

CHAPTER 1 — 1976–1981: The Early Years – *Pre-editor draft attached*

- Childhood in Blair Athol
- The book & stamp shop
- Family struggles and early identity
- Seeds of anger, ambition, and escape

CHAPTER 2 — 1981–1983: The Video Shop - *Pre-editor draft attached*

- The Video Shop: Version 1
- Teenager years in the hood
- VHS culture and the first taste of responsibility

CHAPTER 3 — 1984–1985: SDR and the Band Years

- The Video Shop: Version 2
- SDR and the rise of band life
- First love / Darker years — fighting the demons

CHAPTER 4 — 1986–1988: FIREPOWER and COBRA

- The Video Shop: Version 3
- Cobra and the wild era
- Music, mateship, chaos

CHAPTER 5 — 1989–1995: Drugs and Love

- The Video Shop: Version 3 (continued)
- Formation of FIREPOWER
- Addiction, survival, and finding my soulmate

CHAPTER 6 — 1996–2012: Kitty and the Port Markets

- The Video Shop: Version 3 — VHS to DVDs
- The end of the shop and the next chapter / Port Markets era
- Film clips, band changes, and the end of FIREPOWER
- Technology shifts and the rise of social media
- Birth of my son
- Dad's cancer — the beginning of the hardest chapter

CHAPTER 7 — 2012–2025: The Later Years

- A new direction in music
- Dad's retirement and decline
- Becoming a father — learning what mine never taught me

CHAPTER 8 — Lifetime in a Heartbeat

- Closing reflections
- Dad, legacy, and the philosophical outro



DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED DAD Neville “Nifty” Newton.

**The Video Shop – anger, drugs and rock n’ roll
written by Craig Newton in December of 2024 during my Christmas holidays,
several months after the passing of my beloved father. I poured my heart out for 3
weeks solid following years of the idea brewing in my head.**

NO AI was used in the writing of this memoir.

. References have been taken from Newton Family Roots album, Volume 1 2022 by
Neville Newton and Newton Family Roots Interview 2024 produced by Craig Newton.
Newton family Roots, Volume 1 Researched and Compiled by Neville Newton.

- . Pop Culture sub sections have been referenced from ChatGBT then cross referenced through Google.
 - . Artwork & blurbs written with AI review & assistance.
- . Special thanks to my brother Paul Newton for Video movies history and references.
- . Thank you to my beautiful family for your support and tolerating my many moods.
 - . I Love you Mum, Dad, Paul and Scott.
- . While this book is dedicated to my beloved dad Neville Newton and Mum Vicki Newton, I also
want to dedicate it to my adorable son Jet Newton, wishing a healthy and happy future for you.

CREDITS

**Back inset cover of COBRA photo by Mat Way
To all my extended family & muso mates (*you know who you are*) – ON YA & CHEERS!**

COPYWRITE Craig Newton 2024.

Introduction

There's a strange clarity that comes when life forces you to stop.

For me, it happened in a hospital bed — the first time in my life I wasn't in control, couldn't outrun my thoughts, couldn't distract myself with work, music, or chaos. I lay there staring at the ceiling, wondering how the hell I'd ended up in that room, in that moment, with nothing but time and memories pressing down on me.

And then came Dad's final week.

The fall. The ambulance. The cold tiles. The quiet fear in his voice when he said, "Mate... I think I need some help."

Caring for him for seven years changed me more than any band, any drug, any fight, any heartbreak. It stripped me back. It made me look at who I was, who I'd been, and who I still wanted to be.

This book is the journey back through all of it — the early years in Blair Athol, the birth of the video-shop era, the bands, the addictions, the loves, the losses, the markets, the mistakes, the triumphs, and the moments that still echo.

It's not a story about perfection. It's a story about survival. About family. About the things we carry and the things we let go.

If you've ever felt lost, angry, hopeful, broken, inspired, or stuck between who you were and who you want to be — then maybe you'll find a piece of yourself somewhere in these pages.

This is my journey. This is Nifty's legacy. And this is the truth as I lived it.

INTRO – THE HOSPITAL – PRESENT DAY Dads final week

Wednesday 2am (current)

2am on a cold winters morning, it was a Wednesday...

THUMP!

Are you alright dad???

Dad replied, "No mate, I think I need some help...."

They were the words that lead to the most emotional week of my life...

I live at home with Dad, I have been his carer for the last 7 years.

I rushed out into his room; he was helplessly laying on the cold tiled floor unable to get himself up or move. I tried in vain for a few minutes to lift him up with no avail, I ran and grabbed a pillow and some blankets to make Dad as comfortable as possible as it was the dead of winter. I tried several times to contact my brother on the phone for assistance but couldn't get through to him.

I was contemplating the inevitable question "should I ring an ambulance, Dad?" ...

Because he had been battling cancer and a myriad of other illnesses for the last thirteen years, we were both numb at the prospect... if he went to hospital (this time) it would probably mean he would not be coming back home again – ever!

A sobering decision needed to be made.

Ironically it was exactly one year to the day since he had his last fall, and I had to call an Ambulance to take him to the hospital.

I dialled emergency services, they took all the details, then we waited an agonising ninety minutes for assistance. While waiting I was trying my best to comfort Dad and keep him company, I knew I also had to open the front gates and move cars around to make way as in the past it has been a difficult task getting Dad out of the property for the emergency services.

I rushed back inside and coerced the dogs outside (they were in great distress knowing something was wrong with their best mate Nifty).

The ambulance arrived and two highly skilled female paramedics entered our house; they began to assess Dad and go through a long list of questions and assessing his medical and medicine history which was extremely complex.

Once they had assessed the situation, they began to set up a device that would lift Dad up off the ground so he could be placed into a chair to see what the next move would be to get him to hospital, following thirty minutes of intense probing they manoeuvred him through his room and out the front door along the porch and to the driveway where he was placed into the Ambulance bed and loaded up, I gave him the thumbs up as I had several times before in this exact situation and the Paramedics closed the doors and notified me I would receive a call to let me know which hospital they were taking Dad to, as the sadness set in, I had a sinking feeling this would be the last time I would see him here at home.

It was 4am by now so I showered, fed the dogs and headed to work to tidy up some loose ends as I knew once I found out where they had sent Dad, I would not be capable of working for some time.

I arrived at the hospital at 7am and my brother Scott was already there, they had loaded Dad into a ward in emergency, it was noisy and an extremely upsetting setting with patients yelling, moaning in pain, I distinctly remember a drug addict screaming at staff, he had at least eight people following him around the ward trying to control him (a myriad of security, nurses and a doctor all tied up on this!), I could hear in the distance an old Italian lady screaming "help, help me, PLEASE HELP ME" , this poor ladies distress and anguish continued throughout the day, progressively getting more desperate, it turns out she was a dementia patient with no family there to assist her. The setting here in emergency was distressing and only meant for a short term stay while assessment is taking place. My brother Scotty left to clean up some loose ends at his work while I stayed with Dad for the day. The noise and constant yelling were beginning to take its toll on not only us, but a few other family members of patients who began to complain about the eight hours of solid screaming from the dementia patient.

Dad was finding it unbearable, his heart rate had been racing for ten to twelve hours by now and the doctors had been trying to slow it down, Dad was too sick to eat any lunch, we sat and we waited together.

I gave Dad a big hug, held his hand and started to reminisce...

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CHAPTER 1 D6– The Early Years 1976-1981

I guess thinking back and reviewing my life, the earliest and most special memory goes back to around 1976 when I was around the age of Six or Seven and spending some quality time with my dad.

For the purpose to this story and to give my dad a sense of character I'm going to refer to him as Nifty (*his nickname for decades has been Nifty Newton because he is so thrifty and entrepreneurial*) ...

Nifty had taken me to a local Stamp and Collectables Expo where he had a stall set up for the weekend selling 2nd hand stamps (*Nifty had collected stamps all his life and had a strong interest in collectables*). This expo was held at our city showgrounds and was a chance for Nifty "to test the water" *selling some of the stamps he had been collecting over the years. It was the school holidays, and dad had taken some time off work at Ansett and gone halves with a work mate to hire a stall at the annual collectables Expo, Nifty was selling stamps, and his work mate had set up a stand selling soft toys and teddy bears.* Apparently, a few other work mates had given Nifty a bit of curry (*criticize / harass*) about his stamp hobby and he was out to prove a point to his workmates, that he could make a go of it...

As it was the school holidays, dad offered me the opportunity to hang with him for a few days and see how I go at selling some stamps, this was a great opportunity to spend some quality time together and to give Mum a break at home as me and my younger brother Paul would argue a bit as most siblings do and the school holidays was no exception! The deal was Nifty gave me a container of recycled one cent and two cent stamps removed from old envelopes to sell, and what I sold for the two days I got to keep, I must admit at the time even with my youthful childlike age I knew I had not much of a chance in making a fair quid but the thought of spending a couple of days with the old man sounded mighty good. It was a fun couple of days. I remember the huge Expo building at our local showgrounds, it was cold as the massive opening in the building allowed our cold Southerly winter winds to rip through the inside of the building, it was ok though as Dad brought a thermos for warm drinks and we were rugged up for the occasion. The first day's trading went by and to Nifties surprise I had done better than him, he had a quiet day and his workmate selling the soft toys razzed up Nifty about his quiet day, but he was keen to come back and make amends on the next day. The second days trading went by and by the end of the it I had made a mighty twelve dollars for both days; Nifty was in disbelief of how well I had done, but to his pleasure he had also cleaned up on the second day doing a good day's trading and making the exercise well worth it.. On the way out I brought my younger brother Paul a teddy with some of my pay and I'm not fully sure, but I think I brought myself something like a toy cap gun and saved the rest of the cash. This was my first taste of the entrepreneurial spirit, and I loved it!

