

MILDRED DAVEY

(née BOBBY)

THE BEGINNING OF THIS FAMILY STORY

MAYFIELD NEWCASTLE

My father and mother lived in their own home in Mayfield. The house had been built by my father, helped by his brother-in-law, Uncle Joe Taylor. With my family in the house was a two year old boy, Eric George, my brother. All appeared happy when a girl was born, on 22nd July, 1907. I was that girl, Mildred May. The aunties and Grandma and Grandad were happy.



I don't remember anything about the house at Mayfield, but when quite young we moved to a convict-built house in Noster Place, Wolfe Street, Newcastle. My two aunts, Lottie May and Mildred Ethel built a two storey house named Dartford there in later years. I have a vague impression in my mind of walking down a slope with big ferns growing at the side, steps to go down to my grandparents house at 25 Perkin Street, Newcastle. Quite soon we moved to Stockton, across the river from Newcastle. My father had to go to Stockton because he was in charge of the shop there. I have a few remembrances of Stockton.

- ◆ In the park near our home was a place for babies to sit. It was a peculiar four-square box at a height. A parent would put the baby in, one who could sit up, then fasten in the baby so that it could not fall. Then the baby would be pushed around, quite safely.
- ◆ The most important event to me was that on a certain day my grandfather and grandmother walked up the road pushing a pram. Yes, it was for me for my 4th birthday and I loved it. I already had a few dolls to put into it.
- ◆ Someone, probably grandfather, brought a magic lantern and showed us pictures in an upstairs room which was probably an attic.
- ◆ My brother, Eric, called out in the middle of the night, "There's a cat in the house". In the morning we discovered we had a new sister, Dorothy Mavis, born 14th August, 1911.



With that introduction of myself I must go back to the story of how my father and mother were married.

My father was born in England, in London. He had an older sister, Catherine and two younger sisters, May and Ethel. They came to Australia by ship. I have no details of their trip but they finished by coming to Newcastle. My father was about 7 or 8.

Soon afterwards, while still at school, business became very poor and the Boddy family were very poor. My father used to help a baker by delivering bread to people. For this he took home one loaf of bread and this was the dinner for the family.

Grandfather had a camera, probably a small one and when things got better he and his wife, would drive up the Newcastle Valley and take photos of people. He would finish off the pictures and sell them to the folk.

Things became better and easier for the family. When he finished school, no high schools at that time, my father began to work in a shop and living was easier.

The family members were Christians and they went to church. Katy (Catherine) was a marvellous pianist and even when she was young she played the organ on the ship when they were coming to Australia.

All her life she played the organ and piano and taught music. Years later she taught me.

The family went to the Newcastle Baptist Tabernacle, a beautiful two storey building. It is still there (1995). I think my father and mother met at this church. They were married at Tighes Hill, at the home of Grandma Reavly, my mother's mother.

At one special church service someone refused to let Auntie Katie play the piano (maybe the organ) when she thought she should. I remember seeing

Grandma, Aunties May and Ethel, Auntie Kate walk out of the church. I suppose Auntie Kate's husband, Uncle Ernie went too and Uncle Arthur would have been there at that time. After this they all went to St Andrew's Presbyterian church across the road but my family went to Islington Baptist Church.

RETURN TO EARLY DAYS

After Stockton we moved to Denison Street, Hamilton. My father was in charge of a shop. There was a small patch of green grass between the shop and the house. Dad had horses in a paddock behind the shop and house. The toilet was in a corner of this paddock. Unfortunately for me, I was frightened of the horses and hated to have to go to the toilet. Years later the Hamilton Methodist Church was built on this site. I think Geoff, our baby brother, must have arrived at this time. He was born on 20.11.1912 and died on 27.10.1989.

I remember we used to have a bath in a tub in front of the kitchen fire (coal) on Saturday nights. I think the water was heated in the copper. During this period a terrible thing happened - a fire burnt down the hotel diagonally opposite to the shop. It was a terrifying sight to see in the night. Ever afterwards I said in my prayers, "Please don't let the house burn down tonight".

Another memory is of being sick in bed and seeing the lamp-lighter going along the street lighting the street lamps. I used to get bronchitis each winter and once or twice, pneumonia, but I survived.

