

# THE MIOCEVICH FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA

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## 1. CROATIA.

Ljubo Mioceovich was born on 15th December 1900 at Kozica which is a small village in the Dalmation hinterland of southern Croatia, a province of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. He was the younger of two children. His brother Ante was born 3 years earlier. When he was just three months old, his mother Iva died. His father married Marija Gudelja and five more children, Tomislav, Milka, Dane, Nedeljko and Ivan were born bringing the family to seven children.<sup>1</sup>

The village of Kozica is a very poor part of Croatia and the family eked out a subsistence living on a small plot of land measuring less than a hectare. Jose had planted a vineyard, producing grapes for the table, for drying as raisins, and for wine making, a family tradition that ensured there was always a bottle of red wine on the table. A small patch of vegetables and fruit trees provided some of the necessities while goats and rabbits produced the milk and meat. A horse did all the heavy work while a donkey provided the transport. There were no roads or motor transport, no electricity or refrigeration and communication was by word of mouth. Life was very basic.

It was interesting to note that whilst the family had little, they did have sufficient to provide a regular food and wine offerings to the Catholic Priest of the local parish, a practice which was widespread amongst the villagers. One wonders whether this practice was the outworking of their faith in God, the continuation of an old tradition, or simply Croatian generosity.

Ljubo began his basic education in 1906 and for three years he was taught to read and write the Croatian language. He developed an interest in learning and education, something which he advocated to his family throughout his life. Hardship and poverty caused him to be taken from school before the age of 10 to work on the family property, while his father went in search of work to support the large family.

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<sup>1</sup> THE MIOCEVICH FAMILY TREE [2004], picture pg. 23

Croatia and Serbia were provinces of the vast Austrian-Hungarian Empire from at least the mid 1800's through to 1914 when the First World War broke out. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria while on a visit to Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in 1914, precipitated World War 1, which ultimately wrought great loss of life and destruction upon Croatia and the whole of Europe.<sup>2</sup> To fight the war, conscription was introduced for all able bodied men over 16 years, and the Miocevic family suffered its second loss when Ljubo's brother Ivan was killed.

Before he reached conscription age, Ljubo was rendered unfit for military service by the amputation of the last joint of his right index (trigger) finger and the destruction of the hearing in one of his ears. These were acts of desperation to avoid conscription in what were desperately unstable times. The foundation of a family line of pacifism was laid.

After the war ended, Ljubo, at the age of 19, went to various parts of Croatia and Slovenia in search of work and sent money back home to help sustain the family. He, along with many other young itinerant workers, soon realised that recovery from the ravages of the war was going to be slow, and that his future in Croatia was grim, so he began to correspond with other men who had gone overseas in search of a better life. Argentina, New Zealand and Australia were the new frontiers where men could build better lives for themselves and send money back to their families, so by 1925, at the age of 25 years, he made his mind up to go to Western Australia.

## **2. AUSTRALIA BOUND**

Ljubo had saved enough money for his ticket so he packed his few possessions, farewelled his family in Kozica, and made his way on foot, by bus and train to the Italian port of Genoa to board the steamer "Ville de Verdun" bound for Australia. Although he corresponded regularly with his family and friends he did not return to Croatia for another 43 years. On board the steamer were some 800 Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian and Italian men and women seeking a new life in a land of hope and promise.

In October of 1925, after 28 days at sea, steaming via the Suez Canal, he set foot in Australia at the port of Fremantle.

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<sup>2</sup> THE BALKANS 1804-1999 by MISHA GLENNY pg. 304

### 3. THE GOLDFIELDS WOODLINE

Like many immigrant workers, Ljubo was told that well paid contract timber cutting work could be found on the 'woodline', which was then centred at Kurrawang, between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. The 'woodline' was operated by a private company, The West Australian Goldfields Firewood Supply Co, which supplied firewood and props to the underground gold mines at Kalgoorlie, was almost completely staffed by hard working Croatian and Italian men, eager to make a new way of life.<sup>3</sup>

With the help of a few friends and countrymen in Fremantle, Ljubo bought a few basic items and boarded a steam train to Kalgoorlie, and then on to Kurrawang on the company train where he signed on as a contract cutter. The work was hard and the Australian summer days were long, but he had no other skills, so he persevered. He lived in a tent and shared his life with many of his countrymen, and one man with whom he became particularly friendly was Filip Luetich.<sup>4</sup> This friendship later changed his life dramatically.

Many hundreds of men were employed as cutters, such was the demand for wood from Kurrawong and Gwalia, and the extensive forests that existed around Kalgoorlie at the time were largely cut out by the 1950's. Considering that all the cutting was done by axe and crosscut saw, it was a remarkable achievement, even if it was an environmental disaster. Now in 2004, the forests have regrown and the environment has been stabilised.

From Ljubo's personal documents, now lodged in The Batty Library of Western Australian History in Perth, it can be seen that not long after starting work on the 'woodline', he began sending money back to Croatia to support his family. The sums of money were quite extraordinarily large considering that a good contract cutter earned about 4 pounds (\$8.00) week, from which he had to buy food, tools and have some recreation (the basic or minimum wage at the time was about \$6.00 per week).

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<sup>3</sup> 'TIMBER FOR GOLD - LIFE ON THE GOLDFIELDS WOODLINE' 1899-1965 by BILL BUNBURY.

<sup>4</sup> FILIP LUETICH [1930's], photo on pg. 24

By the end of 1926, Ljubo saw that his prospects in Australia were good and sent money for two of his brothers, Ante and Dane to join him on the 'woodline'. Dane arrived in Fremantle on 13th January 1927 aboard the steamer 'Regina D'Italia' and Ante arrived in April 1927. Both joined Ljubo on the goldfields 'woodline' and the 3 brothers worked together for the next year.