I have lots of positive memories about my early years and spending time with dad, although if I'm going to be brutally honest and delve into what moulded me... the other predominate and one of my earliest memories I have that I can remember, would be at the age of four at Kindy Garden (*known as preschool these days*).

I grew up a bit of a wild child, what moulded me? What lead me here??? I do recall visiting some sort of councillor or physician regularly during my formative years, where I spent time playing with army figures while they asked me questions, "why I do this, why

I do that, and why I react in a certain way to various situations?" I didn't realise until reflecting decades later that I probably has some sort of hypo active personality that more often than not would take control of me, my mind always was always in overdrive. When I had an intense interest in something though, I would put myself under a lot of pressure to focus and achieve at high levels, nothing was done at a small levels when I decided to go for it...it was at the next level persistence, always!

I grew up in a diverse suburban multicultural working class / borderline poverty housing area. Much of the suburbs where I grew up in Blair Athol and Kilburn at the time were SA Housing Trust assisting families in need and a working-class and unemployed workforce, there was a lot of engineering and boiler factories surrounding our suburb and in some sections of our area there were semi-industrial factories that we would venture around and investigate as kids... There were many occasions over the years we would ride the streets and sus out the factories, rail yards and massive stormwater drains that led to the sea. Up the road towards the city was the more upper-class area of Prospect. Our house was a modest size block with a comfortable double brick tiled roof home, this type of dwelling heats up and stays hot in our Mediterranean climate here in Adelaide, see at this point of time we had no air conditioning, only pedestal fans, so summers with heat waves of 40 to 45 degrees for long periods of time could get a tad trying... I remember wetting a flannel and fanning myself with it during long heat wave periods where the house would heat up, but I guess at the time we just dealt with it, occasionally we would sleep outside with the mozzies and our pet dog Woofy that hated people – he would always bite us (*eventually Woofy went missing one day when we were out with Mum...*).

We lived in a simple home with a simple modest lifestyle, there was Dad (*Nifty*) who at the time was working for Ansett Airlines Administration, Mum a dedicated and devoted housewife, and my younger brother Paul who was around two years younger than me. Nifty worked at Ansett in the city, it was an office job, his duties consisted of booking and logistical administration work. Nifty had been at Ansett for years and enjoyed his job, occasionally as a young tacker I would get to go into work with him on a Saturday morning. See for as long as I can remember if I wanted to spend time with Nifty it would be at work, there didn't ever seem to be enough time to spend quality bonding together. See apart from dads full time job, Nifty was always busy with a side hustle, it was very rare to go into work with him, but when the opportunity arose, I jumped at it and it was always enjoyable when I did get to hang out at the office with him.

Before he settled down with Mum, Nifty had a fair side story to his life, he grew up on a farm but never really fitted in or felt welcome from his father or brother who ran it, ultimately, he left his home and family at the tender age of sixteen to move to the city and the huge punt of leaving his family & the country to relocate to the big smoke was well worth it. His mother had helped Nifty land a job with PMG (*the old Postal service*) while he initially boarded with family relatives in Blair Athol. While working at this job, one of his workmates Glen had invited Nifty to a party where he introduced him to a charming young girl by the name of Vicki and they hit it off.

Around this time, Nifty had also homed in on the local sports and became extremely successful playing football for North Adelaide and Cricket for Prospect making it to state level in both teams and for a while captain of the cricket team that played interstate several times for the Postal Institute. Other sports he played during these years included Table Tennis, Tennis & Badminton. Whatever Nifty put his mind to, he

gave 100% commitment and focus which was reflected in his successful sporting years, he thoroughly enjoyed playing sport.

After six years working with PMG and playing local sports, Nifty decided to leave his job and take a year off to travel some of the world with his mates...

This would involve a lengthy cruise ship trip overseas, Nifty and his best mate Jim and a few others ended up away for ten months. The trip would involve them backpacking (*riding much of the way*) and included in Cairo and following some exploring of the pyramids, they began the backpacking portion of the trip and begun riding their way through England, they would attain job in England for two to three months to wait out winter before continuing to explore other parts of Europe including Florence, Italy, Austria, Germany and Rome. They would sometimes survive by eating raw potatoes and onions from farmers paddocks along the way, Nifty did mention to me they had taken a jar of vegemite from Australia along with them on the trip knowing it would help alleviate any home sickness... As the story goes, Nifty had enough of bike punctures and fatigue mid-way through Europe and he ended up throwing his bike off a bridge one day and catching a train for the next portion of the trip, his mate Jim met up with Nifty later in Rome.

Dad always mentioned over time, “that year travelling overseas was the best year of my life”...he really enjoyed the experience.

Apon returning back to Adelaide following his gap year Nifty was initially a little unsettled not enjoying the job he had landed at Farmers Union for six months. Through pure persistence, he eventually secured a job at Ansett Airlines.

During this time Nifty always had a strong entrepreneurial spirit and side hustle on the go.

There is another early memory I recall, a time again when I was very young, we went on a car trip about an hour South of us to pick up a big order of second-hand stamps (*Nifty was a collector and would make money from reselling the stamps*). I remember stopping off at a country bakery and we got a pie each, it was the best damn pie I’ve had in my life, I realise now it wasn’t just the enjoyment of the pie but more so the precious time with Nifty that formed that special memory. I had a real need to bond with Dad (*Nifty*) but unfortunately, he was always working or busy.

Nifty was of the typical male baby boomer generation who would show very little emotions and not communicate his thoughts that often, his early years on the farm growing up with his parents and brother were riddled with loneliness and bullying, isolated and teased by both his brother and his father, Nifties “*escape & pleasure zone*” from the bullying back in those days at the farm was his vegetable garden he would attend to himself. Dad learnt his gardening skills from his Mothers Dad (*on the Dunstan side*), Nifty got on well with his Grandpa and was mentored on how to grow vegetables. He would walk miles to the families adjoining farm property armed with as many gardening tools he was able to carry, then work hard on his little vegetable patch, I recall dad explaining to me about them early days and his disappointment when he would have to let his crop die because of lack of water or another year where they has a locus plague and he lost his entire produce garden, but he persisted and tried the best he could. When he had a bumper crop he would barter or sell produce to his extended family. Grandma (*dads mum*) excelled at sport especially tennis and the sport genes were handed down to Nifty in a big way, Nifty enjoyed and also excelled at sport from a young age starting with country tennis and footy with his nighttime hobby table tennis

allowing a little socialisation then homing in on football and cricket again when he moved to the city. He did tell me some stories of how he was asked to play football at the age of twelve against men in a few country games, in which he found quite intimidating.

Back at home, my Mum (*Vicki*) was a devoted housewife but I'm guessing also thrived for the attention of Nifty who was always busy and focused on work & our finances, Mum also had a troubled childhood growing up in a poverty ridden family with seven siblings and an drunken asshole of a father (*I have no respect for my Papa who misused his children, heavily taxing their incomes from their first jobs so he could use the money for alcohol and gambling*)... Mum would share her room with four sisters and it was two kids per bed.

Nifties side of the family were all country folk with serious work ethic while Mums side were suburban rat bags, her brothers were hard drinking brawlers with serious tempers and a short fuse in any conversation or argument. Mums side of the family (*as we learnt in later years*) was riddled with mental illness and temper issues, so with my parents we had two different sides of the spectrum which I think moulded my personality. All families have skeletons in their closets I guess and mine was definitely no different. My brother Paul and I were close, but I was a real bully during our early years and unfortunately Paul being a few years younger than me coped it big time! I didn't realise at the time as I was too young and naive, but my brother was growing up with serious identity issues, from as very young age he knew he was gay but did not disclose it until his mid to late teens which took its toll on his mental health struggling to be understood.

Back at home I would always enjoy being out in our back yard playing war games with my neighbour's, we would have dirt rock fights throwing small dirt boulders at each other (*I seriously don't endorse this behaviour now in hindsight know someone could have easily lost an eye*), but it was fun at the time, and we lived to see another day. When I was young, I had to be on the go all the time or a deep feeling of boredom and uselessness would sink in, leaving me feeling terribly sad, to keep myself busy I enjoyed playing actively out in our fair size back yard. We had a nice size suburban back yard that featured a hills hoist clothes line and right the down the back was the 44 gallon drum incinerator, I feel for Mum having to deal with us ratbag boys, using the clothesline like a circus trapeze while it was loaded up with the days washing. Right down the back corner of our block, I built a makeshift fortress out of old car bonnets (the mechanic next door gave me), from my "fortress base" I proceeded to dig a network of trenches and tunnels that interweaved my portion of the backyard, this gave me an advantage when the dirt rock fights were sprung on me from my neighbours. We had an incinerator in the far back yard where I build my fort (*a 44 gallon drum that back in the day, we were allowed to burn rubbish inside of*) at my disposal to use as a shield or sometimes have a fire lite then during a dirt rock fight I would throw an empty fly spray can in the incinerator, then I would run and wait for it to explode while my two neighbour's would keep barraging me with dirt rocks, until the can of fly spray exploded and they would run off... (when I say exploded, I mean every neighbour in the block would arise from their dwellings looking for the source of the "BOOM" as it was so loud!!!). My two neighbours (*cousins that lived together*) were a few years older than me and real bullies, there were many occasions I would find myself in trouble with them two, as Mum would leave me over there to be baby sat while she was shopping or at

doctors' appointments, I was always the victim of their intense bullying (*ironically, I think they were bullies because of their older brother beating them up, and so the vicious circle went on...*).

My calming or chill-out thing to do when I was young was to make World War 2 models - planes, trucks, boats, the lot. I customised our old rumpus room tennis table into a desert and forest landscape complete with a fortress and dozens of army figurines and Christmas lights that looked like exploding bombs, I would spend hours and hours making and painting models, when I was doing this, I had the upmost focus for weeks and months at a time, I really enjoyed the challenge and the skill required to build these models and organise them into different groups and sub sections. In my room I would hang fighter planes I had built, suspending them from the ceiling with fishing line set up like they were having battles, my favourite plane at the time was the spitfire.

