one before and was about to eat it with the skin still on when an English army nurse laughed and told him he needed to peel the skin off first.

On this journey, dad's cousin German was also on board. He was also travelling to Australia and they travelled together for the rest of the journey.

On arrival in Egypt, dad travelled to Cairo and spent 3 weeks there in a hotel. Whilst in Cairo, dad was watching trained monkeys dance and one of them took dad's wallet out of his trouser pocket. The monkey disappeared and was obviously trained to steal. Fortunately for dad, all
his documents were at the hotel so all that he lost was his wallet and some money. Another Macedonian staying at the same hotel as dad sewed a pocket and a button on dad’s shirt so that he could keep his new wallet there.

From Cairo dad flew to Rome. Unfortunately, he could not get a direct flight to Australia as the majority of aircraft were being used to transport World War 2 soldiers back to their home countries. This was some 2 years after the war had ended.

The flight to Rome was dad’s first time on an aircraft. Once he reached Rome, he then caught a flight to New York where he spent the next 2 days. Dad was fascinated by the size of the buildings and the number of people who were there.

From New York, dad flew to San Francisco where he stayed for 2 weeks in a hotel with his cousin German. German had an uncle there who wanted the boys to stay with him for a further 2 weeks. Dad politely refused as he was anxious to join his dad in Australia.

Whilst in San Francisco, dad visited a restaurant owned by a Bulgarian who dad was able to communicate with. Dad had an enjoyable meal, paid the bill and went back to his hotel. The next night dad returned to the same restaurant to eat but was refused service. When he asked why, he was told that it was because he did not leave a tip the night before. How was a villager from Nivitsi supposed to understand he had to leave a tip in a restaurant in San Francisco? Anyway, once that issue was clarified, dad ate there every night for the rest of his stay and left a tip.

From San Francisco, dad boarded a light aircraft, a 10-seater and travelled to Honolulu. Apart from dad and his cousin, the other passengers were all American naval officers. Dad sat next to one of them who tried unsuccessfully to communicate with dad. Dad was watching the officer eating chocolate. The officer then broke the chocolate in half and gave it to dad. Dad has never forgotten that act of kindness.

He spent 2 days and nights in Honolulu. During this time he went to Pearl Harbour which had only been bombed by the Japanese some 5 years earlier. The remnants of the bombings were still visible. Dad could recall seeing ships half sunk and those that weren’t sinking were badly damaged.

From Honolulu, dad boarded a flight to Australia. The aircraft flew direct to Sydney where it refuelled and then headed straight to Perth. Dad arrived in Perth on August 17, 1947. It took dad 4 months to get to Perth from the time he left Nivitsi. He was greeted at the airport by his dad
Spase and a number of relatives. It had been 9 years since dad had seen Spase. Spase last saw dad as a 7-year-old boy and now he was seeing him as a 16-year-old young man.

It was an emotional reunion. From the airport, they caught a taxi to where Spase was living in a boarding house in Francis Street, Perth (that area is now known as Northbridge). Dad was going to live in the boarding house with Spase and Spase’s brother Tran. Spase and Tran were part owners of restaurants in William and Hay streets in the city. The one in William Street was called Allied Victory whilst the Hay Street one was called Her Majestys as it was located near the theatre of the same name.

Dad’s first impression of Perth was not favourable. He was expecting it to be a big city like New York but in those days Perth was very much just like a big country town. After 1 month, Spase arranged for dad to commence an apprenticeship as a tailor. Dad continued to be a tailor until the day he retired on 19 July, 1996.
Chapter Twelve

Dad’s Family Members Journey

from Nivitsi to Australia

George’s Journey

In April 1948, at the age of 10, dad's younger brother George was taken out of Nivitsi by the partisans. He finished up in Hungary which was to become his home for the next 8 years.

During this time he lived in Government dormitories. He went to school whilst in Hungary. It wasn't until 1956 that Spase was able to organise for George to join the family in Australia. Spase tried for 6 years to get George out of Hungary but the communists were reluctant to let their citizens immigrate to Western countries. It needs to be noted that this period was when the cold war between the United Sates of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was at its peak.