In March 1928, as the financial depression of the late 1920's began to affect the gold industry and the demand for wood declined, they left the 'woodline' and went contract clearing on "Kerley" farm at Salmon Gums. When this work cut out after about 18 months in September 1929, they took the train to Kalgoorlie and then to Perth and began looking for land suitable for viticulture.

#### **4. SWAN VALLEY**

The Swan Valley was already settled by quite a number of Croatians, who had purchased failed War Service Land Settlement blocks which became available. Ljubo purchased an 11.75 acre (4.7 hectare) property on the corner of Padbury Avenue and Olive Road, Millendon, 27 kilometres north east of Perth, for nine hundred pounds (\$1,800) on 100 pounds (\$200) deposit, in September 1929. It was cleared of trees and was covered with couch grass which he proceeded to dig out with plough and maddock. Ante bought an 8.5 acre (3.4 hectare) property on Padbury Avenue, Millendon, east of the Midland Railway Company's Geraldton line, while Dane lived with Ljubo and worked around the Swan Valley.

They helped each other to plant vineyards consisting mainly of currants and sultanas for dried fruit, and some table grapes for the local market and for export to Singapore, as well as some wine grapes for home wine consumption. They worked their own properties and worked for others and in that way they survived.

In October 1929 Ante arranged to bring his wife Yurka to join him at Millendon where he had built a small one bedroom asbestos and iron cottage. Ante had married Yurka Rakich in Croatia prior to his departure for Australia in 1927, and, as was common practise, she stayed behind in the village till Ante had sufficient money for her passage to Australia. Ante,

who was a big loveable man, had a weakness for wine and this brought about his demise and early death in 1944 aged 47 years.

Yurka was loveable, hard working and loved children,<sup>5</sup> but was childless, and endured a deep loneliness throughout her long life alone. She was illiterate, could not sign her name and never learnt to speak or write a word of English for the 32 years she lived in Australia.

Ante left Yurka with a mortgage and many debts after his death, and Ljubo had to step in to save what was left. He subdivided the property and sold half and then worked the rest for many years to keep Yurka solvent. Some 10 years later, in 1954, Ljubo acquired the property and took care of Yurka till she passed away at a West Midland hospital in 1961 aged 78.

In February 1931 Ljubo renounced his allegiance to his homeland and became an Australian citizen<sup>6</sup> thus severing his ties with the land of his birth.

He decided to build a house at Padbury Avenue and with the help of the Secretary of the Swan Road Board, who drew up and approved the plan, (fee 5/- (50c)) and his friend and carpenter Marko Jujnovich of Herne Hill, a home of 3 bedrooms and lounge was constructed<sup>7</sup> The house was eventually affected by termite damage and burnt down in the 1970's.

Filip Luetich, whom Ljubo met on the 'woodline', was a Croatian from the village of Zupa which was a few kilometres from Kozica. When Filip left the 'woodline', he went to work in the deep mines in Kalgoorlie where he eventually developed pneumonia and later tuberculosis for which he was treated at Woorooloo Sanatorium (now Woorooloo Prison Farm) where he died in 1940

In their many talks while Filip was convalescing at Millendon, Ljubo learnt about Filip's 21 year old sister Manda who was still living with her parents Jure and Vida<sup>8</sup> in Zupa. Following an exchange of letters and photographs and a proposal by Ljubo, Manda agreed to come to Australia and marry him. Ljubo sent money for her fare and Manda travelled to

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<sup>5</sup> ANTE, YURKA AND RAKICH CHILDREN, photo on pg. 25

<sup>6</sup> CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION [1931], photo on pg. 26

<sup>7</sup> PADBURY AVENUE HOUSE, photo on pg. 27

<sup>8</sup> MANDA'S MOTHER AND FATHER, photo on pg. 28

Naples in Italy and boarded the P&O steamer 'Oriana' on 28th February 1932, and arrived in Fremantle 22nd March 1932.

Manda and Ljubo were married soon after at Saint Brigid's Catholic Church in Midland on 11th April 1932, and were attended by four bridesmaids and four groomsmen.<sup>9</sup> A celebration breakfast followed.

Manda gave birth to a son, Voyka, on the 29th December 1932, and to a second son, Dinko, on 15th April 1934 and both were christened in 1937.<sup>10</sup> Their lives on the vineyard were hard but, probably, not different to that of other immigrants who made up the Croatian community. Many countrymen like Luka Prgomet<sup>11</sup> who later married Vid Marinovich's sister Anna, shared their home and hospitality bringing news of family and friends.

Ljubo and Dane were actively involved in the Croatian community activities and assisted in the construction of the 'Jedinstvo' (Unity) Hall on McDonald Road, Millendon.<sup>12</sup> The volunteers hand made all the cement bricks and laid them to build the hall, which still stands today. The hall has been extended and modernised to include electric spit roasting and buca (bowls) facilities and is still the focus of Croatian activities in the Swan Valley. Ljubo taught himself to speak, read and write English, and was able to complete all official documents, including his tax returns, quite an achievement for one with only a basic Croatian language education.

Dane lived with Ljubo and Manda till about 1935, when due to friction in the family, Dane moved to Spearwood and then to Fremantle.

Ljubo paid for Manda's 20 year old sister Ursa<sup>13</sup> to come from Croatia and join them at Millendon in 1940 just as World War 2 was breaking out in Europe. She later met and married Vid Marinovich, a quarryman and vegetable grower, and moved to Spearwood.