To continue the subject of bullying and my temper issues, when I attended preschool at the tender age of four, I also contended with kids stealing my glasses and throwing them to each other while calling me names, I was only required to wear glasses for a few years but then early memories of kids teasing me and my OCD hyper personality resulted in me having a bit of an attitude, I ended up forming a "*thick skin*" outlook in life. As mentioned, I do recall seeing a doctor or psychologist of some sort for a period in my early years but thought nothing of it at the time. In general, I felt I was an average young boy, but I did have an enormous temper issues, and when it hit, it was volcanic! I'll explain throughout the storey...

Back at home in our formative years Mum run a family day care program for kids that required babysitting before and after school, this was going on for as long as I can remember until I was twelve or thirteen. The kids were a mixture of boys and girls from as little as four years of age to my early teens, Mum done an amazing job of full time housewife duties and the day care with sometimes four to five additional kids in the house, I think in retrospect I felt like I was starved for attention from Nifty and Mum, but was that the reality or was that in my head???

Mum had no car licence or car, so all our shopping and other journeys were done on the bus, the bus stop was around the corner on Prospect Rd right next to the best bakery I can remember, "Pinder's Bakery" where they sold the most amazing Kitchener buns (*a donut sort of bun filled full of jam and cream*), we would visit the bakery regularly & sometimes at the end of the day we were lucky enough to receive a few free cakes left over before the bakery closed up for the day.

As I began to grow up and around the age of ten, I too was becoming a bit of a bully, I used to continually pick on my brother Paul calling him names and fighting with him (*I'm certainly not proud of them days but now realise I was the bullied morphing into the bully*). I can only see this now when reflecting back, at the time, in my head, I think the rationalisation was "kill or be killed"!

As well as my fortress and tunnel system down the back, Nifty always had a vegetable garden going, he was passionate about gardening, we also had Woofy the dog (*who eventually went "missing"*) a rabbit named Georgy and Guinee pig called Suzzie and few sleepy lizards we had brought back from the grandmas and grandpas farm. Even back then as a youngster I was extremely interested in Nifties gardening methods and would enjoy spending time down the back with him getting my hands dirty, occasionally to my surprise and ultimate enjoyment, I do remember dad joining in on a few of our dirt rock battles with the neighbours, this was a lot of fun!

See as I previously touched on, Nifty was raised on a farm by his parents Roy and Ruth, the farm was North of Adelaide near Balaklava where he was born, he lived there with his brother Russel. Dad told me stories of how his brother and Father would bully him because he wasn't as strong as them and he found it difficult to assist with farm duties, they grew wheat predominately with other cover crops in the mix, a fair size of land with a good rain system that regularly swept through. We used to go to the farm to visit once a month on a Sunday for a beautiful country lamb roast and the most amazing sides to go with it, Grandma was a beautiful soul dedicated to keeping things running smooth at the farmhouse. The visits to the farm were always exciting and a fun day, we would explore, play games out in the open and spend quality time together as a family, I remember Grandpa as a fun man, but a man of few words. It was funny early one morning we were staying at the farm for some reason and Uncle Russel (dads brother) barged in the door (*I was still asleep in the bedroom where Nifty was*) Nifties brother yelled out to Grandpa at the top of his lungs "*the sheep have got out of the top paddock*" in his broad Aussie farm accent, I know it was probably a serious moment for Uncle Russel and Grandpa but me and Nifty cracked up laughing together as we listened in, not to sure what we found funny but it was a nice little bonding moment for me and Nifty... I remember the long drives back from the farm to Adelaide, we had an old Kingswood at the time with a front bench seat, Mum would sit in the back with my brother Paul to keep him settled while I would lay across the seat with my head on Nifties lap, I can still recall the smell of petrol fumes and the constant burning of a cigarette as Nifty calmly smoked while driving home, lying there with my head rested on his lap I felt secure and comfortable. These were the days where everybody smoked cigarettes, and they were smoked everywhere... On arrival back home we would be treated to a Coffee Kiss (*these were the most amazing homemade biscuits that Grandma used to make*) and there would always be an excited anticipation upon arrival to break them out. I treasured our visits to the farm as they were a rare time of bonding and togetherness as a family, I never really stayed up on the farm but occasionally my brother Paul would stay up there during the school holidays.

The reason Nifty lived in the city was he left the farm when he was at the tender age of sixteen due to not fitting in or feeling wanted, I picked his brain about this over the years as it always saddened me how him and Grandpa didn't get along. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, when first arriving in Adelaide from the farm Nifty originally boarded at a family members house at Prospect and had a crack several jobs, always staying busy and making money, he eventually settled with the old PNG (*now Australia Post*), before travelling overseas for some time then returning to Adelaide to settle down with Mum who he met through acquaintances and landing a respectable job at Ansett Airlines. Nifty had a hobby of collecting stamps and making money out of them by reselling certain collectable set, he also used to remove stamps from old envelopes for collectable sales. Mum was obsessed with reading novels and had quite a collection. This in the late 70's was the beginning of Nifty and Mum opening a "book and stamp shop" that was situated in a small group of old retail shops a few blocks from home and they decided to call the shop "Northside Book and Stamps", there is an old photo I recall of Nifty, Mum, Myself and my young brother Paul standing outside the shop, I would have been eight or nine and Paul six or seven, I have searched for decades trying to find the photo but with no avail, it is still a special image that is burnt into my mind some fifty years later.

The shop Nifty and Mum opened was a modest small single shop front in a block of eight other shops on Prospect Road build decades before, Nifty would man the shop on the weekends while a mixture of Mum and my Auntie Sharon would attend to the shop during the weekdays. Later on, when mum got pregnant, a stamp partner Graham, (*Nifty had brought him onboard, Graham would watch the shop while Nifty was at Ansett during the day*). I guess a year or so went by, and the shop was doing ok and surviving. Nifty would buy up big at Stamp and Book clearance sales or wholesale actions to stock up the shop, he applied a certain formula to what he added on top for his profit margin, and it was always honest with Nifty, that's the way he became so successful through genuine integrity and honesty.

One Saturday night in late 1979 Nifty returned home at Blair Athol following a long week of work at Ansett and the Book and Stamp shop, he was sick and tired of coming home to unwind from the busy week to the same old black and white repeats on the television. Nifty started researching the possibilities for different mediums of watching film at home, at the time apart from free to air, the only option was 16mm or super eight.

Following a few months of investigations and research, Nifty come across and read up on a new technology known as VHS (*Video Home System*) and BETAMAX. Although the perception from consumers VHS was a better unit, the fact was the BETA format as it was known was a slightly better picture quality. The VHS tape was slightly larger than the BETA tape, I'm not sure why, but over the years VHS became the preferred system for most consumers even though the beta format was technically superior...

Anyway, after researching for several months Nifty decided to invest in one VHS machine player and one BETAMAX machine player, I can tell you these devices were big, heavy and bulky but at the time it was cutting edge technology that allowed you for the first time to watch what you want, when you want, on your TV in the comfort of your own home.

At the time there were very little movies available and very few people could afford the bulky new technology at this early stage, so Nifty purchased a couple of the first back catalogue movies on the market in the Video format, a few titles such as the Godfather and a handful of releases of cult favourites from the seventies come to mind.

And so, it begun, Nifty started out with the business model of hiring out a package of two movies and a VHS or BETA machine for overnight hire. As I remember Nifty would often have to go to customers' homes and assist setting up the machines as there was a primitive & sometimes frustrating way of tuning the machines into your television. So that was the beginning of a new venture for Nifty, he took a huge punt and unknown to him it was going to pay off and pave the way for him over the next 20 years...

The cliental of passionate movie renters built very fast, with membership levels climbing into the hundreds within months, in no time at all various Video machines were becoming available for sale, with higher turnover rates which was driving the price of the average Video machine down enough for the average punter to buy one for themselves.

Meanwhile Paul and I had some exciting news delivered to us from Mum at home, she was pregnant and we had a little brother on the way. I remember the build-up and apprehension to the prospect of a new brother... what does that mean to my situation? which room does he get? Will he get a portion of my food? In the end though, I was more excited than anything, being ten years old I was going to be old enough to look after my

Original leaflet Nifty had printed up for the opening of the Book and Stamp shop in 1979.

EVERYONE LIKES A BARGAIN.
THERE'S EVERY CHANCE YOU WILL FIND ONE HERE.

Books & Stamps

Buying~Selling

- PAPERBACK NOVELS, MAGAZINES (Certain Types) COMICS ETC,
- STAMPS OF AUSTRALIA, DEPENDENCIES AND OTHERS.

HOURS OF BUSINESS:—
MONDAY — CLOSED TUE-WED-FRI-10.00 a.m.-5.30 p.m.
THU — 10.00 a.m.-9.00 p.m. SAT — 9.00 a.m.-1.00 p.m.
SUN — 1.00 p.m.-5.00 p.m.

NORTHERN BOOKS

NORTHSIDE STAMPS

SHOP 4, 384 PROSPECT ROAD, KILBURN 5084

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Opening Tuesday, 15th January

little bro myself and show him the ways of the world, the countdown was on and we were excited!

Scott was born on Australia day 1980, on this particular day we were all at Mum's sisters house with Uncle Steve and Auntie Sharon, we visited them a lot back in the day we used to all catch up with a few of Mum's siblings (*as mentioned Mum had eight siblings so we had dozens of cousins*), Nifty, Mum and all my Uncles and Aunties would play card games all night while we would play with our cousins, at the end of the card game night we would scour the floor for one and two cent coins that had been dropped over the night, sometimes we would gather up fifteen to twenty cents each which would equate to a huge haul of lollies from the corner deli the following day.