Another exciting thing happened while we were in Denison Street. Geoff, my young brother, had diphtheria which was a killer disease at that time. My parents took him to the hospital in a cab pulled by a horse. An up to

date doctor treated him and we three other children had to go into the hospital and be immunised. This was a very new business in health matters so we must have been some of the earliest children to experience such a thing. Anyway none of us caught diphtheria.



SCHOOL

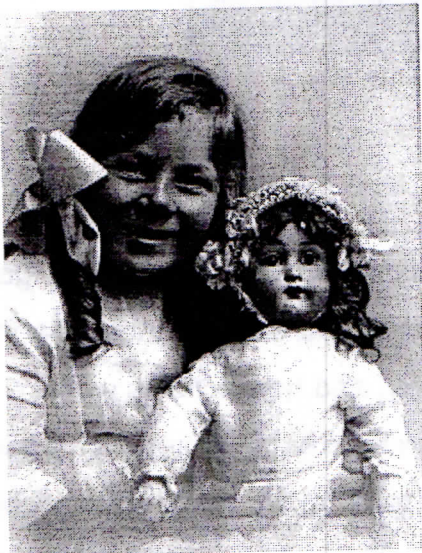
I don't remember much about life in Hamilton but when I began to go to school everything was wonderful. Our teacher had come to Australia from England and she told us all about that country, and how schools were.

The only exact memory I have was when the teacher promised us a special play, and we, a very large group, were told to be quiet, no speaking, but to do whatever she had told us to do. No speaking. Then she disappeared.

What would you have done then? What I did, talk to the nearest person. I guess we all did it. Then the teacher returned. She had been watching us from another room. I don't remember if she used the stick or whether I was not allowed to be an actress, but I cried and that's all I remember in the infants.

I don't remember anything about 3rd class in the Girls School but remember Miss Wild in 4th class.

I loved her even though she made everyone work and be quiet. Also some time through the year I became friendly with Phyllis Ball one of the daughters of the Minister and Mrs Ball as we had gone to Islington church and lived in our own house. I remember how we made a house up against the fowl yard. Phyllis's father made a name MILLIS for the house, printed in colour on a piece of wood. Wasn't that interesting. MIL stood for Mildred and LIS for Phyllis. In the year 1944 when I met Phyllis in Sydney she didn't remember our house. I forgot to ask her if she remembered me cutting my foot. She was allowed to stay with us and she pushed me around in the baby's pusher. I forgot to mention or didn't think of it myself that that left toe has never grown properly since it was hurt.



Dad, of course, managed another shop in Wickham. We moved back to Thomas Street, Mayfield. Here we enjoyed an outdoor life as we had a big paddock next to the house. There was a large pepper tree and a big chook yard, a vegie garden then a big paddock for the horse, Nugget, which Dad bought at this time. We used to drive down to church in the sulky, one seat plus a small seat where the children sat with their

backs to the horse. My mother was very kind to me. She allowed Phyllis to stay at our place at various times. Unfortunately Mr and Mrs Bull and the six children went to Sydney to live and Phyllis and I used to write and send long letters. I stayed at their place and Phyllis came back to Newcastle and stayed with us. However, both of us going to high school and plenty to do, our friendship became almost finished.

At first I was in 4th class with a lovely lady as teacher. This was in a room outside and then in 5th class I had a man who used to use the stick but I liked him. In 6th class I was in 6A boys and girls together in Mayfield school. The Head Master taught us in a large room with a large number of boys and girls.

My sister, who is four years younger than I am was in a lower class. My young brother, Geoff, was a year behind. He was very naughty. Mother would dress him (or see to it) in nice clothes, socks and shoes (or boots) and away he'd go. However someone told Mother that when he got to the school gate he sat down and pulled off his shoes and socks and went bare-footed. I can't remember what happened to him but he probably got out of trouble. He was the baby - we all loved him.

When the first day of school began in the New Year I set off to school. Another girl saw me and said "You don't go to Mayfield School now, you go to Cooks Hill. So back to Mum I went, collected a few things and went to Cooks Hill.



HIGH SCHOOL

I suppose studying in High School is more or less similar at all times. I enjoyed my five years in high school. In 5th year we were in two sections of a wooden building. I chose my seat next to a window. In front of it there were a few houses, all hilly and away in the distance was the Pacific Ocean, showing its water pushing to some heights of trees. I loved that view. (As I write this in March 1995, I have three windows each showing flowing water. My favourite is the centre one which I can see while I am sitting on a comfortable chair.)