Ljubo's marriage to Manda was strained to breaking point and in 1940 following an extramarital relationship, Dane and Manda were forced to leave Millendon. They went to Fremantle and then to Spearwood, taking Voyka

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<sup>9</sup> LJUBO AND MANDA'S WEDDING, photo on pg. 29

<sup>10</sup> VOYKA AND DINKO'S CHRISTENING, photo on pg. 29

<sup>11</sup> LUKA PRGOMET [1940's], photo on pg. 30

<sup>12</sup> JEDINSTVO HALL, MILLENDON, photo on pg. 31

<sup>13</sup> URSA LUETICH, photo on pg. 31

and Dinko with them. Ljubo engaged solicitors Olney and Neville to institute divorce proceedings after a private detective had collected evidence for the 1941 Supreme Court case. It was a messy and painful affair which captured the attention of the scandal columns of the “Mirror” weekend newspaper. Custody of Voyka and Dinko was granted to Ljubo and there were no visiting rights for Manda. Other than short clandestine visits to Upper Swan and Midland High Schools, she did not have a relationship with her boys for about 10 years. Voyka 9 and Dinko 7 years old returned to the Swan Valley to live with their father in July 1941. They resumed their education at Upper Swan School, after a 9 months break, during which time they had attended Beaconsfield Primary School.

Ljubo’s hurt and bitterness over the divorce greatly affected him and the boys, but they were sustained by the kindness, love and generosity of Danko and Ruza Ozich, Steve and Mary Viskovich, and Steve and Mary Udiljak and others, and by the knowledge that people would eventually forget the perceived shame brought to the Mioceovich name at that time.

The need of a mother for his children and a life companion for himself, led 41 year old Ljubo to meet Mare Kraljevich, a 41 year old spinster, sister of Steve Kraljevich. They married in February 1942.<sup>14</sup> Mare was brought to Australia by her brother in March 1937 and shared his home on Campersic Road, Millendon. The two families enjoyed many happy times together over spit roasts, games of ‘buca’ and singing Croatia songs to the tune of a piano accordion.

It was a tragically short marriage which ended in April 1945 when Mare suffered a stroke and died aged 44.

Ljubo was alone once again and the boys were without a mother. The war was coming to an end and a rallying call came out from the new Federation of Yugoslavia comprising Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia for all former countrymen to return to the homeland and help to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure of the new Yugoslav nation under President Marshal Tito.

It was a very persuasive call and one which caught Ljubo at a vulnerable time, so late in 1946 he sold his Padbury Avenue vineyard to

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<sup>14</sup> LJUBO AND MARE’S WEDDING, photo on pg. 32

Steve Perich, for two thousand pounds (\$4000). He arranged a passport<sup>15</sup> and prepared to join the many hundreds leaving Australia on the steamer 'Partisanka' bound for Yugoslavia. Fortunately this did not happen.

## **5. FREMANTLE**

Meanwhile in July 1943, Manda and Dane married after living together for about 3 years. Manda operated a Boarding House at Nairn Street, in Fremantle, while Dane worked at the Port of Fremantle as a ship's painter. Dane joined the Citizen's Military Force in 1942 and served in Brisbane and Karrakatta till his discharge in 1945. They later built a new home at South Fremantle, where they lived for many years.

They established themselves in the Fremantle and Spearwood Croatian Community and made many friends while providing hospitality to the working single men.

Manda and Dane moved to Boston Way in Booragoon where Dane passed away in 1978 aged 68. Manda moved to a townhouse in Walsh Place in Booragoon in 1981 and passed away at the Villa Dalmacia Nursing Home in Spearwood on 3 January 1998 aged 86 years. The hurt and bitterness from her first marriage never really left her, even to the end. Some of her possessions have been gifted to the Swan Guildford Historical Society in Guildford as a reminder of the contributions made by Croatian settlers in the Swan Valley.

## **6. BASKERVILLE**

After moving from Padbury Avenue, Ljubo and his boys took up temporary residence in a brick and iron shed on Steve Kraljevich's property on Great Northern Highway, Baskerville, in preparation for sailing on the next ship to Yugoslavia. The shed was unlined and was used in part as a wine cellar and was shared by two elderly bachelors, Stana Yukich and Mate Beus, both in the casual employ of Steve Kraljevich. The shed was cold and draughty in winter and extremely hot in summer and was not a good environment in which to live, however it became 'home' for 3 years. Ljubo

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<sup>15</sup> LJUBO, VOYKA AND DINKO [1946], photo on pg. 32

built a small kitchen on the rear verandah and a tank collected rain water from the roof for drinking, cooking and washing. He worked wherever he could earn a living by doing what he knew best, labouring in the vineyard.

Reading the letters that filtered back from those who had sold everything, and gone back to their homeland, Ljubo soon realised that the propaganda that was used to encourage many to go to Yugoslavia was not matched by the reality of life over there. He concluded that the education which he valued so much, and which he wanted his sons to have, was not going to eventuate in the new nation. He was determined that his sons would have the education which he was denied and which led to his life of hard labour. He, along with others,<sup>16</sup> decided to cancel his plans to go 'home'.

Voyka completed his primary schooling before the family moved to the shed at Baskerville in 1944 and achieved high marks and got good reports. He went on to Midland High School where he was selected for the professional class and completed his Junior Certificate in 1947 achieving good marks. At age 15 he was selected to go on to Perth's elite Modern School in Subiaco to do two years study for a Leaving Certificate and University Matriculation. His concentration started to wane during this time as his fractured home life and other activities distracted him, and his grades suffered accordingly. He did not go to University, despite his father's urging.

During the long hours of travel on buses to and from school Voyka became friendly with Ken Squires and Mark Gadean, the Beam Bus Company drivers on the Upper Swan and Bullsbrook route. Often he caught the last night bus to Bullsbrook and persuaded the driver to let him drive it back home to Baskerville, although he was underage and was unlicensed. His love affair with buses was so intense, that using an old packing case laid on its side as his desk, he did scaled pencil drawings of every bus in the Beam fleet, truly works of art. For some reason, Voyka was nicknamed 'Charlie' at this time, and the name stuck to him for the rest of his days.

Dinko completed his primary schooling at Upper Swan School at the top of his class in 1946 and he spent the next 3 years at Midland High School in the Professional Class studying for his Junior Certificate, while living in the 'shed'. He passed his exams in 1949 with mediocre results, and

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<sup>16</sup> A CROATIAN GATHERING [1946], photo on pg. 33

despite his father's protests decided to do an apprenticeship in a trade in 1950, rather than go on to Perth Modern School like his brother.