One night during a card game, it was getting late and I recall I couldn't sleep because of all the noise, (*as the card game nights went on until the wee hours of the night, we would settle down in sleeping bags until we were woke by Mum and Dad to go home*) there was a lot of noise and I went and told Mum and Dad I couldn't settle, my Uncle Steve listened in and called me over, he said he had a new fantastic record he wanted me to hear. For me at the time this was huge! My Uncle Steve had the most awesome newest High fi system, I mean this Hi-Fi system (*as they called them back then*) was a masterpiece complete with a huge set of speakers and subwoofer, a stack of amps, equalizers, other components I couldn't understand and a record player. Uncle Steve set my sleeping bag up near his record player and put a decent set of headphones over my head, as he slipped the headphones over my ears I distinctly remember "War of the Worlds" being played, to this day I am still blown away and distinctly remember the storyline and fantastic production, I think this was the moment that something deep inside me clicked with the whole music and production thing, it is a very strong memory to this day and made a huge impression on me! I didn't fall asleep until side two had ended. And of course, I have the War of the Worlds soundtrack in my current music collection. I have fond memories of Uncle Steve, and my other favourite was Uncle Dave, these two Uncles on my Mum's side played a huge part in my upbringing as I would have sleepovers regularly to alleviate Mum and Nifty of me and my hyperactive personality, I really looked up to my uncles as mentors to fill the void when Nifty wasn't around. Uncles (*or these two anyhow*) had a unique way of "mentoring me". Uncle Steve was fun to be around, both him and Auntie Sharon loved playing music on that awesome Hi-Fi system. When I stayed over for the night, I would do the weeding for them and get paid five bucks, then Uncle Steve would set me up in the back yard with a slug gun and cans, and that would keep me busy for a while. All my uncles loved to drink – a lot! One time at Uncle Steves a bunch of us were in the pool (*they had an above ground pool which were popular at the time*), my uncle Steve grabbed me by my feet and dangled me head first into the water, I was in the water head first resembling a dangling tea bag, I was gasping for air and he finally released me after was probably only five to ten seconds but when panic sets in, it honestly felt like an eternity, I was only seven or eight years old and it left me quite distressed, everyone laughed it off though and that was that.

Anyhow back to the birth of my youngest brother Scott, we were at Uncle Steve's and Auntie Sharons house when Mum broke water, Nifty and Mum rushed to the hospital while me and Paul stayed with our relatives for a few days. Scott was born ten years younger than myself; I was the proudest big brother, the age gap meant I felt a need to be actively involved as the oldest to assist bringing up my newly born sibling.

A few years earlier before Scott was born, around the same time as our Dog Woofy had “disappeared” (*I think dad took Woofy to the animal welfare because of his aggressive nature towards children*) we had purchased a Corgi and named him Benji, Benji was a cute little dog but loved to escape and take himself for walks which one day ended up being poor Benji’s downfall...Anyway, Benji adored Scott and lived to see another few years yet.

Back at the Video shop things were moving along at a fast rate, within a year Nifty had built up a collection of six Video machines and dozens of movies. Eventually the hire machines became “rewind” and “check movie defects” machines for in the shop, occasionally someone would hire one as an emergency, but after a few years the Video Machines never ever got hired out again.

As I mentioned before, in the early days of the Video industry customers were hungry for new releases and variety, but at this early stage the bulk of the new releases initially were classics from the seventies, cult movies of the previous decades were becoming available on the VHS and BETA formats. The blockbuster movies in the first year or so of Video were rare but a few classics that landed within the first year were titles such as, Jaws, Star Wars and Mad max to name a few (*check out the Pop Culture section at the end of this chapter for movie and director of this time period references*).

At this stage I was working Saturday’s and Sundays at the shop with Nifty, I would spend as much time as possible at the shop, keeping myself busy cleaning or building some sort of new display or assisting serving customers, as I recall I was on five dollars per day which was quite handy cash for an eleven-year-old child in 1981. Being down the shop, all weekend with dad just felt right, there was never nothing to do in there, so a day working a long shift went extremely fast. The big bonus at the end of the day was the trip two shops down to order our tea from the fish n’ Chips shop and our pick of the movies to take home. Now most of the time the brand-new blockbuster movies had been rented out...Day in, day out! That’s the only way Nifty could pay back the huge outlay per movie was to ensure the movies are rented to the max during that first one month “hot period”! BUT...sometimes a customer would be a pain to Nifty by returning movies right on closing time which would inevitably piss off someone else who had the movie pre booked, for us though, it meant being able to take home a massively popular hot new release. Sometimes if everyone at home had watched the blockbuster release already, I would take it to a mate’s place to watch with a group of friends which made me very popular with my mates.

Nifty drove a tiny, tiny Suzuki van with a motor that sounded like a lawnmower, we would just sit or lay in the back after school and hold on for dear life as there were no seats in the back of the van, because the van was so tiny and sounded like a lawnmower I would cringe every time we were picked up in it. Scott could just barely walk by now, but he refused to sit down in the van, instead holding on for dear life wedged in-between two front seats, gripping with his little hands. One night on the way home from Uncle Steve and Auntie Sharons following a long day in the sun swimming and playing we all headed home in the van with Mum and Dad in the front and us boys in the back, Scott (*only two or three at the time*) once again refused to sit or lay down and stood there with his tiny legs trembling the entire trip home, he was exhausted...

A few early memories around this time that were strong in my psyche was when Nifty and Mum had an addition built to the front of our tiny, modest house. I remember fondly hanging out with the tradies that were building the room, watching with a keen eye how

everything was done, this – the process of building excited me and really set the fire burning deep within me to pursue and build whenever possible, hence my fortress at the rear of our yard and the cubby house (*outside bedroom*) I later built at the age of twelve, I'll go into that a little later.

Around this time, I recall one day eating an orange at home, actually I was shoving it down and consuming it as quick as I could (*as Nifty always reminded me, I had terrible eating habits*) and simply would not chew my food enough, anyway I started to choke on this massive chunk of orange that had become stuck in my throat, I remember gasping for air... the feeling of helplessness as the necessity of life – breathing is prohibited... then as dad ran over I began to feel faint, the rest is a blur. My brother Paul screamed for help from Nifty who was luckily home, he ran in and tipped me upside down and began thumping at my chest and back while shaking me about while fishing around my mouth for the chunk of food (*probably not the best solution, but it worked*), the orange become dislodged and fell out my mouth, I could breathe again, I'll never forget the feeling of not being able to breathe and hanging upside down dangling from Nifties hands. I am so thankful he was home that day as I doubt, I would not have survived otherwise, it's funny how some of these life changing moments lead on to a crossroad in life, I mean if I had died that day who would have looked after Nifty decades later at the end of his life....

The pop culture of 1980 was vibrant and diverse, marked by significant trends in music, film, television and fashion. All these component's helped shape society as we know it.

From 1979 to 1998 the VHS Video format revolutionized home entertainment, allowing consumers to watch movies at home. Notable releases included blockbusters and cult classics, solidifying VHS's place in home entertainment. The format's accessibility and affordability made it a household staple until the gradual shift into DVDs in the late 1990's. Nostalgic memories associated with VHS rentals include the excitement of browsing the aisles of a video store, discovering new titles, and the opportunity of the mandatory impulse buys of chocolates, lollies, popcorn and soft drinks at the counter. Many must remember the thrill of renting a new release on a Friday evening, picking up the takeaway Fish n' Chips on the way home and anticipating the movie experience with friends or loved ones and the follow up of conversations that followed.

In the early days of Video, there weren't a lot of new release and "BLOCKBUSTER" movies made available from the big Video distributors such as Video Classics, CIC Taft, CBS FOX, Warner Brothers and Sony releasing Videos for purchase every few months. Initially there was a lot of cult classics and 70's movies made available on Video format. A blockbuster movie is a release that Nifty would buy anywhere from six to twelve copies of (*following an intensive month of hiring at the Video Shop, they would get moved onto the country outlets rotation*), the hype and demand for the BLOCKBUSTER movies died quick following purchasing, so ensuring he met demand to prevent his loyal customers going to another Video shop, Nifty would buy big numbers of new release BLOCKBUSTER movies. An example of the early BLOCKBUSTER Video releases are movies such as Star Wars, this classic was directed by George Lucas who also later directed a couple of the the Star Wars Trilogy movies of the original movie. One of the early release movies about the Vietnam War was a disturbing classic called The Deer Hunter, this movie definitely hit a few raw nerves...Another classic of the time was Mel Gibson starring in Mad Max, there was Jaws (*I was never really the same swimming in the ocean following watching that movie at a young age, my Auntie and Uncle took me to the drive in to see it for the first time on the big screen...*). One who flew over the Cuckoo's nest was one of Jack Nicholson's early roles. Any Which way you can starring Clint Eastwood, Blood Beach, The Warriors, Superman starring Christopher Reeve, Caddyshack starring Chevy Chase, Bill Murray and Rodney Dangerfield, Flash Gordon, Sophies Choice, Kramer v's Kramer, Bad Boys, Star Trek, Aliens, Flying high, Friday the 13th, Escape from Alcatraz, Life of Brian, Kramer vs Kramer, Breaker Morant, the classic Rocky 1, the Godfather and Halloween to name a few. Another great director over the video era was Martin Scorsese, he directed dozens of films in his lifetime, in these early years he was involved with films such as Taxi Driver and Raging Bull to name a few with dozens of other films under his belt over the upcoming years.

Nifty would take bookings from his customers to hold these popular releases, we would then ring the customer when the movie returned from the previous night's hire, this ensured a loyal customer base was kept satisfied. Within a few years Nifty had a membership of loyal customers that started with around ten and quickly grew into the hundreds.