The Red Cross played a pivotal role in organising George’s departure. George finally arrived in Western Australia in 1956. He was 18 years old and saw his father, Spase, for the first time on his arrival. Spase left Nivitsi for Australia in July 1938 and George was born in October of the same year. Dad recalls it took George a long time before he started calling Spase dad.

It was the first time George had seen his mum Veza in 8 years and my dad, his brother in 9 years. It was also the first time he had seen his sister Kathy who was born in Australia in May 1952. Also he saw his 2 nephews, Chris and me and his sister in law Tina for the first time.

George did an electrical apprenticeship and finished up owning his own electrical contracting business. He married Doris Peos in August 1968 and they had 3 children, Tom, Nadia and Leanne.
Unfortunately, George tragically passed away in July 2000 which deeply affected everyone who knew and loved him. Dad and George were very close and I know that he still misses him. George was a lovely person whose life was taken too soon.

**Veza’s Journey**

Dad left Nivitsi in April 1947. His mum Veza stayed in the village until 1948. As the Greek army was going to win the civil war, the partisans view was that anyone who assisted them during the war may be in danger if they stayed in their village. Therefore Veza was taken by the partisans to the Republic of Macedonia in Yugoslavia.

Veza spent 2 years there working on a farm. During this period, her husband Spase worked with the Red Cross to bring her to Australia. This was finally organised in November 1950. She was transported from Macedonia to Belgrade in Serbia and caught a flight from there to Australia. Coincidentally, the aircraft that took Veza to Australia returned to Belgrade where mum then caught it to go to Australia. Therefore, within the space of 1 month the same aircraft had transported dad’s mum and his future wife to Australia.

When Veza reached Australia, it was the first time she had seen her husband Spase in 12 years and her son Louie, my dad, in 3 years. Everyone was excited and emotional. However, dad was shocked when he saw his mum. To him she looked sick and had aged considerably. It was understandable that Veza looked the way she did considering how hard she would have worked on the farm and the stresses associated with war and family separation. Over time she got back to looking healthy.

When Veza arrived, Spase had bought a house at 47 Brandon Street, South Perth (now referred to as Kensington). Spase and Veza both lived out the rest of their lives in this house. My brothers Chris and Angelo and I also lived in this house from our birth until mum and dad bought a house at 41 Brandon Street in November 1965. At the time of writing mum and dad still happily live in this house.

Our aunty Kathy (Spase and Veza’s daughter, dad’s sister) was born and lived at number 47. Both Kathy and my brother Chris were born in 1952, 6 months apart, Kathy being the eldest. As they were born in the same year, lived in the same house, everyone thought they were twins when they started school together at Kensington Primary School. To make matters worse, neither of them could speak a word of English.
Anyway back to Veza, when she arrived, Spase had got out of the restaurant business and was working as a garbage collector for the Claremont Council. He did not have a driver’s licence or vehicle and used to leave home at 5am to catch a bus to the city and then a train to Claremont. When we had shifted to #41, I can recall Spase yelling out good morning to us as walked past to catch his bus.

At the time Veza arrived, dad was in the third year of his tailoring apprenticeship. Both dad and Spase could only speak broken English. Veza never learned to speak English.

Spase worked at the Claremont council until the day he retired. After he retired, he would spend a lot of his time sitting on his veranda just watching the world go by. The locals loved him and he would always greet them as they passed his house. It was a standing joke that the people who passed by would ask him “How do you like Australia?” to which he would reply “Australia is a great country, the only problem is there are too many Australians living here.” This would always guarantee a laugh.

Veza never went to work after her arrival. She looked after the house and all of us who lived there. At its peak, there were 9 of us living there. I have fond memories living at #47. There was plenty of love and kindness, we always had food to eat and clean clothes to wear. I’m certain that the values I hold dear today come from living in that house with an extended family.
Mum and dad met at a wedding at the Leederville Town Hall in 1950. Mum had only been in Australia for 1 month. Dad had gone to the wedding with a mate named Con who happened to be mum's second cousin.

Dad spotted mum as soon as he entered the hall. He asked Con “Who is that girl? I haven’t seen her before.” Con asked dad if he would like to meet her and explained she was his cousin.

The introductions were made and they talked and danced with each other. Mum remembers dad was a terrible dancer (now I know where I inherited my dancing skills from) and her feet were trodden on a number of times.