During the school vacations both Voyka and Dinko worked on the Swan Valley vineyards picking grapes or barking currant vines to earn pocket money and to help others out. Currants were a prime crop in the 1950's, while today they are rarely grown because of the changed economics of the grape industry.

The Swan Athletic Club, a breakaway from the old established Swan Valley Sporting Club, was established on McDonald Road Herne Hill in 1945 and both Voyka and Dinko became foundational members. They helped construct the soccer ground, played soccer in the Junior 'B' and Reserve Teams<sup>17</sup> and became involved in all the social activities. Dinko drew the plans for the original change rooms and Voyka, who had a gift for public speaking, was M.C for many dances and weddings. The club became a centre for Swan Valley youth and many long lasting relationships were formed.

## 7. SWAN VIEW

By 1950 Ljubo could see that his boys were being affected by bad local influences and decided to buy a property of his own away from the Swan Valley. He purchased a 6 acre (2.4 ha) block with an old cottage on Talbot Road, Swan View, at a cost of 1450 pounds (\$2,900). It is interesting to note that in 1950 the basic wage (today's minimum wage) was \$13.10, therefore the old property represented about 4.25 years of gross earnings. Today's minimum wage over the same period would barely purchase a home building block in the same area. The orchard is now a residential subdivision and the old house has been demolished.

The old Swan View house was very basic and had mains water and electricity, and a pan system toilet. Whilst cycling daily from Swan View to Millendon, a distance of about 10 kilometres, to work Yurka's property, Ljubo also established a vineyard and orchard at Swan View in his spare

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<sup>17</sup> SWAN ATHLETIC CLUB, RESERVE TEAM 1954, photo on pg. 34

time. Seasonally, he took full time work with the Metropolitan Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage Board digging sewerage mains through Midvale and Midland. There were no hydraulic excavators in the 1950's.

In August 1951, Voyka persuaded his father to buy a 1928 Whippet Roadster two seater from Gordon Bambrook of Baskerville. It had a canvas roof, no side curtains, leaf springs, no working shock absorbers and had a 'dicky' seat in the back. Ljubo could not drive, so Voyka drove the Whippet everywhere the family went. Regrettably it ended its days at South Guildford and became food for George Di Candilo's crusher.

Due to some inconsistencies with family member's names, they were formally corrected by Deed Poll in August 1954. Mioceвич was previously Mijoceвич, Voyka was Voyko and Dinko was Ivan. These changes legitimised names that were already in use and eliminated future problems.

## 8. BACK TO THE SWAN VALLEY

In 1959, after both Voyka and Dinko had married and left home, Ljubo left the drainage work, sold the Swan View property to the Nind family and moved to Yurka's house at Millendon. He continued to care for the ageing Yurka and work the property till, in 1963 after Yurka's death he sold the vineyard to Lile and Olga Bondi and moved to live and work on the extensive vineyards of Dan and Mate Sokol at Lefroy Avenue, Herne Hill.

In 1964 he retired from full time work and bought a house at 60 Great Northern Highway, Middle Swan, from the Chatfield estate for 2,100 pounds (\$4,200). He lived there contentedly, still riding his bike out to the Swan Valley to visit friends and help them where required. He provided hospitality and accommodation for many young migrant men, particularly his nephews the four Rudez boys, till they got established.

Ljubo returned to Croatia in 1968 with Dinko, who was on a business trip to Germany, It was Ljubo's first visit in 43 years, and he met his two brothers<sup>18 19</sup> and sister<sup>20</sup> and their families for the last time. He travelled

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<sup>18</sup> TOMISLAV AND LJUBO [1968], photo on pg. 35

<sup>19</sup> LJUBO AND NEDJELKO [1968], photo on pg. 36

<sup>20</sup> LJUBO - MILKA AND LAZO [1968], photo on pg. 36

extensively around Yugoslavia for about 6 months visiting Belgrade, Split, Dubrovnik, Kozica and Zupa.

He was a loving, caring and unselfish father and grand father, one who had a hard life, and had his share of sadness and disappointment. He lived frugally, yet he was generous with his few means and helped many people. He was honest, a good friend and neighbour and was respected by many.

His greatest shock and disappointment came when in 1976 Voyka suffered a heart attack and died at the age of 43. Ljubo never recovered from that blow and passed away 6 months later aged 76.

Ljubo Mioceovich's life may not be known and recorded in the annals of Australian history, yet he made a lasting and significant impact on the lives of those around him, particularly his sons.

## **9. VOYKA [CHARLIE]**

It was not surprising, that after leaving school, in 1950 at 17, Voyka got an apprenticeship with the Beam Bus Company at its Redcliffe workshop. He loved his work and made rapid progress.

He excelled in the theoretical classes at Perth Technical College motor vehicle section on Mounts Bay Road [opposite the new Bus Station] and was Apprentice of the Year on one occasion. He soon earned the respect of the manager, Bill Hebitton, his foreman Colin Thompson and his workmates and later became foreman of the workshop and established many new and improved practises.

Of course, as he became a skilled diesel mechanic, his skills were not lost on the Croatian community or his many trucking mates like Maurice Yelcich, Leo Polinelli and George McShane and soon he was working nights and weekends repairing their tractors and trucks. During his holidays, Charlie went truck driving, particularly carting wheat, from Bindi Bindi and Wubin to Fremantle.