A big movie release I distinctly remember from the early days is American Werewolf in London, our home lounge room was packed with my family and the neighbours and their extended family watching the much-anticipated movie for the first time as soon as it arrived, there was a lot of hype about this movie and the special effects in it. For its time the movie was way ahead of itself, it featured never seen before gruesome horror make up of a gorged neck complete with veins hanging out, there was always a big demand for the cult horror classics, I'll mention along the way.

On the TV as a kid, I would watch shows like Happy Days, Lost in space and favourite cartoons on the Bugs Bunny show.... Our television was a big wooden box with black and white reception, there was no remotes at the time. Around the time when Dad brought the Video machines, we also upgraded our television to a color one that could tune in to the Video players, this took a little messing around to get it right.

Political and social movements began to gain traction, setting the stage for future changes in America. At the time here in Australia in the early 80'S the world was recovering from the horrors of the Vietnam War, there were many refugees that had arrived in Australia and integrated and contributed to society. I had a few Vietnamese friends at school, and we had many customers at the shop who were newly arrived refugees, they had a pleasant manner and were very friendly. Many of the Vietnamese refugee families have now taken over the old European greenhouses and market gardens here in Adelaide.

On a side note - Up until the seventies the Aussie takeaway diet basically consisted of;

a) fish n' chip

OR

b) fish n' chips...

As migration increased so did the options for fantastic take away options.

In February 1981 the Ash Wednesday bushfires lead to the destruction of thousands of homes and properties in South Australia and Victoria resulting in significant loss of life. I remember driving back from my Nana's house that night and seeing from the back seat of our car the surrounding hills of Adelaide on fire, it was a terrible and frightening sight!

In the world of global politics things were still fragile with tensions between the once Soviet Union, (*now Russia*) and America running hot, Russia had evaded Afghanistan and America begun backing rogue militant groups to fight back. The invasion continued to escalate tensions with the Cold War having no end in sight, leading to international condemnation and a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. America was going hard to convince Western civilisation that they were the elite superpower and boost the capitalist way, consumerism was at a high and the term "yuppie" was born.

I do remember growing up and fearing of Nuclear War because of all the tail end of the cold war propaganda machine.... There was still a lot of media spin related to Russia and the dangers of nuclear war. At the time a movie was released on TV around the world called "the Day After", a doomsday film depicting the days of humanity following a full-blown nuclear attack. This fear wasn't at the surface of our attention but certainly deep within our psyche there was some worry about the tensions between Russia and America.

I grew up watching cricket from an early age and my earliest memories are, One Day cricket was born... *(as opposed to the traditional five day test,)* a famous Australian businessman named Kerry Packer changed the games proud history by introducing a new, more fast, and actioned based format that was done and dusted in the one day, each side would bat for fifty overs, it definitely was a great version of the game to watch, with stars of the game such as Dennis Lillie and the Chappell brothers playing against West Indian legends with super stars of the game like Joel Garner and Viv Richards. I remember fondly Dad took me to the cricket *(and I think possibly the airport as well)* one day and I got autographs from a few players, this was a highlight of my youth. I would watch games on our TV, I remember recording the scores on my home-made makeshift scoreboard, the passion for the game was a result of Nifties keen interest in Cricket.

Pac-Man is released in the arcades around this time and became the highest earning arcade game of all time and the popularity of pinball machines and arcade games reaching an all-time high. The Sony Walkman was the hottest new gadget to enjoy. Nintendo and Transformers were big in the toy and game market. At home I remember plugging in and playing this simple game called “Pong Tennis” that had several different offerings of games where you played “tennis” in a simple fashion – a dot that travelled across the screen where two opposing tennis bats (a straight line on the screen) would knock the “ball” back and forward...

As the world mourned the passing of the king of Rock n’ Roll – Elvis, Punk and Disco had ruled the music scene for the past few years, although the big hair glam rock bands were beginning to emerge onto the scene. In fashion, the punk and disco hangover from the 70’s rolled through reflecting a spirit of rebellion and inspiring fashion items such as leg warmers for the girls and tight denim jeans for the boys, in the hood we completed it with Ripple shoes and a flannelette shirt known as “the druggie shirt”. In tandem Neon colors and big hair was all the rage.

Our Aussie slang we used on the street consisted of words such as;

“Fair Dinkum” - meaning genuine or real

“Bogan” - a term used to describe someone who maybe lacks social grace...

and of course, the famous Aussie...

“G’day” - hello

An early Video player and movies



Pac Man arcade game home



Pong Tennis home game system for the



Some of the first Blockbuster movie covers



Chapter 2 - THE HOSPITAL – PRESENT DAY Dads final week

Wednesday 6pm – (current)

They took Dad off to get some scans, so I said my goodbyes for now (each time we parted from there on was carried out like our final goodbye), Scott was due back at the hospital soon, so I left for home to eat and get some sleep. Dad later explained they left him at the scan departments passageway for 90 minutes unattended and with no water, I felt so bad about leaving the hospital earlier on...Unfortunately the once reliable health care system in this country seemed to be in tatters, the hospital was terribly understaffed.

After a couple of hours my brother returned to look over Dad in the Emergency ward while I was at home resting. At this stage Dad had been in the ward for at least 16 hours, the noise and commotion in this front-line area is extremely distressing to ones emotions and mental state. Scott let me know he was leaving after a short stay as he too was finding the ward distressing, we were advised Dad was being allocated a room and would be moved out of the emergency ward ASAP.

Thursday 1:30am – (current)

I woke to a call around 1.30am and it was my brother Scott, he had returned to the hospital in the early hours and discovered Dad was still in the emergency ward and not in a good state.

I rushed down there to find Dad and Scott in a new area single room which was great to see. Dad seemed to be at rest so I made myself comfortable and sat there with Dad while Scott returned home for rest as we had arranged for Scott to take over at 6:30am so I could go into work for half a day.

As soon as Scott arrived back at the hospital at 6:30am, I took off for work as planned and Scott took over the rains for a few hours until I returned.

I managed to get through all my site inspections and back at the hospital by mid-morning just intime for the specialist palliative care team to debrief with Dad.

Thursday 11am – (current)

The specialist doctors explained to Myself and Scott regarding Dads status following the scans he had the previous day. It was a candid and emotional talk as the scans revealed our worst concerns...

The specialist revealed the cancer had spread throughout Dads body taking over all major organs and his bones, his liver and kidneys had shut down. We were trying to stay brave for him, I took deep breathes & done my best to control my emotions, but it was difficult to contain the tears flowing down my cheeks, for myself & my two brothers Paul & Scott the realisation that this was the final hours or days for Dad was overwhelming, I know there was a big lead up to this moment and I had years to process and prepare for it, but no matter what, it did not make it any easier going through this miserable point of time for real - it was so surreal.

I felt time had slowed & every single heartbeat from this moment forward was the most precious of my life to date. Dad was suffering bad with issues such as breathlessness due to the cancer riddled through his lungs, racing heartbeat the specialists were finding it difficult to control, liver and kidney failure, absolutely no strength to walk or control his bowels, the lack of strength resulted in Dad not being able to use his throat properly rendering eating near impossible. They administered a puree diet to attempt to get food down his throat. Me and my brothers worked out a roster to ensure one of us was in the ward with dad spread throughout the next 24 hour period, he needed one on one care, we would spoon feed him his meals and top up his water when needed, & just "be there" for him during his final hours.

Over the last few years, as his condition deteriorated, my dear father had several sobering discussions with me regarding strict instructions...this is the moment "do not resuscitate" and "quality over quantity" comes into play, Dad had mentioned over the years leading up to this point (and to be noted with the medical team) about how he would like to move forward when he arrived at this point of time in his health battle.

One thing he had already lost is his dignity and pride with the bowel issues and having to be spoon fed puree, Dads condition and mental state had taken a serious dive since arriving, we had a candid talk with the Palliative care team for direction moving forward...

I had also been on the phone for hours in the afternoon speaking with aged care services arranging home Palliative care, I was hoping we could get Dad

well enough to move him back home to more comfortable surroundings for him to live out his final days.

I sat with dad close so we could chat,

We began to reminisce...

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CHAPTER 2 – THE Video Shop

1982-1983 **D6**

So now it was 1982 and the Book and Stamp shop was quickly morphing into what was known at the time as “Northside Video”, the Book and Stamp section was now a small area at the corner of the shop with the predominate space now being allocated to Video movies.

There was an overlap period for a year or so where the Videos took off, but Nifty was still working full time at Ansett, his health was taking a hit due to relentlessly working a full time job & after hours & weekends at his shop - 7 days a week! he did not know how long he could keep it up. He ended up consulting a doctor who advised to Nifty his health was taking a hit, the decision needed to be made - it was to be either the Video Shop or Ansett, he could not do both jobs at the same time.! Nifty knew this was serious and he needed to decide very quickly. He made a pact with himself, that when he made “x” amount over three consecutive weeks, he would then resign from Ansett...

Well the following three weeks Nifty hit his mark convincingly and the following week resigned from Ansett, he took a huge gamble to invest any money he had saved on the shop, a small payout from Ansett was used to buy a couple of decent safes to store the movies as the new VHS tapes had great demand on the resale market, in turn Video Shops were beginning to be targeted by criminal gangs who would smash & grab in midnight robberies.

I am extremely proud of Nifty, throughout his entrepreneurial journey he never obtained a loan to prop up his ventures, it was all done through good old fashion strict saving, reinvesting and living an extremely modest lifestyle. Graham who was assisting Nifty with the stamp sales had left the shop by now and it was operated by Dad and Mum and with a part time employee by the name of Leanne propping up shifts & I of course was down there Friday nights, & all weekend, week in, week out – the Video Shop was my new sanctuary & time quality time spent with Nifty was gold!