For school sport in winter I played hockey at the Newcastle Showground. I walked home after hockey. Mum always had a baked custard ready for me to eat avidly to help replace the energy I'd used playing hockey. In summer there was swimming, first at the Bogey Hole, cut out of rock by convicts, later at the new Newcastle Baths at the other end of the beach.

In 5th year we had less than 50 students, both male and female. Though I wasn't a marvellous student I enjoyed myself, passed to go to Sydney to become a teacher.

After we finished the exams a few of us went to the boat shed at the lake to have a relaxing time.

CHURCH

My earliest memory, about 1909 when I was 2, is of being in church. At a certain time my brother and I would be put along the seat with a cushion under our heads and we were supposed to go to sleep.



All the time we were lying down a loud voice thundered out words. While I lay on the seat and looked upward I saw stars, not real ones but hundreds of painted stars on the ceiling. I can see them in my mind's eye now.

Years later I found out that the church was Newcastle Baptist Tabernacle, still a majestic building, built on the side of a slight hill, with a large hall and smaller rooms underneath.

About the turn of the century or maybe early in the 20th century the minister was Rev Seth Jones, a Welshman, much loved by his people. My mother told me that soon after I was born Rev Seth Jones prayed for me during the service. (This would be a prelude to the modern dedication service.) Rev Seth Jones died unexpectedly and the church called his brother, Rev Mona Jones, to be their minister. His was the loud voice I heard as I went to sleep in the pew, a voice totally different from his brother's. The obelisk the church set up for the Rev S Jones can be seen in Sandgate cemetery, Newcastle.

I had some kind, patient and good Sunday School teachers. Miss Lil Collins was one. She was very fat and sick. She had to stop coming to church and stayed in bed. Mum used to take me to visit her but I wasn't keen on this.

FIRST ROMANCE

Alan asked if I would go for a drive with him. I asked Mum and she said "yes" so off I went. Jack and someone were in the back seat. We went near Merewether. I was still in school of course I told the girls who thought

it was very funny. Later on when I lived with Auntie Ada and he was in the army (Eric was there too) Alan arranged to meet me on the railway station. He got out of the train to help me in, very smart in his army clothes and carrying an enormous bag of lollies. (Eric told me later that Alan had bought it from the soldier who won it). Well I was embarrassed but went along. We walked round the place then I saw a ladies toilet and thought I can't go in here so suggested we go to Auntie Ada's which we did. After Auntie Ada's I walked up with him to catch the tram. He said he was sorry for me to have to live there. Seeing that I thought everything was lovely, I was amazed.

One other time he came to our place in Newcastle. I think it was my birthday. The Aunties and Grandma were there and after the "eats" we sat and talked. I remember that he thought that was wonderful. At his place the mother and father and sister just ate the food and walked away.

Well I can't remember times but it was a Sunday night. Dorothy, another girl and I were walking home from church. We saw the car stop on the other side of the road. Alan got out and walked across the road, stood in front of me and "Are you going to marry me?" I said "no" and I think he just crossed back and they drove off. He was married a few months after that.

The next time I saw him was outside the Baptist Church at Punchbowl. He was a minister by then and was giving a special account of money that was needed. I thought to myself he won't see me. However, Alan came out of the church and walked straight through the folk and came to talk to me. Stan was in another part of the church talking to other folk. I never saw Alan again.

LAKE MACQUARIE

Around the time we were living in Mayfield, Dad rented a block of land at Pelican, on the channel leading from the lake to Swansea and the ocean. I think he paid one pound (twenty shillings) per year for this. He built one shed, with home-made double bunks for beds, an open fire with oven at the side. Later on, he added a lean-to shed to provide more space.

Each school holiday we would go to the Lake and enjoy the water and free spacious living in the outdoors. Dad would stay in town and return each week-end with supplies in the sulky. If we ran out of food before he returned Mum would cook fried scones which we would eat with Golden Syrup which we'd take out in 7lb tins. While Dad was there he would be fishing, all day sometimes. Then Mum would cook the fish, though we got tired of eating fish. We had lots of visitors at the Lake and stayed there till 1921, when Dad bought a block at Coal Point. It had a water frontage too and went back to the road - about 900 ft.

At first we had two sheds on the waterfront level but later Dad, Uncle Joe Taylor and Arthur Gardner, my cousin, Emily Taylor's husband, built a cottage. They really re-erected the cottage which was pulled down next door to us.