While he was living at Swan View, Voyka bought a 3.5 hp single cylinder BSA motorbike for travel to work at Redcliffe, but soon it was upgraded to a 650cc BSA 'Goldflash'. It had a windscreen, crash bars and a

lap rug, the all weather accessories of the time. He was called up for National Service in 1951 and joined the Army serving for 3 months at Karrakatta, where his leadership skills developed and he rose to the rank of Corporal. In 1952 he was selected to attend a course at the School of Military Engineering in Liverpool, N.S.W. After National Service he joined the Citizens Military Force and enjoyed the weekend camps and later was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Whilst working at the Beam Bus Company at Redcliffe he met a young 15-year-old girl named Elizabeth (Betty) Buxton, who worked for McRobertson Millar Aviation [before Ansett] at Guilford Airport [now Perth Airport].

They became engaged to be married in February 1954.<sup>21</sup> The 'Goldflash' made way for a two door Vauxhall Coupe and life was beautiful. Their wedding followed in 1955 at the Methodist Church in Midland. They were only 18 and 22 years old. They had three sons, Gary Linton in 1956, Mark David in 1959 and John Bradley in 1961. All three sons were born at Swan Districts Hospital at Middle Swan.

With the help of Ljubo they paid a deposit on 7 acres of industrial land at South Guildford adjoining the Perth Airport for the purchase price of 1500 pounds [\$3,000] early in 1955. Even at this early stage Charlie had an idea that he would one day start his own business, hence the industrial land. This land had on it an ex-air force building that after the war had been used by the State Housing Commission as temporary accommodation for returned servicemen.

Being of very basic accommodation Betty and Charlie renovated it to make it into a comfortable home. They built a new kitchen and laundry and replaced the corrugated walls with asbestos sheeting. The hazard of asbestos was not known to them and was used extensively for home building at that time. This land was resumed by the Civil Aviation Department in 1963 for airport extensions. They were generously compensated for the compulsory resumption and in 1964 they moved into a new home in Melville where they were living when Charlie died in 1976.

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<sup>21</sup> Voyka and Elizabeth's Wedding, photo on pg. 37

Charlie began part time studies towards an associateship in Mechanical Engineering at the WA Institute of Technology, now Curtin University, on the day release program. As well as taking on this study and holding down his job at the Beam Bus Company, Charlie spent his weekends and after work on some nights repairing interstate trucks for Maurie Yelcich and others.

Alex Wright, Kevin Smyth and Les Robinson who were apprentice diesel mechanics at the Beam Bus Company, often worked with him, as did his brother Dinko who was studying for his engineering qualifications at that time. This work was carried out in the yard at the side of the home in South Guildford.

However, in 1959 Charlie was struck down by a mysterious paralysis in his legs and was hospitalised at Royal Perth Hospital for some months. His condition was serious and when this paralysis moved up to his arms and chest there was talk of him being put into an iron lung to assist with breathing. This was not needed when large doses of cortisone reversed the paralysis and he gradually recovered and returned to work part time and later full time. He was out of hospital only a few days before his second son Mark was born.

In 1959 the W.A. Government formed the Metropolitan [Perth] Passenger Transport Trust [MTT] and bought Beam, Metro, Scarborough and Kalamunda Bus Companies to form the nucleus of a modernised transport group. Voyka was seconded to the Perth Head Office of the MTT to assist in planning the proposed central bus maintenance and overhaul facility to be built at Kensington Street, East Perth.

At this time he was appointed Assistant to the Chief Engineer, Tony Strick. After Kensington Street Workshop opened in 1962 he was appointed Workshop Superintendent. Much of the innovation in the layout of the workshop, the equipment and chassis testing dynamometer were his work and brought new standards of efficiency to the industry. He continued his studies whilst working for the MTT and graduated in Mechanical Engineering in 1966.

In 1964 Charlie was sent to England for three months to oversee new bus manufacturing contracts and to study new transport and maintenance equipment and systems. His wife, Betty, accompanied him and they were

able to spend two weeks in Yugoslavia, visiting the birthplaces of Charlie's parents and meeting with relatives. They hired a car in Dubrovnik and drove up the coast to Rejeka after which they travelled overland by bus and train to Amsterdam and then flew on to Heathrow Airport, London.

Charlie resigned from the MTT in 1968 and set up his own business on an Industrial site in Willetton, specialising in the dynamic balancing of rotating vehicle and industrial components. The business was named VEEM ENGINEERING after its founders Voyka & Elizabeth Elsie Mioceovich.

He took a significant risk by moving into a little appreciated technology and succeeded, blazing a trail that many have since followed. He was truly a pioneer in the dynamic balancing industry in W.A. He was encouraged to enter this area of engineering by lecturer Minchin who was in the Engineering Dept. at the University of W.A. In the eight years before Charlie's death VEEM became established as an engineering machine shop for the mining industry and in the building, repairing and balancing of tail shafts and specialised dynamic balancing.

The industrial land of one and a quarter acres was purchased in 1967 for \$11,000 and a very modest workshop and office was built. Charlie subcontracted the building and P.C. Airey & Associates designed the structure. Bob Collins Pty Ltd constructed the steel work. The business was very successful and during the next five years the workshop space was doubled in size and then doubled again. When the business commenced in September 1968, there was only Charlie and one tradesman in the workshop and Betty in the office but at the time of Charlie's death on the 10th February 1976 VEEM employed twenty five people.

Soon after VEEM was established, an opportunity to move into an area of manufacturing of machine tools arose when the Tulloch Lathe venture in Sydney ended, so VEEM bought out the drawings, patterns, tooling and stock. It had been used extensively by Technical and High Schools as well as by hobbyists throughout Australia and the project appeared to have a sound future. It became the VEEM Lathe and continued to be purchased for use in Technical and High Schools.

During the early part of manufacturing by VEEM there was the advantage of tariff protection and State price advantage of 10% that ensured profitability for a short time. However, establishing the manufacturing

processes to the quality levels required, whilst competing with foreign imports, proved to be unviable and manufacturing ceased in 1978.

In February 1976, 8 years after starting VEEM, Voyka collapsed at his factory and died of a heart attack. His eldest son Gary was by his side. For nearly seven years Elizabeth [Betty] skilfully kept the VEEM business going while under significant pressure from bankers, creditors and employees. Dinko was able to give much technical and emotional support to Betty and his nephews during this difficult time.