Video machines were beginning to take off with the general public in a big way, so we needed more and more movies to satisfy the ever-increasing demand, we still had Video machines that were hired out at this point, but most customers now had purchased Video machines for themselves, as demand & the market grew, the price of the VHS & BETA machines come down which fed the market boom in a huge way.

As the year progressed the shop grew at a fast rate and Nifty already could see within a short period of time, we would outgrow these premises, right on cue two shops side by side in the same shop complex we were in came up for rent. Nifty new the landlord well and got on with him (*as with everyone that interacted with Nifty his charm would leave you feeling pleasant about any dealing with Nifty*). So, the deal was done! Nifty secured the contract for the double shop, this new double shop was only two shops over from

us in the same group complex, it was two shops side by side with a massive opening joining them, the move was fairly easy because of the close vicinity.

Moving shops was not an issue but preparing the new shop took some work...with a huge task ahead, the first thing to be done was paint and build shelving units for the ever-increasing new Videos coming through the door. Even though I never seen Nifty swing a hammer or build much around the home, as his name suggests he is very thrifty and crafty at carefully working through any situation and coming up with a plan or solution. He had devised a simple method of building the new shelving units that would each hold around 100 movies, it was easy to build each one methodically with not much need to cut materials as the units were designed to be made from stock size materials. After Assisting Nifty building a couple of units, at the tender age of twelve I started to build and paint them myself knocking out around a dozen new shelving units and painting the shop with Nifty over my school holidays, we had a customer called Youpy, he was pretty cool dude who knew how to look after himself (*he was intimidating, but friendly local of the area*), Youpy was one of our earliest customers and became sorta part of the furniture...He lent me some of his tools to assist in the building works including an huge oversized circular saw, I remember using the powered oversized saw for the first time, it grabbed on the timber I was cutting & fucking jumped back at my face – got my heart racing for sure, this is where I definitely started honing in on my building skills. Around this time, I began visiting the local hardware shop down the road, the shop was owned by a sweet old couple and I got on really well with the owner named “Jack”, he allowed me to purchase tools and pay them off, I quickly began building up my tool arsenal using my money I was making working at the shop, the prospect of owning my own tools excited me, there was nothing I couldn’t do or make!

Within a few weeks we were ready to do the move, it was all carried out at nighttime so we would not affect any business, all hands were on deck with family members and any friends we could gather up to assist in the move, there were even a few customers that rolled up their sleeves and assisted... The move went long into the night and was a laborious task, I remember thinking to myself “*this is something we don’t want to do again*”, it was a huge undertaking.

The following day Nifties new and improved Video Shop was proudly open for trade, by now the shop had no books or stamps, it was just a Video Shop. One thing that followed quite quickly as the demand for movies grew, & the price tag of \$120 per movie (a lot of dough at the time) ensured the black market was growing quickly and nightly break ins were becoming an issue. Within weeks Nifty had to purchase two safes to store the movie cassettes in (*this became a complex issue as the customer base built up – more about that later...*) and he had security bars fitted to all the shop windows; the front and rear doors were also beefed up and an alarm system was installed. For the next few years once every two to three months or so we would wake up in the early hours of the morning to the phone at home ringing, it would be the alarm company informing us the security system had been triggered and we needed to attend. I would jump out of bed and rush down the shop with Nifty (*there was not one time in coming years where I would not go down the shop in the middle of the night with Nifty, absolutely no way was I letting him go there alone...*).

We only lived a short one to two minute car ride to the shop, so there was a good chance of someone still being on premises by the time we arrived, I would arm myself

with whatever I had handy, upon arrival we would always first notice either the front or rear doors totally smashed in, as you entered the dark shop it was either dead silent or the alarm would be screaming, my heart would be racing in fear but I felt a sense of pride being there with Nifty side by side, there would be movies thrown all over the place and sometimes broken glass from the windows scattered across the shop, the adrenaline running through my veins as I entered the dark shop with the alarm siren screaming, baseball bat in hand was exhilarating & unnerving at the same time. The police would attend eventually and make a report, after some time over the years and several more break-ins the police would no longer attend due to government policy, so it was just me and Nifty attending the break-ins in the end. The process would be either secure the shop enough so we could go back home, but more often than not, we would have to stay until day light and a glazier could attend to fix the broken windows and or doors, it would get exhausting waiting the night out and cleaning up so the shop was respectable for trade the following day... Unfortunately, the break-ins continued for the upcoming years and ultimately not one person was ever caught!

When I think back to them times, & how young I was, in reflection, I guess it did traumatise me as little... at the time though I just got on with it...

There were some other shops in our complex, the main ones I remember was a decent Fish and Chip shop and a BMX store, there was also a hardware up the road as I mentioned that I frequented often and gym equipment manufacturer factory across the road that had caught my attention of late, I would pop over the road to the gym shop and my eyes would glaze over with my imagination in overdrive...

I was working solid shifts on Saturdays and Sundays at the age of twelve, Nifty was impressed with my passion and one night he reminded me to turn on the front store lights, I had already done the task, I tried to stay one step ahead of the shop's duties. Later that night we went out as a family for tea at the local pub, Nifty sat me down and explained how happy he was with my passion for the business and said he was giving me a raise to twenty bucks for the weekend. This was pretty good dough for back then. I remember saying to Nifty I wanted to take over the Shop one day when he retired, I had never felt so close to Dad as around this point in my life.

It was a special moment in time...

The next week at school we had to do a screen-printing assignment, I took in a blue track suit top I owned, then designed a "*Northside Video*" logo to screenprint on it, I out wore that top with pride for years until it no longer fitted me.

I allocated my weekly increased pay straight to the bike shop, I instantly went there the next day to layby this blue Mongoose BMX I had been salivating over for months, (the bike was featured in a new movie BMX bandits) it was a new release bike that I really wanted, considering our proximity to the shop I would jog or ride there to and from home, it took me ten long weeks but I paid off the bike and the reward endorphins rang out of control, my brain instantly made the connection between work ethic = rewards! My bike was my first sense of freedom and independence, and for some time gave me real satisfaction, I would ride everywhere around the neighbourhood, to and from school and work. Our area was riddled with young families so there were kids everywhere around the streets, I had a close-knit group of mates who lived in the upper North Section of Blair Athol we used to loosely call "the hood", it was two suburbs of housing trust for assisted housing. I guess without the risk of sounding judgemental the

area was full of lower socio working class and a massive number of unemployed & dysfunctional families.

There were parts of Blair Athol and Kilburn that you should simply not be around at night! Growing up in the area I always pushed the boundaries with this rule and usually felt pretty comfortable with my own company throughout my years of stomping the ground in the hood. Although at this point of time at the age of twelve going on thirteen the rules by my parents were *“be home by the time the streetlights are on!”* as the months went on I would spend more and more time around the hood when not at the Video Shop, hanging out with my mates and honing in on BMX bike tricks and generally just hangin’ in big groups... This was an awesome time in my life, and I have fond memories of just “killin’ time”.

One night I woke to a helicopter hovering very low over our street and close surrounding area for hours, I woke the next morning to see our suburb on television plastered all over the news...it turns out one group of lads I was associated with were out walking around the streets, shooting out streetlights with a .22 rifle, a police car was on patrol and turned a corner just as the gun was fired and a cop was shot dead. I got on my bike the next morning and road around the corner to where the incident had occurred, there were cops and media crews everywhere and a lot of streets were blocked off. Me and my mate Fuzzy got interviewed by Channel Nine and were on the news that night, I recall the reporter asking me *“what do you think they should do with the lad who shot the police officer?”*, I replied to the news camera “lock em’ up for life!”, it was all a bit surreal, but I took it as just another day in the hood. The boy who did it was only seventeen and had lived around the corner from me, I knew him well... he was locked away for forty years – we would not see him again. This was a deeply personal and sobering reminder to me, not to break the law...

I feel for the cop who died, he was only young as well.

Despite all this it seemed comfortable and safe in the hood, I always felt like I could take care of myself in any situation (*although I think some of it came down to luck and who you run into at certain times*) ...

Back at home I had been busy building a “cubby house” that extended off our garage, after eighteen months of building, it more so ended up at permanent outdoor bedroom that I lived in for the next few years. The materials were timbers and iron my neighbours gave me and some other “offcut timbers” that me and my mates would trek back on our shoulders while ridding our bikes from local building sites, the gym making business across the road also placed a heap of hardwood flooring in a skip, so Nifty helped me getting that back home. All my spare time (when I wasn’t at school or working down the Video Shop) was devoted to building this outdoor room, as per usual, once I got a bee in my bonnet about something, I would not rest until I had completed the task or project... I finished slowly but surely and moved in as soon as I had completed it. I had even built a bunk bed and small dining table; the “cubby house” as it was tagged also included a secret hatch that led to an underground hole where I could hide, and I stashed my secret army knife collection without anyone knowing (blame all my years of watching Hogans Hero’s and The Great Escape for my obsession with tunnels and knives!).

I was really into war movies and fancied myself in the ARMY, so at the age of thirteen I joined the cadets, and it lasted all of a few weeks, I got as far as getting my uniform but really could not stand being yelled at by some oversized Sergeant! so I quit. It was probably one of the rare things throughout life I didn’t persist with. My motto in life is

once I decide to do something I had always followed through with relentless commitment, I guess the army cadets thing was something I just had to get out of my system, I tried it, and it didn't resonate with me.