Mum told her dad Blagoi that she was keen on Louie. Blagoi told mum that this man, i.e. dad, was only about having a good time and not someone who could provide you with a good future. Blagoi had based this assumption on dad being a snappy dresser.

Dad and mum's relationship nearly didn't make it past first base as Blagoi had been approached by the father of a wealthy family seeking permission for his son to marry mum. This man was much older than mum. The father and son in question visited mum's family home in Wanneroo and the father asked Blagoi for permission for his son to marry mum. Blagoi saw mum wasn't happy and told them to ask her directly. The father asked mum whose response was that she had just arrived in Australia. She was just getting to know her father again and did not think it was the right time to be contemplating marriage. She also told them not to hold any false hope that mum may change her mind in the future.

When mum and dad met, it’s not like modern times when everyone is mobile and could see each other whenever they want. Dad was living in Kensington and did not have a drivers licence whilst mum was living in Wanneroo. The only time they could see each other was when there were Macedonian community dances which were held in a place called Unity Trades Hall in Beaufort Street, Perth or when they were invited to friends’ birthday parties.
On average, they would have seen each other twice per month. However, they would write letters to each other on a weekly basis.

Five months after first meeting, they got engaged. Dad spoke to Spase and told him that he had met a girl and wanted to marry her.

Before taking this matter any further, dad's parents and uncles went to a community dance to observe mum. One of dad's uncles asked mum for a dance and began questioning her on issues such as did she love dad and would she fit into the Mitsopoulos family. Mum must have passed the test because the uncle told Spase that he thought this girl would be the right girl for Louie.

Mum and dads' fathers met at a city hotel and over a beer Spase asked Blagoi if he knew that Louie and Tina loved each other. Blagoi said he did and invited Spase and his family to his home in Wanneroo to discuss an engagement.

When the families gathered at Wanneroo, mum and dad told everyone that they loved each other and then both families gave them their blessings.

The Engagement

In May 1951, mum and dad had an engagement party at mum's Wanneroo home with about a 150 people in attendance. They had a band playing traditional Macedonian music. There was plenty of food such as a lamb on a spit and plenty of wine and beer was drunk. It was a real festive occasion that upheld the traditions associated with engagements held in their Macedonian villages.

Even though they were engaged, neither of them had their own transport and therefore they were still separated by the distance between their respective homes. They only saw each other on weekends. One weekend dad would travel to Wanneroo and the next weekend mum would travel to Kensington.

Mum would catch a bus to St Georges Terrace in the city where she would be met by Spase. Dad could not meet her as he would still be at his own work. At this time, Spase had his restaurant in William Street and mum and him would go there and wait for dad to arrive there after he finished his work.
Spase would give mum a meal and in return mum was taught to ask the customers after they had finished their meal if they wanted tea or coffee. These were the first English words mum learnt.

A regular customer asked Spase's brother Tran, who was a partner in the business, if he could ask that beautiful girl if she would go out with him. Tran got upset, grabbed him by the neck and threw him out of the restaurant and told him never to come back. Poor guy.

When dad would arrive at the restaurant, mum and him would go to the movies and then catch a bus home to Kensington. When dad travelled to Wanneroo, he would catch a bus from the city on a Saturday at 12:30pm as he worked in the morning. He would get off at the 24 mile peg on Wanneroo Road and walk for 10 minutes to the market garden.

At that time, there was a big Macedonian community living in Wanneroo. Saturday nights at Wanneroo were generally spent visiting Macedonian friends to eat, drink and dance. Sundays were spent attending picnics held in a paddock again with the Wanneroo Macedonian community.

To get home from Wanneroo dad would get a lift on a Sunday evening with a Macedonian market gardener who was transporting his produce by truck to what was then the West Perth Markets (Harbour Town now stands at this site). The driver would drop dad off in William Street and he would walk to Spase's restaurant. Whilst there, dad would work as a waiter. The restaurant would close at midnight and then Spase and dad would catch the last bus from the city to go home.

**The Wedding**

Mum and dad only had to put up with those travel arrangements for about 9 months as they were married on the 27th January, 1952. They were married on a Sunday afternoon in the Greek Orthodox Church at Parker Street, Perth which still stands at the time of writing.

As is Macedonian tradition, on the morning of the wedding about 30 relatives joined dad at Spase's home in Kensington.