RELATIVES

Grandfather Boddy and Grandfather Reavley, my mother's step-father had died about 1913. So in our family we had Dad, Mum, Eric, myself, Dorothy and Geoff. Then there were:- Grandma Boddy, (Sarah Blackburn) who talked to us and played games eg flicking a piece of bread to the top of a slate, telling us about living in a three storey house in Ramsgate, near the

waterfront and climbing up three flights of stairs. She was a good cook too. They had a very long table in the dining room which could seat a dozen people. The maid had to iron the enormous tablecloths. We had this table in the lake house for years.

Auntie Katie married Ernest Bailey. She and Uncle Ernie were always getting up concerts. They also organised cantatas. Uncle Ernie sang funny songs. In fact he thought he was a funny man. Auntie Kate was a great knitter and had a huge collection of books. They lived at 2 Samdon Street, Hamilton.



My Aunties May and Ethel. I put them together because they worked together, running the photography business, when Grandfather died. They did this for at least 50 years. One manager of BHP, an American, used to get the aunties to develop and print his films when he opened the steelworks - about 1919. After he returned to USA he continued to send his photography work to the aunties.

Auntie May used to love to brush our hair (mine and Dorothy's), used to wash our hands with scented soap and also make clothes for us. Incidentally the aunties paid for me to have elocution lessons for some years from Miss Beatrice Welsh, later near my high school days (1921 - 1924) they paid for me to have piano lessons from Mr George H Young.

When I was about 8 I played the piano while Auntie Ethel played the cello. We played Schubert's Cradle Song. This was the beginning of my career (?) as an accompanist and I've been doing it ever since.

Uncle Arthur was the youngest of the Boddy family. He was 14 years younger than Dad and 14 years older than I was. He gave me his old tennis racquet when I began to play tennis about 1923. (No one coached us). Someone would say "Hit the ball across the net to the person standing there" and we did. In 1924 when I was sitting for the Leaving Certificate I used to get up at 5am cycle to South Hamilton and have a few games before riding home, having breakfast and then off to school. Uncle Arthur married Essie Hutchinson in 1919 when I was attending Cook's Hill School. Dorothy was their flower girl and wore a pink bow on her hair.

My mothers' family; Grandma Reavley was a rather stern lady. Both grandmas always wore black dresses. Grandma Reavley lived at 82 Henry Street, Tighe's Hill with her son, Uncle Eddie. His twin, Auntie Sadie, lived in Melbourne, with her husband, Uncle Will Pater and their son, Jack.

Grandma Reavley always had an apple or a rhubarb pie for lunch on Sundays. When we lived at Mayfield Dorothy and I took turns in going to Grandma's for lunch on Sundays. She always had the Salvation Army paper, the War Cry, and I used to sit in her rocking chair and read it. She used to make a lemon cordial and we were allowed to add water and have

a drink of this delicious cordial. The water came from a well at the back of the house and was always cold. The well is still there but covered over under the kitchen. Grandfather Reavley built the house for Grandma when the Cousins family arrived from Melbourne. Mr Cousin was an executive of Kitchen's Soap factory in Mayfield East - not there now - but Kitchen's turned into Levers.

Grandma Reavley had funny sayings eg "You need some treacle on your dress, my girl" when my legs were longer and my dress was above my knees.

TEACHING

The one and only study for those who wanted to become teachers was in Sydney. We were given 10/- a week. Because I went to live with Aunty Ada she only took 10/- a month from me as she did from her daughters. Merle and others had to pay more than what they were given for their rooms. I was very fortunate.

Freda lived in the next suburb. I paid 1p on the tram to the station. She had a special pass in the railway. We changed at Sydney station and took a train 1p to college. Freda's cousin, a boy, took her to a tennis court so I went too. We had a lovely time at tennis. Each Saturday night we went to the pictures a few miles away. We never sat with the boys but we always walked home with them - quite a long walk, there and back, after playing tennis.

We were two years in Sydney then Freda was sent to her suburb, West Wallsend and I went to Waratah for two months, a very large room and a senior teacher too.

After two months I was sent to a new school Mayfield West and stayed there for two months, then to Warialda miles away in the North West.

About this time I had a letter from an old friend, Phyllis Ball telling me she was going to be married to a young man, Reg. She asked me if I'd be her (one and only) bridesmaid. Of course I said "Yes" but cannot remember how I was dressed, who made the dress etc. It was a pretty long dress and I had a soft hat too.

