

JOYCE AND IVAN CRIBB

Ivan was born in Sydney. At age four he contracted an eye infection. He underwent several operations at the conclusion of which he had lost his sight. The operations were carried out by a leading ophthalmologist of the time but later medical opinion suggested they should not have been performed at all. His loss of sight was a terrible blow to his parents, especially his mother.

Ivan first attended the blind school located in Darlington (it is now part of Sydney University). Almost all the students boarded but his mother would not allow him to board for which Ivan is most grateful as he does not think he would have survived. At the very least he would have emerged with an attitude very different to the one he developed growing up in a normal family. However it meant his parents, mostly his mother, taking him to school in the morning, returning home and repeating the process again in the afternoon. During these journeys his mother often spoke of a young blind man who was then attending Sydney University and how she would like him to do the same. The blind school only educated students to about 5th primary class level and most of them went on to work in a sheltered workshop. Some got casual work as musicians. Three school afternoons were devoted to handicrafts which Ivan loathed with an intensity he still remembers. However, he did develop a great love of books and an intense desire to learn which he has never lost.

Through the good offices of a local school principal, his mother obtained permission for him to attend 6th class at the local primary school from where he went on to Canterbury Boys High where he obtained the Leaving Certificate. Ivan studied Arts and Law at Sydney University graduating with Honours. During his time at public schools and University, there were very few text books available in Braille and Ivan did not even have a tape recorder. His parents read the books aloud and Ivan took notes in Braille. It was from these notes that he did his studies, including producing homework and assignments on a standard typewriter. The amount of time involved for all concerned over the years of school and university studies is beyond computation. Ivan feels he owed his parents a debt of gratitude absolutely beyond measure.

Following graduation Ivan went through a very difficult period. He was unable to obtain employment because of his disability. He was obliged to work at the Bar for several years and, having no legal connections whatever, briefs were few and the financial return meagre. However, it was during this period that he acquired a guide dog which gave him far more freedom of movement and opened up an almost completely new social world. This eventually led to his joining the Guide Dog Association as a committee member. He served in various honorary positions with the Association, including N.S.W. and National President, over a period of more than 30 years. He has been awarded a Life Membership by the Association.

In 1960 Ivan got the opportunity to join the staff of Dawson Waldron Edwards and Nicholls (now Blake Dawson Waldron). He stayed with the firm for the rest of his working career, for many years as a Senior Associate, specialising in Local Government and Environmental Law. He acted mainly on behalf the Sydney and Parramatta City Councils. During his career the practice of law and the firm changed out of all recognition but he found the practice of law both challenging and interesting and never regretted his choice of a profession. During most of his practice, he worked by having his secretary read the materials he was working with onto a tape recorder. He listened to the recordings, again taking a lot of notes in Braille, and then dictated his correspondence and advisings from these notes and recordings. He was fortunate to have a secretary exclusively to himself (almost unheard-of these days). Over his career he had only two

regular secretaries and was very fortunate that they were both loyal and hard working ladies who were of inestimable assistance to him. Toward the end of his career he began to gain some assistance from technology but nothing like the extent to which technology would be of assistance now. To-day it is possible to read or download nearly all legislation from the Internet.

Joyce grew up in the Southern Riverina on her father's soldier-settler farm. (Her dad had served with the Light Horse in the 1st World War). She attended the Methodist Ladies College in Melbourne but returned afterwards to help on the farm. Joyce and her mother were very active in the Country Women's Association and Joyce collected a number of prizes in local shows for her cooking and cake decoration. She was also keen on embroidery. However, by 1966 she had tired of the farm and came to Sydney to work with an Aged Care organization. Soon after coming to Sydney, she and Ivan met and very soon married. They still live in the same house in Pymble which they bought at the time of their marriage. They have three children, Alison, Rachel and Philip, of whom they are intensely proud. Alison holds a M.A. degree, is married and is currently working in London. Rachel has a B.Sc with Honours and has just completed her MBA, is also married and is working in IT with Brambles. Philip started a university course but the attraction of industry proved too great. He currently works with a computer firm. We tell him he should complete a degree.

Joyce rejoined the work force when the children were at school and school fees needed to be paid. She returned to the Aged Care industry working as a Diversional Therapist. She also enrolled in Leisure Studies at the University of Technology Sydney securing the Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree. In 1990 she joined the staff of the School of Occupational Therapy at the Cumberland campus of Sydney University. She lectured there until her retirement in 1996. By then she was tired of working for a seriously under-resourced organization and having to bring home work every evening and week end for a far from generous salary.

Ivan, in addition to his work with Guide Dogs, had joined the Council of the Royal Blind Society in 1981. In 1994 he was awarded the Order of Australia for his voluntary work in blind welfare. They are both very proud of that award.

Ivan first joined this club in (he believes) 1977 but had to resign after 3 years because he found the pressure of getting home from Sydney early every Monday too much. In 1993 Rodney Higgs invited him to be a guest speaker for the club. Rodney and others suggested he might consider rejoining and, as retirement was looming, he took up this suggestion. Soon after this club saw the light and inducted its first lady member, Joyce also accepted nomination and joined the club in 1995. Ivan served as President in 1999-2000. It was an interesting experience and, though demanding, he is glad he undertook the task. Joyce has been Secretary for 2 years from 1999 to 2001.

Although both are now retired Joyce and Ivan are still busy. Apart from their involvement in Rotary, which has been quite demanding over the past 2 years, they have several other activities. Ivan is still on the RBS council. Joyce helps to produce a regular publication for the Oral History Association. Both attend classes conducted by the University of the Third Age, an adult education organization. Joyce is looking forward to having more time for her art and embroidery when her secretarial duties come to an end. Ivan spends a lot of time on his computer which is equipped with software which reads the contents of the screen by way of a synthetic voice. He reads the Sydney Morning Herald off the Net almost every day, is a member of several mailing

lists and often reads or downloads other material of interest. In fact he does not have the time to read all the books and listen to all the classical music he should like to. Life is full and busy for both of them.