Dad's best man was Peter Tallis. His wife Jeanie was mum's matron of honour. In those days it was traditional for a member of the same family to act as best man and be a godparent to any children from that marriage. A male member of the Tallis family had been a best man and godparent to male members of the Mitsopoulos family for over 100 years. In addition to Peter, dad had 3 groomsmen, Forte, a cousin of dads, Phillip mum's first cousin and Stavro who was a close friend of dads.
The only member of dad’s immediate family who could not attend the wedding was his younger brother George who was still in Hungary.

Mum spent the morning of the wedding at the home of a very good family friend from Dumbeni who was living in North Perth. Mum went there on the Saturday night before the wedding and stayed in the same room as her friend Mary. On the Sunday morning, mum was joined by her dad Blagoi and brother in law Vasil. They were the only 2 immediate family members of mums who attended the wedding as her mum Sofia and elder sister Vicki were in Czechoslovakia and her younger sister Daphne was in Romania.

The tradition in those days was that relatives and close friends were invited to the reception whilst others were invited to come to the wedding after the reception to join in the dancing and drinking.

Well over 100 people attended the church. Being January, it was an extremely hot day and the service went for approximately 2 hours. Mum’s bridesmaids were Alexandra, who was from Dumbeni and was the person who travelled with mum from Croatia to Australia; Chrissi who was mum’s first cousin and Ristosia who was dad’s cousin. Nicky Mitsopoulos (now Carvell) was the flower girl. Nicky and dad’s sister Kathy are still best friends.

The reception was held at the Leederville Town Hall and about 150 people attended. Another 60 odd people attended after 8pm to join in the festivities.

Nat King Cole’s “They Tried To Tell Us We Were Too Young To Be In Love” was the song that mum and dad danced their bridal waltz to. That was probably a good choice as dad was 21 and mum was 19.

After the reception, which finished at around midnight, mum and dad and about 30 close relatives went back to Spase’s Kensington home to continue the celebrations. Eating, drinking, singing and dancing continued until 5am.
Married Life

No such thing as a honeymoon for mum and dad. Mum and dad moved in with dad’s parents. Dad had finished his apprenticeship and was then laid off. He was unemployed for 1 month after they married.

A neighbour across the road, Frank Whiteman, was a clothes presser with a tailoring business called Adelphi. This company was looking for a cutter and Mr Whiteman told dad and took him to have an interview with the owner, a gentleman by the name of Sam Lever.

Mr Lever offered dad 1 weeks trial and dad stayed in the business under various ownerships until he retired in July 1996. Dad became very close with Mr Lever who treated dad like a son.

Mum and dad lived with dad’s parents for 13 years until they bought a house 3 doors down. There is a bit of a story to this. The house mum and dad bought was owned by an elderly gentleman named Mr Baker. He would wait for mum as she passed his house on the way home from work so that he could have a chat with her. Mr Baker was very fond of mum and used to tell her that he wished she could buy the house once he left it. That’s exactly how it turned out.

At the time of writing this book, mum and dad still live happily in this house.

My brother Chris was born on the 6th of November 1952. Prior to that, dad’s sister Kathy was born on the 2nd of May 1952. Therefore, at that time, mum and dad, dad’s parents Spase and Veza and the 2 babies i.e. Kathy and Chris were living at 47 Brandon Street. I was the next person to arrive at the home when I was born on the 19th of September 1955. The next arrival was dad’s brother George who arrived from Hungary in 1956. The last arrival at that time was my brother Angelo who was born on the 17th of March 1957.

After our family left number 47 to move into 41 Brandon Street, George married Doris in 1968 and she then moved into number 47. Two of their children were born whilst they were living there, Tom on the 29th of November 1969 and Nadia on the 10th of December 1971. This means that 6 Mitsopoulos children were born and raised in this house.

Mum joined the workforce in 1965 when she started working part time in a café in James Street, Perth. Mum started work so that the additional money could be put towards a deposit for the home they wanted to purchase. After mum and dad bought the house in November 1965, mum
was basically forced to look for full time work in order to meet mortgage repayments. She had a close friend named Lena who was working at the Peters Ice Cream factory in Roe Street, Perth.

