

## MEMORIES OF JEAN AND ARTHUR HIGGS

Sarah (Sally) Schinckel-Brown:

My earliest memories of Jean and Arthur, or 'Arfy', as Jeannie used to call him...were spending time at their wonderful 'den' of a house in Denistone (a leafy suburb in the northwest area of Sydney) back in the 1960s until they moved to Bayview, a suburb in the northern beaches area of Sydney, in the early 1970s.

My parents were great friends with Jean and Arthur, who were wonderful friends to us particularly after our father passed away very suddenly in 1963.

They had a really interesting A frame holiday house down at Mollymook, a small beach town about 200 kilometres south of Sydney, where we often went for a few days away from Sydney. It was always great fun, picking up driftwood that Jean would turn into a work of art.... Even her occasional baking would turn into some crazy shapes or animals.

Ant and I often spent time at their wonderfully eclectic home, both playing with clay in Jean's studio or sometimes being allowed into 'Arfy's' study... The house was very colourful, full of pots, macramé and craft work of all kinds, Jean also dabbled in painting, both oils and watercolours.... I think Jean was a classic example of a latter day hippy, being a little younger than Arthur.

Jean's studio was always a very exciting place to be apart from having two pottery wheels 'Arfy' also built her an enormous kiln that gave her the ability to fire large quantities of pots in one firing. When they moved from Denistone to Bayview I think she had 2 kilns.

Arthur always had his own study for work and it was just as exciting to go into his study as it was to go into Jeans studio... they were 2 of the most interesting people I have ever known.

I last saw Jean back in 2004/5, when she was still as busy as ever, running around her Bayview home in her leopard skin jumpsuit (she was very fond of animal prints). She did become rather forgetful but always remembered me, for which I am very grateful.

Antony Schinckel:

As my sister said, we spent many wonderful times with Jean and Arthur Higgs in the 1960's. Jean excelled at keeping us busy and distracted with fun activities, usually involving our youthful attempts at emulating her superb skill with clay, but also other artistic endeavours. I have a number of pots I made in her studios – but far more highly valued by me are the wonderful pieces of pottery Jeanie made and gave me. These are

truly exceptional instances of the potter's art – while I have always been impressed with them, I certainly had no idea at the time of the level and recognition Jeanie achieved.

Vacations with them at Mollymook were exciting experiences, with beach fishing a key part of Arthur's regime. I don't think I ever caught anything worth keeping, but it was fun to try. The area was also rich in clays, and all trips there required spending some time driving all over the area, digging up clays of astoundingly different colours, carefully wrapping them in plastic, and filling the boot of Arthur's car.

Arthur was more reserved but was a gentle man and not at all intimidating. I was only vaguely aware of his role at what was then CSIRO's Division of Radiophysics, but knew it was important. His home studio contained aspects of his work life – mixed with some of his hobbies which he was passionate about. In particular he was an avid ham radio operator (VK2GY). Listening to him communicate with other operators around the world was a real thrill – even in the 1960's when international phone calls were possible (albeit rare and expensive), the aura surrounding such long distance communications, especially when carried out by such impressive-looking equipment, and the associated processes left a mystical feeling – the people at the other end seemed so exotic, whether they were in the South of France – or Detroit or Sheffield.

During their time in Bayview I became more appreciative of Arthur's role in radio-astronomy – and specifically within CSIRO's Radiophysics. Rarely from Arthur directly, who was reserved and never trumpeted his own achievements. But Jean would frequently mention key things he had done that had a substantial impact in the development of radio-astronomy in Australia, and Arthur could reminisce about them – though always in an understated way, minimising his role. It's only recently that I have discovered how important he was to the early days of radioastronomy, including his influence in getting The Dish built at Parkes.

Arthur died in 1991. We kept in touch with Jeanie, with frequent visits to her in their Bayview home. Here I met Arthur's son by his first wife, Michael, who lived in Carmel California. My family visited Michael in Carmel a number of times in the early-mid 2000's and had many enjoyable times reminiscing about Arthur and Jean.