

extract from

A Day in My Shoes

by Amanda Millear



Amanda Millear

Amanda has agreed to some of her story being republished in IDA. The story is about her early life growing up at school in Melbourne and home on the farm. The long story can be found by clicking on this link <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/latrobe:37717>

The story was started in 2011 by Amanda Hiscoe and David Henderson and finished in 2014. Amanda got divorced since writing her story and now prefers to be known as Amanda Millear.

When Amanda was six years old her parents decided to send her to Melbourne to attend a special school.

‘So then I’ve been down in Melbourne since six years of age’, Amanda explained. She told David how she had lived in hostels and boarding houses and all kinds of different accommodation. ‘I shared a flat and I also lived in one by myself and all this was done while I was going to school. I went to a special school for slow learners. It was from 1965 or 1966 until the end of 1972 and that was my school life’.

The school was an old two-storey brick homestead on Power Street in Hawthorn. By Amanda’s own account, her first days at school were scary.

‘I still remember even now going into the mistress’s house. I remember sitting at this big table and I was one of the first students. I guess I must have been very alone because I’d never been down to the big smoke before and at six years of age it must have

been very scary stuff. Like walking into a big room as if I was a little mouse. In terms of what it (school) was like, it gave me the skills I need today. They went at a slower pace. I learned to read and write and also did swimming lessons. We used to have sports days and everything else.’

Amanda went home for the school holidays and she has vivid memories of this precious time she got to spend with her brothers and sisters on the farm. Each year, the family would pile into the car for their annual holiday to Narooma. Amanda’s grandmother owned a house outside the town that looked out over the ocean.

‘We would often go fishing in Dad’s boat and I will always remember this. Dad held up a trumpet fish up to my left ear and I couldn’t hear it because that was my deaf ear.’

‘I was the only one that didn’t have home schooling’, said Amanda, ‘the others did. Ruth, Pete, and my younger sister had home schooling.’

‘My youngest sister works in the country area in Victoria with her family.’

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‘Peter, my brother is in Queensland and he’s got two grown up children who are now are legally adults.’

‘Mum’s still living where she’s living and Ruth has got three grown up children as well. And most of them have got cars!’ Amanda laughed. ‘Look out on the road!’ she exclaimed, ‘Gee! Oh gee wiz’.

‘We had that property’, she said, referring to the family farm 56 miles from Deniliquin. ‘And we had a dog called Penny and Dad also had cattle and sheep as well. If the cattle came in the house yard, you know, Penny would bite their heels. Snap, snap, snap, snap, snap. She was a corgi and she would nip the heels of the cattle to get away’.

‘We’ve had fires, floods, a grasshopper plague and a mouse plague and droughts as well!’

‘The poor cats’, she cried, before launching into story about a time when the house had been overrun by hundreds of mice.

‘They didn’t know what to do with the mice because they were everywhere. In Mum’s drawers! Yuck! The poor cats’, Amanda said again. ‘They didn’t know what to do. Oh they were in the hay bags and everything. Yuck! Then, outside the kitchen door there was this old Agar stove that sat this way and a hot-water tap was on there’, Amanda said as she was painting a picture with her hands.

‘Muff and Two Butter cats and a whole lot of other cats used to sit there. As soon as the back door opened: “Meow, meow! Rar, rar, rar, rar!” Now when it come feeding time, watch out, watch out! “Ree-ow!” They would even jump up this high to get the plate’, said Amanda. She held her hand about a meter and a half above the ground to indicate the height of the stove.

‘At one stage, 24 cats at once, whoa! Each of us four kids had our own little pet cat. Mine was Two Butter

Cats. And there was this cat named Muff, and she was the mother of all cats. There was Santa Claus and so on and so on. I think I’ve got thousands of cat photos’, she said, ‘don’t ask me where they are, but they’re somewhere at home’. ●