I was the only bridesmaid and Reg's brother was to be Best Man. Well everything progressed but I found the Best Man took a great interest to me. I returned to Newcastle in the side car of his motor bike. I don't remember much details. He stayed at our place for a few days then returned to Sydney to his work somewhere near the Darling River. He had been away as a sailor for some years.

I had a letter from him and sometime later he came back to Sydney and to Newcastle. I can't remember all the details of meetings between us but after a year or two the friendship ceased. Soon after that I had the notice to go to Warialda. Warialda was a very small place, small school, four teachers at the time, one other came later.

To me it was a dreary place. There wasn't much to do. I read books, played the piano, also played the organ at the Presbyterian Church, got a Sunday School group and taught them, that's about all. Later at Warialda we moved down into the town (extremely small).

Every year we had a different headmaster and the third one was the best. During the third year I went to a dance at the next tiny town. I had no idea about dancing but stood up with a boy. To my surprise he turned out to have lived in Newcastle and had been to Islington Church. That was enough. We talked the next part of the night together. He worked at the station. After this he used to come in to Warialda on his bike pushing it on

the railway line. In the beginning he would get on a machine on the railway lines and pushed something to and fro and he would get to the station four or five miles from Warialda and then ride his bike the rest of the way. Later on he bought a powerful bike and rode it to Warialda. I can't remember all the details but towards the end of my third year he was sent to a different place.

I forgot to tell you that Geoff and I bought a car between us, it cost just 100 pounds. When I was in Warialda I had the car for three months, then Geoff would have it. My class thought I was someone special because I not only could drive a car but owned one. When Geoff had the car I used to come home in the railway carriage. That meant I got out about 3.00am. There was always someone to take me home - Dad or Geoff. After a sleep and breakfast someone would take me into the beach to have a good look at the sea.

Is it any wonder that now in my 89th year I love to look at the river in front of the house. When it came time for the end of the three years at Warialda Geoff came up on a Friday and we crammed all my books etc into the car and we left as soon as school finished. We arrived at our family place about when the sun was rising.

I did another year at least at Mayfield West. About March or May I had word to go to Lakemba School. The Inspector at Mayfield West told me not to hurry down to Lakemba. In fact he inspected me, and later I found a good result of the inspection came along.

I went to Lakemba Girls and the dear old pet Miss Smith, Head Mistress, sent me over to the Senior Master. He said I should have been there days before but I told him I had to have my inspection. It was a large school, more than eight classes in the girls section. There was a huge infants and a boys school. I had 5th class - very nice girls. One day at lunch time one

of my girls went to buy her dinner. There was always a teacher on the boys' side of the road. My girl had to cross over to buy whatever it was for lunch. The boys' teacher at the boys gate chipped my girl for something or other. I immediately wrote him a nasty note, including the wrong spelling for his name. He sent one back and that was that, my first meeting with Stanley Edward Howell Davey.

After a year Freda came down to Lakemba and we were very happy. She discovered that there was a teachers tennis game after school and she and I joined it. I can't remember how long it was but I found one of the men was interested in me. Time went on and I was invited to go home with him (Stanley Edward Davey) for tea. Our friendship increased and at the end of the year I was given a golden ring on the 3rd finger of my left hand. The wedding was at the Islington Baptist Church which my family and I had attended for many years. Stan's sister Mabel was my bridesmaid. Dad lent me his car and we drove to the lake for the honeymoon (a week). On the Sunday I cooked a hot dinner. Who should turn up but Uncle Ernie (Aunty Katie's husband). Stan had two exams to take during the week and also we played tennis with some friends one (or two) afternoons. Once I was married I had to leave teaching. (It is interesting to note that when war broke out I was asked to go back to teach because too many men, including my husband, enlisted.)

MARRIED LIFE

We lived in Lakemba. Stan had always said he wanted to leave Lakemba if he could.

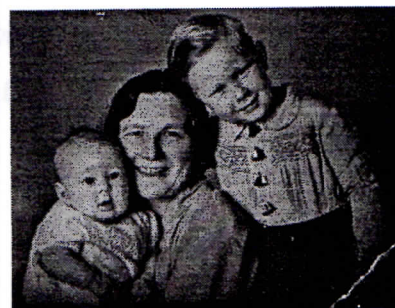
However his parents wanted to be closer to town so that they could play chess in the city and gave the house to us - it still needed a lot of money to actually own the house. We were very happy living at that house.