Lena knew that Peters were looking for someone to relieve staff working in the company’s canteen. Lena let the relevant supervisor know that she had a friend who had the required experience. Mum went in for an interview and was met by a gentleman named Mr Thomas. He asked mum her name and address. As soon as she said her name was Mitsopoulos, he asked her if she was related to Chris. She informed him that he was her son. Mr Thomas knew Chris from junior football and offered mum the position straight away and didn't bother with the interview.

Mum was offered a temporary position relieving canteen staff taking leave. Mr Thomas told mum that if any of the staff failed to return after their leave then she would take their place. Mum did the relief continuously for over 12 months and then the work dried up.

Mr Thomas then offered mum a permanent job in the ice cream cone section of the factory. Mum worked at the end of the production line wrapping and packaging the cones. She also continued to relieve in the canteen as required. Mum worked at Peters for 22 years.

Both mum and dad were extremely hard workers. Dad used to leave home at 7:30am on weekdays and worked to 8pm most nights. He also worked all day on Saturdays. He had significant contracts with the police, fire brigade, St John Ambulance, Metropolitan Transport Trust, now called Transperth (when the state government employed bus drivers and conductors), prison officers and various other government departments.

I can remember dad used to sit down for dinner at 8:30pm. I used to love that because I would hang around him like a seagull and he would share his meal with me.

Mum used to start work at 8am. Dad would drop her off at Peters. Her normal knock off time was 5pm. She would then walk from Peters to St Georges Terrace to catch a bus home. This was a 25 minute walk. Mum would arrive home about 6pm and then cook the family dinner, do the clothes washing, make all our lunches for the next work and school day and do all the other household chores. Mum would never get to bed before midnight and she would be up at 5am. This was even worse in the summer months as she was required to work until 9pm most nights.

Looking back now, I just did not appreciate at the time what mum and dad put themselves through so that that could provide for my brothers and me. It was only after I left home and started to raise my own family that I started to really appreciate the sacrifices they made to
ensure we had a roof over our heads and food on the table. We were very lucky to have them as parents.

Mum and dad could barely afford to buy us presents for our birthdays or Christmas. That mattered little to us because we grew up in a home that was built on love and respect. I’m sure I speak on behalf of my brothers when I say we had a wonderful, happy childhood that shaped our values and moulded us into the people we are today.

One of the advantages of growing up in Kensington was that we were living in a predominately Anglo Saxon area. This meant we were going to school and playing sport with Australian children.

This enabled mum and dad to assimilate quickly and they made a number of close friends in the community. This was good for them as they learnt another way of life which complimented their Macedonian culture and heritage.

At that time, Macedonian families tended to congregate in their own communities making it hard to assimilate. We, on the other hand, primarily from the time we started school, grew up as Australians but never forgetting or not respecting our Macedonian roots.
Mum and dad preparing to leave their wedding after a change of clothes. Pictured with them is their master of ceremonies, Sam Tallis.

The Bridal Waltz.

Group photo of mum and dad’s relatives at their wedding.
Mum and her father Blagoi going into the Greek Orthodox Church in Parker Street, Perth now referred to as Northbridge.

Mum and dad and their good friends Kiro and Lena about to hit the town in Perth in 1952.
Family photo at the wedding of Archie and Rina Toutountzis. Mum and dad were best man and matron of honour. They are now godparents to Archie and Rina’s four children. Whose the idiot in the bottom right – me!! Angelo is on the left and Chris in the middle. Aunty Kathy is between mum and dad.

Mum and her niece Gloria on Gloria’s wedding day.

Dad with mum’s cousin Con who introduced mum and dad.
Dad and George Frossos who was an owner of Adelphi Tailoring where dad worked for many years.

Mum and her 3 sons at a friends home in East Perth in 1959.

Mum (in the middle) whilst working at Peters Ice Cream factory in Roe Street, Perth – now Northbridge.
Chris (left) and Angelo in a photo that appeared in a Perth afternoon newspaper, at the time called The Daily News. Angelo had just been selected to play for Western Australia in State Schoolboys Football whilst Chris was playing league football with Perth in the Western Australian Football league.

Mum and dad and all grandchildren with the exception of Dylan, who wasn’t born at the time the photo was taken.
Mum with Chris and me sitting on her lap in the backyard of 47 Brandon Street in 1956.

