

Place : Southport Stories
Theme : History and Development – Pioneers, Identities and Family Stories
Author : Karen Wright

My descendants started a lot of the Gold Coast history – mainly Southport – to which I have many photos. My descendants had two of the first boarding houses and one worked at Chelmsford boarding house which sadly burned down. Also starting the first Masons Club and the first Salvation Army and many more – we have parks and streets named in our honour.

I am a descendant from the Lentz, Miethke, Ryder, Hart, Pohlman, Zimmerman, Sommer, Lightbody etc. Families – so as you can see being around this long I am nearly related to everyone in Southport!! I often see my family photos in the Bulletin and Sun papers – also when they have heritage photos in shopping centres I see all my relatives.

One of the Sommer's was buried at the Southport cemetery in the year 1850 – in fact a lot of my family is there. I also have many stories of Southport and the Gold Coast passed down to me, but never seem to get the time to put pen to paper.

My husband's family has also resided at Southport for many generations. Even in my collection of photos and newspaper clippings is a photo of my family building infrastructure of Nerang and Scarborough Streets. The first pavilion at Main beach for the Southport Life Savers was built by my Uncle Bill Ryder and still to this day has his name in the roof.

Another relative of mine that I am proud of is Cameron Hart – who organises the gold coast triathlon. So as you can see both my husband and I are very happy we were born at Southport Hospital - also built by my uncle and grandfather.

We love Southport. Even my daughters partner of many years is another family that has lived in Southport for many generations – so you can see why we think we own this town.



Chelmsford Guesthouse, circa 1912
Image courtesy of Gold Coast City Council Local Studies Library



Construction of Southport's first permanent seawall 1902
Image courtesy of Gold Coast City Council Local Studies Library

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Author : Jennifer Zerna

I arrived on the Gold Coast in 1954 and even then it had began to make a name for itself as really something great. It was not called the Gold Coast as I recollect and Surfers Paradise is where my parents settled with five children. I remember being quite excited as all of my school friends who I left behind in Sydney told me how lucky I was to be going to this special place of sun and fun. As I grew into my teens I remember this man down the beach at Surfers Paradise that used to spray you with this mutton oil so that you could burn yourself stupid.

We initially lived in Ferny Avenue in a little old house until we relocated to Goat Island which is now called Chevron Island.

There was a road into Goat Island which my father drove on every day to reach his place of work which was Hamilton

Heights. He was employed from Sydney to develop and sell this subdivision. My sister and I enrolled in the Surfers Paradise school and my second oldest brother gained employment at Ivor's Barber shop in Surfers Paradise and continued to work in Surfers as a Barber until the end of 2008. Rather than having to be driven right around through Southport to work and school we rowed a boat back and forth each day. This could become quite scary when we had cyclonic weather and the boat actually tipped one day when my brother was in it but he managed to make it safely to shore. One of my most vivid recollections of Goat Island was how Dad used to burn cow dung in a bucket and walk through the house with it to get rid of the mosquitoes.

After a few years when the development of Hamilton Heights was completed and sold my father became licensee of The Southport Hotel which eventually became the site of Sundale. Our family lived on site at the Hotel and I was too young to be allowed into



Southport Hotel, circa 1950
Image courtesy of Gold Coast City Council Local Studies Library

the hotel premises but I remember Dad telling me about this young band that played there and how good they were. This band is now the BG's. While we were living at the Southport Hotel, we would walk across the Jubilee Bridge bare footed and constantly get splinters in our feet from the bridge itself, and sometimes these splinters were so big they had to be surgically removed.

During the Southport Hotel days, my parents purchased a house at 98 Pohlman Street which has since been developed into Units. Anyway we all relocated to Pohlman Street and during this time Bob Radcliff, as my father was known, and Ned Twohill founded the Southport Pony Club at Owen Park and dad became the charter president. During our teenage years in Southport we rode horses through the cemetery to go on cross country rides, frequented the Pier Picture Theatre on a Saturday Night and it was quite an event to catch the train each year to the Brisbane Show from Southport. The Spring Festival was a yearly event when great effort was put into decorating trucks, cars and floats and the entrants in the Miss Spring Festival were transported through the streets lined with excited people.

In 1964 Bob took over the management of the Upper Coomera Pub as it was then called. After a 2 year stint in the Pub dad took over the lease of the Mobil Weighbridge Service Station at Coomera. While he was leasing this Service Station a man called John purchased some land beside him and began what he reckoned would be an enormous theme park. He did things very gradually at first and quite a few people thought he was dreaming and what a dream Dreamworld.

In 1972 Bob moved to Gilston and in 1973 started a business in Nerang called the Nerang Saddlery. He became the charter President of Nerang Lions and watched Nerang move gradually from a little country town to what it is now.

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