

Florrie and Gar Begbie - My Grandparents, A Big Influence

A short story by Anne Paul.

Florence and Garfield, known as Florrie and Gar were a very big part of my life growing up. They were next door neighbours as teenagers and the story goes my two great grandmothers were talking over the fence and Gar's mother said 'is that your daughter who plays the piano?' It was, so then she said 'Garfield is a singer'. Perhaps she could play for him. She did and they made it a permanent arrangement, attending eisteddfods and even making a 78 record together. The record is now in the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra.

From not long after I was born in 1948 until late in 1954, when we moved to Canberra, they spent the summers in Sydney and the winters in Buderim Queensland. I had holidays there with Mum and my brother in 1953 and 54. They moved to Canberra a couple of years after we did and built their house in Deakin where they lived until Grandma died in 1974.

I spent a lot of time at their house growing up and she looked after me when I was off school sick. Grandma made me custard puffs and they introduced me to avocados when I was four and they were not available south of Queensland - she would bring them to me in her suitcase on the plane. Grandpa taught me to play chess. They took me to the movies and agricultural shows around the region. Grandma told me stories she made up about the adventures of Booke the blue tongue lizard and stories about Mum, including all the naughty things she did when she was a child.

Florrie and Gar did the Grand tour of Europe when Mum was 7 leaving her in the capable care of her Auntie Mary (Harriet Mary Begbie) and Aunt Eva (Caroline Evelyn Muriel Begbie). Aunt Nan (Elsie Kathleen Begbie, known as Lillah by her sisters - I don't know why) also lived in my grandparents' house at Lane Cove.

Post Card from Grandma to Mum 3 July 1929:



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