One thing I would learn about myself at an early age is that I was to be a natural leader or bossman, I was independently motivated and really did prefer to do things myself, so I started an army themed cadet's group at home with a small group of eight or nine mates. Another task I became good at from an early age was scaling our roof (*don't ask me why!*), maybe because of all the war movies I was watching at the time or maybe because when I was up there I undoubtedly felt free and untouchable, one day we were booting the footy on the road and it hit a dudes car, he ran out chasing me and I told him to fuck off and I scaled the roof, there was no way he could follow me, the roof was my safe and chill out zone... Anyway back to my home made cadet group of scallywags, I had designed a timed course that involved running through and around certain obstacles then scaling the roof and ending with a jump and roll off the roof at the lowest section of the front flat extension, (*regularly jumping off the roof was something I always had to get the courage to do, but got a real thrill from it, I can thank the thick layer of kikuyu grass for not breaking any limbs over the times I was doing such crazy things, I would never contemplate doing that as an adult!*) So, all my crew of mates done the course as I timed them yelling out directions, following everyone completing the course I went inside to work out the times and what given rank they would receive from the results, we ended up at some point all heading to the pines (*a local pine tree forest we would hand out at with our bikes*) and began digging a tunnel system I had drawn a plan up for, it didn't last long though, the home made cadets thing lasted a few months, it was good fun but not what I was looking for...

I had times where my anger and depression were getting the best of me, one morning before school I got into an argument with either Nifty or Mum (*or both..*), I ran out the front and without thinking it through lashed out at our front window punching it, my arm went through the broken glass and I clean cut open a section of my elbow around the size of a golf ball, as I took a glance I could see my elbow bone poking through, I nearly passed out. Mum ran across the neighbours for help as Mrs Dempseys daughter was a nurse, she stabilised the wound then I was rushed to hospital to have it stitched up.

This was my second lot of stiches as a few years prior I had dropped an axe on my head when I was playing war games out the back, that time resulted in stiches to my head... I was a little injury prone as I grew up, I felt invisible and would often make silly decisions...I remember one time I brought a small anchor from the local hardware, Jack (*the store owner*) asked me "*what are you doing with this*", I shrugged it off and continued home. Once home, I attached some rope to it and threw it up on the roof until it latched onto the front brick parapet wall, as I began to scale the wall the anchor dislodged and I fell to the ground landing on my back, a second later the anchor sprung down and smashed onto the concrete only inches from my face, needless to say that was the last time I attempted to scale the roof in that fashion, once again it was years of watching war movies as a young tacker that influenced me to do such crazy tasks...

I was unsettled, I had a yearning, a calling, but for what???

What was I looking for? what was my soul yearning?

That was about to come to fruition, become lifechanging!

Around the home, Mum was always busy cleaning or cooking or watching multiple Family Daycare kids, I didn't realise it at the time or let Mum know, but she was our

rock, and I really appreciated her! She done such a good job at looking after us and tolerating my mood swings over the years. Women of the time really were unsung heros! Eventually over the next year or so, Mum would get her car licence and a car which would make life much, much easier for her to do the shopping etc. and getting us kids around, over the next few years though, something would happen to that car – twice! more about that later...

As kids we had a fair bit of freedom because Dad and Mum would be down the video shop often leaving me and my brother Paul at home alone. With all the horror movies we had been watching, we had seen Ouija board and how people can connect with the dead...for a while my brother and me got into this practice, carrying out seances. Now weather you believe it or not, we had some funky shit go down over the years we were doing this this, we would have mates over and all do the ritual. I won't go into it anymore, but I truly believe in the power of these rituals and also recommend that no one attempts it, once it has been carried out there are many things that can go wrong in life following connection with spirits, there has to be a shit load of respect for the practice and kids should definitely

not be dabbling in this...

Anyway, enough of that subject!

At the time of turning thirteen my Nana gave me a digital clock complete with an inbuilt AM / FM radio and even featured a snooze button!!! I was shaking with excitement when I opened this gift from my her, see we never had any form of music in our house, most people grow up with music in their lives, but Nifty didn't get into music, Mum adored Elvis so I'm not sure why we had no medium at all to play music or listen to the radio, anyhow, now... I was armed with my own set of vibes! The music at the time on the radio really influenced me, Hard Rock genre and the tail end of the Seventies guitar bands with energetic and charismatic vocalists really connected with my soul and what I was feeling, I could not get enough of it and insisted we get a radio for the Video Shop to give the shop some atmosphere, I enjoyed listening to the radio and singing along. This was the beginning for me, I found an outlet that would allow me to write and express myself and singing always just felt good, it's a workout that requires mental and physical attention to detail, for prolong amounts of time – that was me in a nutshell, I needed the outlet of writing as a release and therapy, it took a few years for that to eventuate but that digital clock that my dear Nana gave me for that birthday sowed the seeds!

At this exact point of time though I had been obsessed with exercising and boxing, see, Rocky 1 had just been released on tape and I had this real need to get into that lifestyle for a while. Over the next few years I had a continuous layby at the Gym gear business across the road, as with all local business owners in the area, they all frequented the Video Shop and thought a lot of Nifty so everything I brought was local and at a discounted price. I ended up taking over Nifties garage at home and it became a full gym complete with everything boxing related. I joined the Sportsman's Boxing gym in the city and became to master the art of boxing. I would run laps across the road from home on Kilburn oval in the early hours of the morning, I would jog or sprint to and from work, I would run to the deli and back for Video Shop errands (*this is probably why my knees are so sore as an Adult*)...I committed to this for 2 years until I reached the point I could have my first fight. Training at this boxing gym was a solid three sessions a week, the training sessions would start with a lot of skipping followed by a long, long run, then we would do one on one training sessions with the coaches homing in on our technic &

moves, the night would always end with a spa session up in the ring, I would always look forward to this part of the training session, being in the ring fighting for survival felt right for me...

It was a huge build up to my first boxing fight, Mum had arranged a huge “good luck” card and had all the family, and my mates sign it, I went into the fight with the upmost of confidence. The night of my very first boxing fight had arrived, following years of training, I got in the ring and instantly noticed opponent was smaller than me, this was my first & last mistake of the night! I got a little cocky about the fight, in my head I had already won the fight... He may have been smaller, but he was a lot fitter and quicker than me and probably a little more versed, either way I made it through the whole fight, but my opponent ended up winning on points. Even though I thoroughly enjoyed it I gave it up not long after that fight, I had a goal to have an official boxing match and I persisted for years, the gym I trained at would not let you get into an official bout until you were at a certain level and would make their newly trained fighters wait years, so I waited, and I fought, and even though I lost the bout, I was proud I followed through, but now, was definitely ready to move on.

At this point we were still driving up to the Grandma & Grandpa’s farm for monthly Sunday lunches, but not for long now... one of the last times we went up I asked if I could take my bike and get dropped off a kilometre from the farm and ride it the rest of the way to the farmhouse, Nifty grinned & agreed and he dropped me off as arranged, to my shock it wasn’t just a gravel road, this damn road had boulders scattered throughout, it was ball breaking! I remember once, Nifty had once told me he used to ride his bike miles and hide it behind a bush then catch a bus, then pick up his hidden bike at the bus stop and ride home in the afternoons, he had done this from grade one, at the age of five, with absolutely no assistance or guidance. When young, Nifty went to a country school that only twenty-five kids attended, there would be nine grades in the same class (*much respect to Nifties teacher!*).

Anyhow, back to me riding on the gravel/ boulder ridden road...this damn idea was not a good one, I did not enjoy my bike ride to the farm in the end.

The mood in the farmhouse was always a little sombre as Nifty and Grandpa (*Nifties Dad*) did not get on well, even until the very end! Unknown to us this was to be our last trip to the farm as Grandpa died the following week. I was numb but not upset at the news as I wasn’t close to grandpa, I felt I should have been more upset but just wasn’t. I let Nifty know I was sorry about him losing his father, but Nifty was emotionless... I think his connection with grandpa was lost, or it was just never there, which I always felt terribly sad about for Nifty. There were some sad events that carried out following my grandpa’s death, because Nifty had left the farm to make a living in the big sticks he was written out of the will and his only brother inherited everything, this meant all the farm properties and machinery together with the two farmhouses. Nifty had not only not spoken with his father for years, the same applied with his brother, they also both despised each other and had not spoken for decades. I was saddened for Nifty as no one deserved to be stricken out from a will, although this was the expected outcome Nifty anticipated, he was still sore about how everything played out following grandpas passing.

I still feel sad to the day about Nifties shaken relationship with his father and brother, Nifty once told me about the day he left the farm at the age of sixteen. At the time he was made to leave school as his Mum had a hysterectomy and no one else could look

after Grandma during her recovery, so Nifty was made to leave school (*which he detested*) to attend to her while she recovered. Not long after that grandma helped Nifty find a job in the city and arranged for family to take him in while he found his feet. The day Nifty left the farm, Grandpa and Nifties brother did not even say goodbye or acknowledge he was leaving, his mother drove him to the train station and that was that! he left the farm life for good, apparently his father did not believe it was for real and expected Nifty to return within weeks begging to move back in... but Nifty never looked back following that day! he could not stand life on the farm with the mental abuse from his father and brother and quickly found his feet in the big smoke! Nifty embraced his new life in the city and began making a crack of it.

Back at the shop and by late 1983 the new shop was going at full steam, Friday and Saturday nights were absolutely crazy, for hours straight it would be shoulder to shoulder in there. We had a simple and effective but primitive way of processing information as computers where either not satisfactory or too expensive, so everything was handwritten, customer membership number/ name/ phone/ movie hired/ cost/ paid/ due date. We had three sometimes four of us running around, two serving, one out on the floor putting back hired movies and one processing returned movies, (*it was important especially with new blockbuster movies to keep them turning over*), if the newly returned from hire movies were in a pile waiting to be put back on the shelf, then they were not making money! So, it was a well-oiled machine behind the counter at the Video Shop! I remember there would be sometimes several customers hovering around the “returned movies” staff member, the blockbuster hits of the week would either be booked out solid or never hit the shelf for weeks, the demand was so great.