From 1976 until 1982 VEEM employed three Engineer Managers with varying degrees of success and Betty was pleased when at the end of 1982 her sons indicated that they wanted to take on the challenge of running the family business. At that time Gary was 26, Mark 23 and Brad 21.

Gary had completed his apprenticeship in first class machining, Mark had graduated with a degree in Applied Science [Engineering] from Curtin University and Brad had completed his apprenticeship in diesel mechanics with the Perth Metropolitan Transport Trust. The three brothers have worked together successfully ever since. Brad later went on to gain a degree in Business from Murdoch University graduating in 1998.

Today, in 2004, VEEM is a thriving business employing over 140 people at its new Canning Vale plant where dynamic balancing, machining, marine maintenance and modern non-ferrous casting facilities produce international quality products. The foundations for VEEM's success today were laid in 1968 by its visionary founder Voyka [Charlie] Mioceovich.

## **10. DINKO**

Dinko wanted an apprenticeship in automotive electrical work and joined M.J.Bateman Pty. Ltd. in Milligan Street, Perth as a junior worker in 1950 at age 15. When an opening didn't occur he resigned and went to the Western Australian Government Railway Workshops at Midland and started an apprenticeship in Mechanical Fitting in September 1950. He attended apprenticeship classes at Midland Technical School (Railway Institute) and with the encouragement and support of George Groves, the Master of Apprentices, he started night school in 1951. He was a member of the team

of apprentices who assembled some of the new 'W' class steam locomotives during the 6 month long fitters strike of 1951.

In 1952 Dinko went into the Royal Australian Air Force for National Service Training at Pearce Air Force Base for an enjoyable 6 months, and then returned to the Railways. He was transferred to the Drawing Office in 1953 to work on the design of tooling, jigs and fixtures for production engineering and completed his apprenticeship there in 1955. He continued his studies at Perth Technical College and received a Mechanical Draughtsman's Certificate and was appointed a Mechanical Draughtsman on steam locomotives in 1956. He completed a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, in 1958 and was promoted to Assistant Engineer on steam and diesel locomotives.

A casual meeting at Swan View's Rocky Pool between Dinko and a pretty young lady, Mavis McGlew, developed into a loving life long relationship and in 1956 and when she was 19 and he was 22 they became engaged. By then they had progressed from travelling by bike to 250cc BSA motorcycle, to a 500cc Matchless, to a 650cc BSA 'Goldflash' to a 1936 Ford 10 sedan and finally to a 1953 Holden sedan. Dinko, with Mavis, began visiting his mother and resumed the relationship which had been broken for about 10 years. Mavis, who lived at East Midland, was educated at Swan View School and Midland High School and worked at various sales and clerical jobs around Midland including Coles, Freecorns and G.F. Hoare & Son till 1958.

In order to try and finish more of the 23 unit Associateship in Mechanical Engineering course Dinko and 3 WAGR colleagues took 9 months leave without pay in 1958 and studied full time at Perth Technical College. Dinko's fiancé and his father supported him during that important time and, he graduated in 1960.

Mavis and Dinko married in 1958<sup>22</sup>, and with Ljubo's help, they bought an old house in St. Kilda Road, Rivervale for 1,500 pounds (\$3,000). Mavis resigned from her job and became a loving homemaker.

In 1959 Dinko resigned from the Railways and joined the Department of Civil Aviation in Perth, where he developed the Chamberlain-BHB

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<sup>22</sup> DINKO AND MAVIS'S WEDDING, photo on pg. 37

Tractor Loader Grader unit, and a Medium Duty Airport Fire Tender both used extensively on Australia's Secondary Airports.

B.H.B. Engineers in Bayswater offered him a position as Design Engineer in 1962 and this led to the development in 1965 of the B.H.B. Articulated Tractor Crane of which over 4,000 were built over the ensuing 25 years. In 1968 he left BHB to start a joint Engineering and Concrete venture in Clune Street, Bayswater, with a concrete products manufacturer, but after establishing the business he sold to his partner.

Mavis and Dinko were fortunate to be able to adopt baby Leanne in 1963 and in 1965 to adopt Karen. These beautiful girls brought great joy to the home and a sense of completeness to the family. But surprise, surprise, Mavis became pregnant and in February 1968, 10 years after their wedding, a son, John, was born.

The St. Kilda Road house was sold in 1966 and another house purchased in Redcliffe Road, Redcliffe. This industrial property was 2000 square metres in area and cost \$4,000. Dinko had a vision to build a 4 wheel drive slewing crane, so he bought an ex army 'Staghound' 4 wheel drive Armoured Personnel Carrier at auction and proceeded to strip it in the back yard. He prepared detail drawings for the telescopic boom hydraulic crane, but the project stalled for the lack of money and it was sold to Associated Mobile Equipment Company Pty Ltd (later Linmac). The crane was never finished and a great opportunity was missed.

The family moved to a new \$30,000 two storey home at Vernon Street in Trigg on 1 January 1970 and Dinko began work as Research and Development Engineer with Gaydor Plastics Ltd in Osborne Park. It was interesting work in new plastics production methods and tooling. In 1972 Davmar Pty Ltd offered him a position as Technical Director to head up the design of a complete range of Rough Terrain Cranes and Forklifts, but after one year and the production of only one crane the whole Marfleet and Weight group which owned Davmar was taken over by Prok and Davmar was sold back to its founder Dave Norman. Norman had no interest in cranes and dispensed with the project and the staff.

Mavis and Dinko became committed Christians in 1972 under Garth and Joy Eichhorn's ministry and were baptised at Wembley Downs Baptist

Church by Rev. John Ridden. They now attend Riverview Church at Burswood where their Christian life has been greatly enriched.