Our first baby died and we were very sorry about that. I blamed our doctor. Looking back and after four healthy children I blame the doctor because he kept telling me that having a baby was a perfectly natural thing, however our baby died.



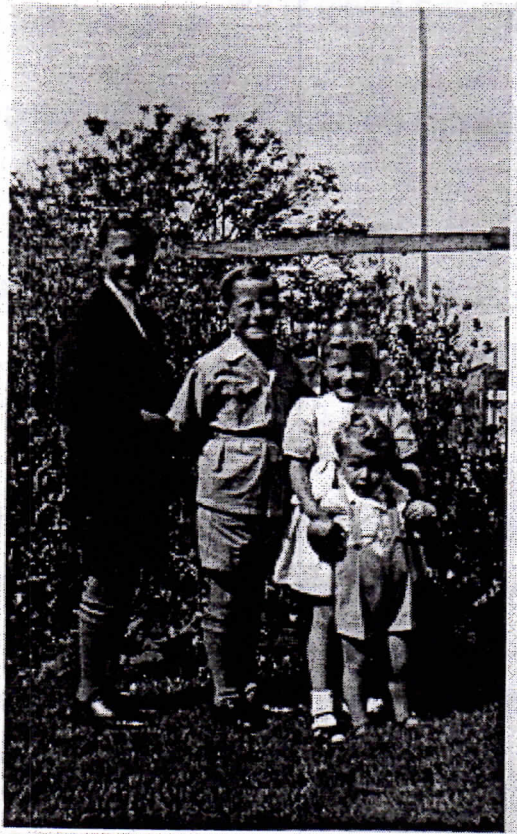
Soon after, the 2nd World War broke out overseas. One weekend we went to Newcastle and I, with Peter our son, stayed to go to a special Ladies Meeting at the church on the Monday night. My father minded Peter at home. The next day I took Peter home by train. Stan was waiting at the station. I can picture it now, I held Peter and a bag and walked down out of the station. Stan moved to us, took Peter from me and said "I've enlisted". Well I could have screamed or yelled or done nothing. It seemed that another man at school decided to enlist and my husband had to do the same.

Colin and Barbara were born during the war. Actually Stan did not see Barbara until after the war ended. He didn't come till her birthday, in Christmas (1 year old) and she was sick with measles.



Colin was given a dog by his Aunty May. When Colin was in trouble he would take his dog and sit under the house talking to him. "At least you love me, Toby". No wonder Colin finally chose to be a veterinarian.

We had four children.



Peter John	married	Helen
Colin Gordon	married	Lorraine
Barbara May	married	Terry
Nicholls		
Ian Frank	married	Fay

We had friends, Doug and Nell Jones. They had just bought another house on a hill in Punchbowl and persuaded us to buy the one next door. I loved it. We could see for miles to the hills. By the time Frank was in high school we were living in Albany, Western

Australia on the farm, Stan's delight. We all moved to WA except Peter who was working. It was very difficult for me to go away leaving Peter by himself. I used to think it was the hardest thing I had ever done. It was very fortunate that Barbara didn't stay in Sydney as she was thinking of doing. However she came to Albany and after a short time went to work at Borthwicks and met Terence Nicholls. I have a very strong picture in my mind of this bright young man with a smile and bright hair. At the time we didn't have a proper gate and he tore his clothes getting through the gate. His mother mended it for him.

From my point of view I couldn't have found a better young man to take Barbara away from us. It is 1995 I live alone in Gracewood. I not only have Barbara to help me but Terry is a wonderful help to me.

It is interesting as I write in May 1995 that we have a number of young folk.

Peter and Helen have	Philip, Rowena, Paul and Ross
Colin and Lorraine have	Andrew, Nerida (married to Brad) and Rebecca
Barbara and Terry have	Fiona, Tanya and Peter
Frank and Fay have	Timothy and Nicole

Tanya has helped me for three years as she takes me to the shops to buy my Christmas presents. This year, 1995, she has gone to England. However before she left she made two (maybe three) visits to the shops and bought enough presents (with my money of course) for each person. She even covered each parcel with pretty paper, also decorated with coloured ribbon.

I hope Tanya will have a Happy Christmas and be back in Australia for Christmas 1996.

THIS IS MY LIFE