Dad with his son Chris (right) and sister Kathy (left). Everyone thought Chris and Kathy were twins.

Mum with relatives and friends doing a traditional Macedonian dance on her 60th birthday.
Mum and dad at Wanneroo in 1951.

Mum, dad and Chris who was about 9 months old – outside the Greek Orthodox Church after attending a cousin’s wedding in 1953.

Dad entering the church on his wedding day with his best man, Peter Tallis and his wife Jeannie who was the matron of honour. Peter and Jeannie became me and my brother’s godparents. This was following a tradition that spanned over 100 years.
Four generations of Mitsopoulos. Dad’s father, Spase in the middle holding my son Kane flanked by Dad on his right and me on the left.

My Three Sons. Chris in the middle, me on the left and Angelo on the right. The photo was taken on the front lawn of our house at 41 Brandon Street, Kensington around 1967.

Mum and Dad’s best friend Lena’s wedding to Kiro in 1951. Mum and Dad were engaged and were bridesmaid and groomsman at the wedding.

Dad and his three sons at Kings Park in 1963.
Mum and her 3 sons at the wishing well at Kings Park in 1963.

Mum sitting on the fence at 47 Brandon Street, Kensington in 1959.

Mum (left), her 3 sons, Aunty Kathy and Dad’s Mum Veza (right) at Kings Park in 1963.
Mum and dad with their 2 great grandchildren, Christopher (left) and Euan (right).

My cousins Tom (right) and Nadia (left) who were born whilst living at 47 Brandon Street. Their sister Leanne was born after they moved. They are the children of Dad's brother George and his wife Doris.

Mum and dad (right) and dad's brother George (left) and his wife Doris.
Dad's father Spase and my brother Chris in 1953
(nice dress!!)

Mum and dad at the wishing well in Kings Park
in 1963.

Dad with his sister Kathy in 1953.

Mum and dad leaving the church for the
first time as a married couple.
Mum and dad’s wedding photo.
Mum in her wedding dress. The photo was taken at a studio that was in Barrack Street, Perth.
Conclusion

At the time of the publication of this book, mum and dad had 3 children, 10 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. The following are direct descendants of Louie and Tina Mitsopoulos.

**Son Chris – Born 6 November 1953**
Chris married Carole Ward and they have 4 children, 3 daughters, Rebecca, Gabriella and Romina and a son Tristan. Rebecca married Stuart Gardiner and they have 2 sons, Christopher and Euan.

**Son Norm – Born 19 September 1955**
Norm married Joanne Smith (divorced) and they have 2 sons, Kane and Lewis.

**Son Angelo – Born 17 March 1957**
Angelo married Deanne Buswell and they have 4 sons, Adam, Kyle, Trent and Dylan.

Hopefully mum and dad’s grand and great grandchildren and future generations will take the time to read this book and each family can add their own chapters so that it can become a living history.

In conclusion, I have immensely enjoyed the experience of compiling this book. I thought I knew everything there was to know about mum and dad’s journey but after having the extensive discussions we had, I quickly realised that I only had a very high level understanding of what they and their families went through.

I didn’t love them any more after writing this book because that was already there in full and it was unconditional but my respect and admiration for what they went through grew enormously. I’m so glad we did this because it’s a story that should never be forgotten or lost.

On behalf of all the family, thanks mum and dad for all the sacrifices you made and for providing a wonderful family environment for Chris, Angelo and me to grow up in. The three of us pride ourselves on the values we possess which we gained from the wise counselling and love you provided us.
The Mitsopoulos Clan

The following photos were taken on the 13th of September 2008 at the South Perth foreshore.

The Mitsopoulos clan consisting of Mum, Dad, their 3 sons, grandchildren, great grandchildren, daughters-in-law and partners. From left to right: Stuart, Dylan, Trent, Deanne, Adam, Danielle, Kyle, Angelo, Kane, Louie, Euan, Lewis, Tina, Chris, Gabriella, Romina, Craig, Rebecca, Carole, Chris, Norm.

Tristan, the only member of the Mitsopoulos clan not in the family photo. He was travelling through Europe at the time it was taken.
Mum, Dad and their 3 sons.

Mum, Dad and 9 of their grandchildren and their 2 great grandchildren.