Mavis was pregnant with Ivan in 1973 when the family moved to a flat in Morgantown, Carnarvon. Dinko commuted 50 kilometres daily for 3 months to the Texada Salt mine on Lake McCloud to work on the redesign of the salt handling system for loading the road trains which transported washed salt to the ship loader at Cape Cuvier. Mavis went into premature labour and the Doctor decided she had to be flown to Perth by the Royal Flying Doctor Service for urgent treatment at KEMH. Ivan was born, but prematurely, and passed away after 3 weeks. Anyone who has lost a child or spouse knows the pain and grief such a tragedy brings, where only the grace of God provides solace.

The family was blessed with the safe arrival of another son, Michael, in 1975 seven years after John's birth. The Trigg house was a busy place for many years as the children grew and began their education at North Beach Primary School and later at Carine High School.

Dinko took an appointment at the WA public Works Department working in a team designing the Perth Medical Centre 'G' block next to Sir Charles Gairdiner Hospital. It was a massive project and he designed the medical gas distribution and the cafeteria air conditioning. He later transferred to Wembley Technical College to lecture in Engineering.

In 1978 after a 10 year break away from the company, Dinko rejoined BHB as Chief Design Engineer and continued the development of a broad range of mobile telescopic cranes and access platforms till 1986 when he resigned to form his own consultancy operating from the Trigg home office.

D. Mioceovich Pty Ltd specialised in cranes, access platforms and lifting appliances and became state distributor for Robway Crane Safety Systems as well as agents for Imtec slewing rings and mechanical power transmission products. The company was an approved Design Reviewer for crane designs being submitted to Worksafe WA and processed in excess of 1,400 designs. Eldest son John, who had graduated in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Western Australia, and had previously worked with several engineering companies, joined his father as an Engineer in 1995. The business was separated from the home in 1997 and moved to an office warehouse in Enterprise Crescent Malaga.

Dinko retired from full time work in 1999 after 50 years of rewarding and challenging Mechanical Engineering. Mavis and Dinko bought a holiday home in Busselton, sold the Trigg family home after 30 years and replaced it with a town house at Ascot Waters.

Leanne married Ron Larsen and had two children, Mathew in 1983 and Teneale 1985.

Karen married Tony Clarke and had two children, Jacob in 1993 and Zac in 2002.

John opened his engineering consultancy in 1998 at Technology Park in Bentley, taking on a major design project in the logging industry.

Michael graduated from Curtin University in sales and marketing and has worked in various organisations.

Both John and Michael are bachelors at present. (2005).

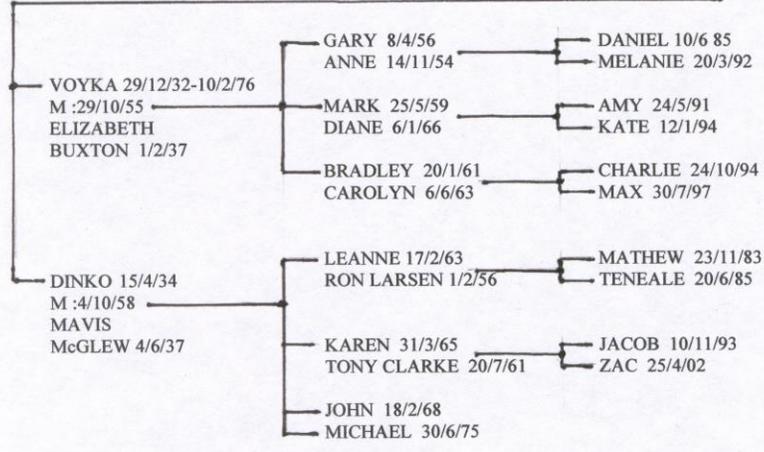
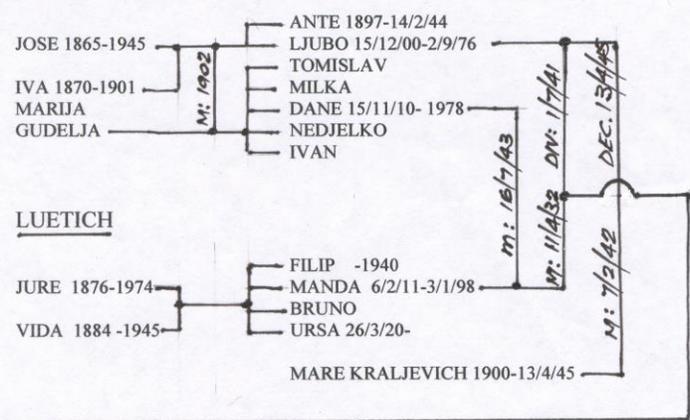
## APPENDIX AND REFERENCES