Getting back to the break-ins (*previously mentioned in the storey*), before we set up the safes, the hire process was; to remove the Video tapes from the covers, checked they were rewound (*usually the rewinder machine was going none stop all night – it was important to us to ensure the movies were rewound for our customers to receive a rewind movie, there was nothing worse than getting home ready to watch a movie , then realising it had to be rewound which would take several minutes but would feel like forever...*), once the movies were removed from their covers, the empty covers were promptly returned to the shelves, as a result of the need for safes to store the movies in (because of the break-ins), the entire process of entering returned movies now at least took up one additional staff member due to having to remove and replace the tapes from the empty covers so they could be stored in the safes...

Occasionally during the rush hour, we would have to all be required to separately stop and greet Jackson the huge overweight Labrador that would walk himself around the neighbourhood unattended with his lead in his mouth, he would walk himself around the streets as his owners knew he would return home after doing the rounds to all the shops, Jackson was renowned for visiting all the local shops and receiving plenty of pats and treats along the way – everyone knew Jackson.

One busy Friday night I was working hard, suddenly, a life changing event happened that I never, ever expected...

We were flat chat busy and as per normal on a Friday and Saturday night, you could hardly move as the shop was so full for hours during peak tea period. I was working hard when I suddenly first felt a rumble, then heard this deep purr, then moments later seen this blue and white beast of a car pull up right out the front of the Video Shop while I was on shift. Mike walked into the shop (*Mike was one of our regular customers*), I was

asking him about the car, he explained to me it was known as a Ford XC Cobra, he had been working on the car for years, it wasn't an original Cobra (*the Cobra was a limited edition, the last 400 XC coupe 70's muscle cars that were the last coupe to be produced in 1978 before Ford went to the square XD designs*). Anyway, Mike's XC Cobra was still a beast of a thing, even if it was a replica. As I was hovering around him and asking so many questions, he offered to take me for a run around the block....

Shit yeah!!!

As I got into this beast of a machine, I slipped into lambswool seats covers, (you sat low & snug in these machines), and I struggled to see over the massive bonnet scoop. Mike started the beast, and she purred this beautiful rumble that shook my bones, he floored it down Prospect Road and my heart started to palpitate, I was shaking with excitement!!!

I left that shop a nerdy little dweeb and came back following the experience of the 351 Cleveland power and returned a man!

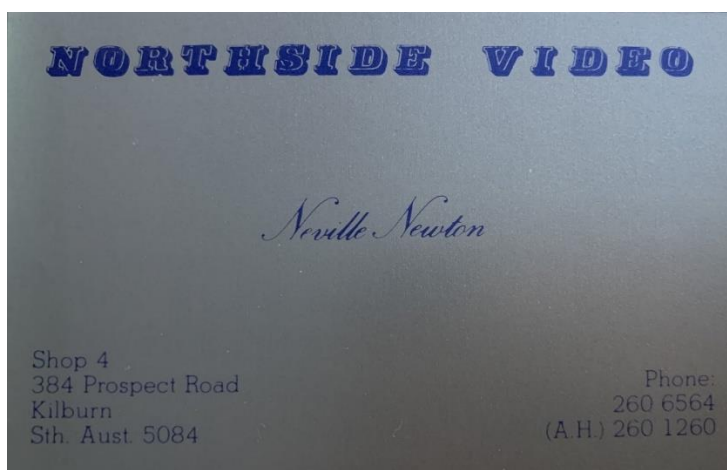
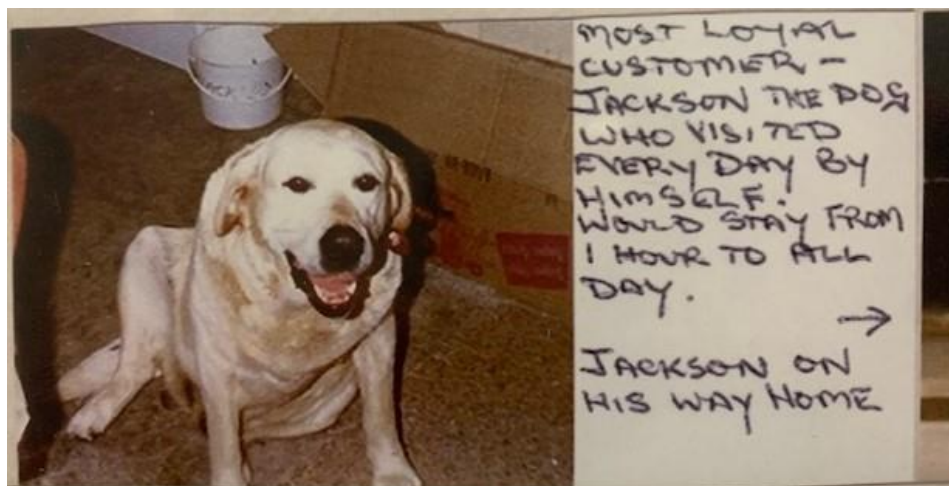
These hardshell 70's coupes were absolute fucking beasts of cars.

That car absolutely rocked my soul!

From that day on the plan was to save and one day buy one,

One day...

One. Day!



The Video Shop / POP CULTURE 1981-1983

As the first initial years of Video progressed movie releases began to increase in volume, with back catalogue movies becoming available on the Video format and the blockbuster releases coming through more regularly. Popular releases of the time included movies such as *The Cannonball Run* starring Burt Reynolds and Roger Moore, Mel Brooks in *the History of the World*, Sylvester Stallone and Michael Cane in *Victory*, *Chariots of Fire*, *The Evil Dead*, *the Blue Lagoon*, *Gallipoli* was a classic and powerful war movie starring Mel Gibson, *Arthur* starring Dudley Moore, *Friday the 13th part 2*. Emerging comedians of the time following their mandatory run with the popular “Saturday Night Live” included Chevy Chase, Bill Murray, Steve Martin, John Candy and Rodney Dangerfield to name a few with comedy classics such as *Stripes* starring Bill Murray and the *Nation Lampoons Vacation* movies starring Chevy Chase becoming cult classics. Other movies of the time included *48 Hours* starring Eddie Murphy, *First Blood* and *Rocky 2* and *3* both starring Sylvester Stallone, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* starring Harrison Ford, *Mad Max 2* and the racy teen comedy *Porky’s*. There was a cult following for various genres, movies such as the Cheech and Chong crew who enjoyed the comedy classics and also the Bruce Lee movies were very popular at the time, then there were the loyal Sci-fi crowd who loved the *Star Trek* series, then there was the action crowd who adored the car chases and shoot up scenes, there was also a loyal cult following for the horror classics. An upcoming director of the time who would become renown for classic movies was Steven Spielberg and the biggest movie to date was released at this moment, it was called “ET” and the demand for this movie was huge. I can vividly remember my Auntie taking a 12-year-old me to the movies to see it and she full broke out into tears near the end when ET left the planet, I was a little freaked out and didn’t know what to do, it’s the first time I had seen someone cry over a movie...

On the TV at home as kids we were watching a new music show called MTV, there was an Australian version of this that promoted upcoming bands and allowed them to play live (*well lip sync anyhow...*), it was hosted by a music guru known as Molly Meldrum and the show was called *Countdown*. Watching these music shows really inspired the music bug in me.

In the early 80’s the airwaves played a lot of electronic heavily produced pop music at one end of the spectrum and the heavy guitar big hair hard rock bands of the time were beginning to emerge on the scene and with the invent of MTV these bands were more in our face than ever before. The emergence of MTV and *Countdown* changed the music landscape significantly. I also remember watching a series on TV called “MASH” with Dad, we would have watched it over a period of years. Comedy wise on TV there were the likes of *Benny Hill*, *The Goodies*, *The Paul Hogan Show* and *Blankety Blanks* with the infamous Graham Kennedy among a cast of other stars.

In fashion bigger was all the rage, casual and comfortable happy pants and cargo pants, women’s shoulder pads and men’s power suits. Bold colors and patterns exploded; nothing was off limits. Puffed sleeves and oversized accessories making big statements. Fashion icons describe this as the “New Romantic look”.

With technology CDs were increasing in popularity as the medium to listen to music, ultimately offering superior quality compared to the analogue alternative. Personal Computers were on the rise with use from businesses and consumers, brands at the time included the IBM PC and the Apple II. Handheld arcade games and the Atari home game console were all the rage, games such as Pac Man, Frogger and Space invaders were very popular during this period.

In the world, the marriage of Princess Diana and Prince Charles created a huge amount of public attention over the airwaves and with Royal watchers alike. Immigration of migrants particularly from Southeast Asia, in response to the aftermath of the Vietnam war and conflicts in Cambodia and Laos. In the 1980's immigration numbers fluctuated, with numbers averaging around 80,000 to 100,000 annually.

In sport around this time distinctly remember the Americas Cup in 1983, it was around my birthday, and I woke up in the early hours of the morning (*I think it was 3am or 4am in the morning*) to watch Australia beat America in the final race. The moment the race was won everybody in Australia went nuts celebrating, my Nana called us, I remember she said to me *"what a birthday present for you"* ... the flamboyant Australian prime minister of the time Bob Hawke famously commented in the morning news shows *"any boss who sacks anyone for not coming in today is a bum!"*

On the global stage during this period, America were funding and training faction groups in Afghanistan to oppose the Russian forces in the conflict. Economic challenges were reverberating around the globe with high inflation and unemployment increasing. These key events shaped the geopolitical landscape and set the stage for future developments in international relations.

During this timeframe pop culture reflected a time of innovation and change, setting the stage for future developments in entertainment and fashion.

Slang words around this time included.

"mate" – friend

"Chockers" - full or crowded

"Strewth" - an explanation of surprise or disbelief

These terms were part of the informal and laid-back communication style characteristic of the Aussie culture during this time.

The Atari consol units Nifty would hire out



Some of the movie covers of the time