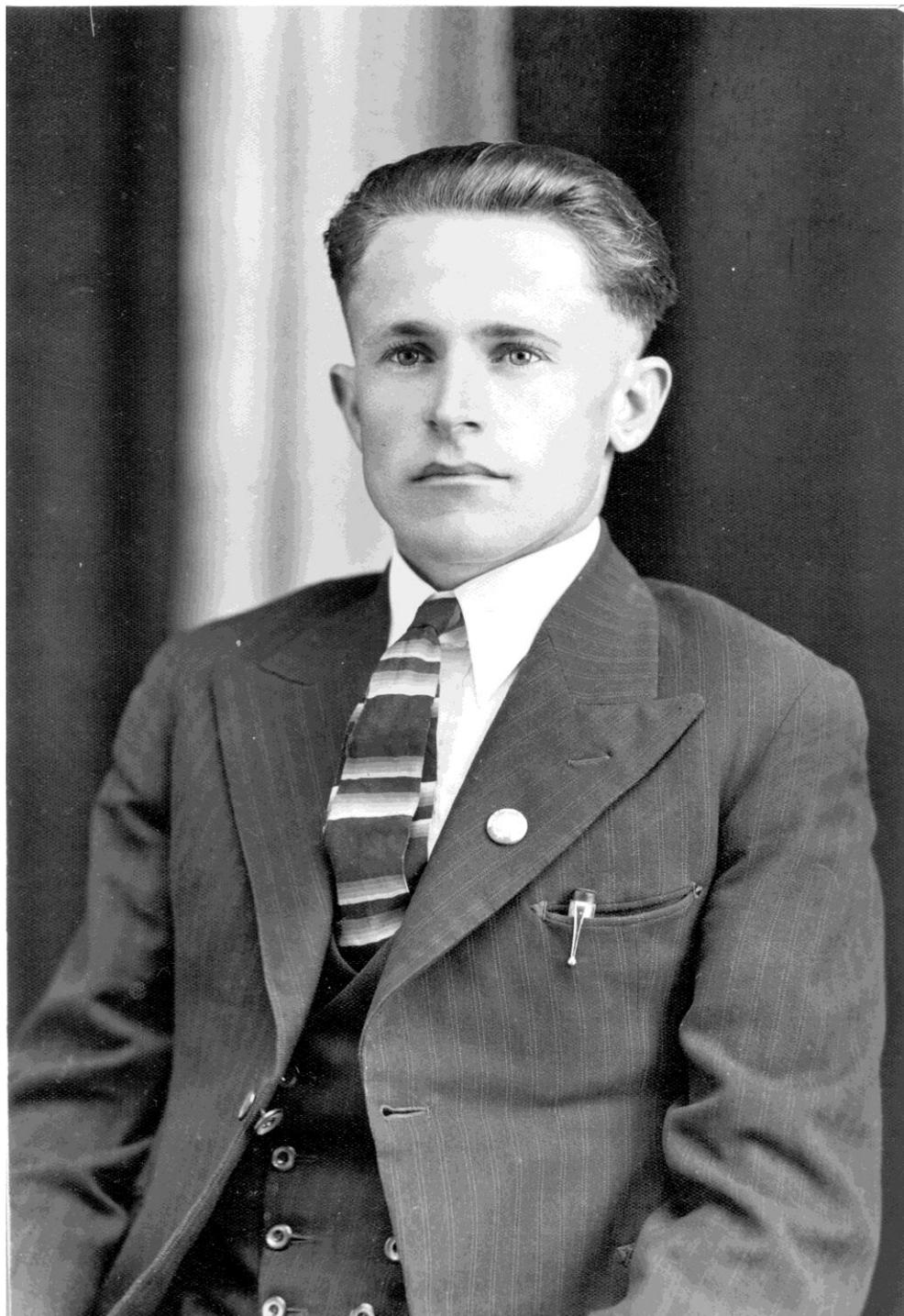
- 1 THE MIOCEVICH FAMILY TREE [2004]
- 2 THE BALKANS 1804-1999 by MISHA GLENNY p. 304
- 3 'TIMBER FOR GOLD-LIFE ON THE GOLDFIELDS WOODLINE'  
1899-1965 by BILL BUNBURY.
- 4 FILIP LUETICH [1930'S]
- 5 ANTE, YURKA AND RAKICH CHILDREN
- 6 CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION [1931]
- 7 PADBURY AVENUE HOUSE
- 8 MANDA'S MOTHER AND FATHER
- 9 LJUBO AND MANDA'S WEDDING
- 10 VOYKA AND DINKO'S CHRISTENING
- 11 LUKA PRGOMET [1940'S]
- 12 JEDINSTVO HALL, MILLENDON
- 13 URSA LUETICH
- 14 LJUBO AND MARE'S WEDDING
- 15 LJUBO, VOYKA AND DINKO [1946]
- 16 A CROATIAN GATHERING [1946]
- 17 SWAN ATHLETIC CLUB, RESERVE TEAM 1954
- 18 TOMISLAV AND LJUBO [1968]
- 19 LJUBO AND NEDJELKO [1968]
- 20 LJUBO - - MILKA AND LAZO [1968]
- 21 VOYKA AND BETTY'S WEDDING
- 22 DINKO AND MAVIS'S WEDDING

Please note that all of the above photos listed can be found on the CD itself. These are larger versions of those displayed on the following pages, and are labelled properly to make them easy to find.

THE MIOCEVICH FAMILY TREE 2004

MIOCEVICH







5

# Commonwealth of Australia.

## CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION.

By virtue of the *Nationality Act 1920* <sup>1930</sup> ~~1926~~ of the said Commonwealth and the British Nationality and Status [of Aliens Acts 1914 to 1922 of the United Kingdom, **I, the Governor-General in and over the Commonwealth of Australia**, certify that I have received an application supported by a Statutory Declaration, from **Ljubo Mijosevich**,  
 now residing at **Millendon, Western Australia**,  
 hitherto a **Jugo Slav** citizen whose description appears in the margin, and on the faith of the statements appearing therein, and having regard to the fact that the applicant has formally renounced his allegiance to the **Kingdom of Jugo Slavia**  
 and has sworn allegiance to HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V., his heirs and successors, I, the said Governor-General, with the advice of **The Federal Executive Council**, grant to the said **Ljubo Mijosevich** this **Certificate of Naturalization** whereby, subject to the provisions of the above-mentioned Acts, and of any other law affecting the rights of naturalized persons, the said **Ljubo Mijosevich** becomes entitled to all POLITICAL and other RIGHTS, POWERS, and PRIVILEGES, and becomes subject to all OBLIGATIONS, DUTIES and LIABILITIES to which a NATURAL-BORN BRITISH SUBJECT is entitled or subject and, as from the date of these presents, has to all intents and purposes the status of a NATURAL-BORN BRITISH SUBJECT.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Australia



at **Melbourne**

the **Second** day of **February**

One thousand nine hundred and **Thirtyone**

By His Excellency's Command.

ISAAC A. ISAACS

Governor-General.











