

Back from Down Under

Mission gives Hermiston couple feel for life in Australia

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
Staff Writer

Unexpected glimpses into the lives of everyday Australians punctuated Garry and Sheila Reynolds' life for the past 18 months.

The retired Hermiston couple returned home last week from a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Melbourne, Australia, where they spent 40 to 50 hours a week preserving digital copies of historical documents at the Public Records Office Victoria.

"It gave us real insight into the type of life people lived," Garry said.

That life was often a difficult one. Death inquests from the 1800s, for example, discussed women who died after their heavy skirts caught fire while cooking and children who fell into tubs of scalding hot water used for laundry.

"There would be a fisherman who got a hook caught in his hand, and from that he got gangrene and died," Garry said. "It was an unbelievably dangerous time."

Other records provided more light-hearted quirks of personality, such as Louisa Elizabeth Morant's official, notarized last will and testament from 1938 that for some reason had a lemon butter recipe scribbled upside-down on the bot-

tom, perhaps as a last-minute bequeathment.

Sheila snapped a picture of the recipe and tried it later.

"It was delicious!" she said.

There was also a will that had a precisely trimmed rectangular hole in the center. Someone had apparently taken the phrase "I'm cutting you out of my will" literally.

In a collection of "petty sessions" court records (the equivalent of today's municipal courts), whimsical doodles covered the margins next to descriptions of the proceedings.

"The clerk evidently was getting bored, because there were beautiful little sketches all through the book," Garry said. "I doubt the judge knew that was going on."

Those little flashes of personality have been preserved in boxes at the Public Records Office Victoria, known more commonly as the PROV, in a vast warehouse of shelves Garry described as reminiscent of Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Each day Garry, Sheila, and four to eight other church volunteers would pull documents out of boxes and gently remove the string or ribbon that held them together. After pressing the creases out, they would use a machine with a mounted camera to create a high-quality digital picture of the document.

The pictures will be available to the public through the PROV, but — in return for all the free



The Reynolds noticed a recipe for lemon butter written on a will they were archiving in Australia.

volunteer labor provided — will also be made available to the LDS church's family history website familysearch.org, where volunteer "indexers" from all over the world can type the document's details into a digitally searchable database for people looking for clues to their ancestor's past.

Although most people associate Mormon missionaries with pairs of young men going door to door in shirts and ties, married couples whose children are grown can also apply to go on service missions that can include anything from running a church welfare ranch to giving tours of Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

While the Reynolds worked to help others with their family history, Garry also used the opportunity to collect more information about his own. His father, a Merchant Marine, met his mother while stationed in Australia and the two were later married by



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY SHEILA REYNOLDS

Sheila and Garry Reynolds pose for a photo during a weekend outing in Melbourne, Australia.

proxy over short wave radio so she could immigrate to the United States. Living in Australia gave Garry the opportunity to meet relatives on his mother's side and to find family history documents including the World War II service records of his grandfather, who was wounded in France.

"He knows what his grandfather looked like now," Sheila said.

On weekends, eager to escape the windowless rooms in the PROV, Sheila said she and her husband enjoyed getting to know Melbourne and the surrounding area.

"It's very artsy, with 4 million people, and parks everywhere," she said.

The climate was warm and temperate, with sweet-smelling Eucalyptus trees and flocks of red

and blue parrots known as Rosellas that would descend on the street where the Reynolds lived in a little third-floor walk-up.

"They mate for life, so you'd see little pairs," Garry said.

The couple fell in love with the beauty of the countryside, the brilliant blues of the ocean and Australian landmarks such as the "massive" Sydney Harbor that Sheila said was like nothing she had ever seen. Garry said it wasn't a pleasant sight to be greeted with snow when they landed at the Pasco airport.

"We had just come from a beautiful summer day," he said.

Even though Australia is an English-speaking first world country, there were still differences in culture, language and food to get used to, as well as

the animal life. Sheila said she missed cottage cheese but enjoyed the abundant fish and chips, and they found out that Australians eat pumpkin on just about everything, including spaghetti and pizza.

While in Australia the Reynolds befriended their neighbors, including a woman who worked as a solicitor (a type of attorney) in the court system. When she found out Garry is a former attorney and retired Circuit Court judge, she invited them to a sentencing hearing and to tea with the judge so they could learn more about Australia's court system.

The courtroom is much more formal, Garry said, with the attorneys in robes and wigs and everyone bowing to each other.

"It was fun to see how different things are," he said.

PARK:

continued from Page A1

than the next highest project.

"We're going to be hitting radio, newspapers, social media, et cetera to really get people mobilized to vote for Hermiston," said Hermiston parks director Larry Fetter.

Work is already underway to redesign and expand Sunset Park, located on Northeast Fourth Street. Fetter said crews started landscaping the area last fall, and tore out an asphalt driveway that led into the Public Works Department on Fourth Street in order to move the entrance onto Elm Avenue. That, he said, will allow the park to combine with an adjacent city lot, giving kids a couple of acres to play — about twice as much room as before.

It also will fill the need of bringing more recreational opportunities to Hermiston's east side, Fetter said, as the west side of the city has most of the city's park acreage.



AP FILE PHOTO

Portland Trail Blazers' C.J. McCollum and Damian Lillard celebrate a basket by McCollum against the Dallas Mavericks in Dallas, Tuesday, Feb. 7.

The city removed outdated playground equipment last summer, which Fetter said did not meet safety standards. If they are selected, Fetter said the Moda Assist Program would double their budget for installing a new playground at the park. He said the equipment would be similar to what was installed recently at Victory Square Park near West 11th Street.

"We could get a very nice play structure," he

said, estimating the payout to be about \$20,000.

Fetter said he was contacted directly by the Moda



EO FILE PHOTO

Sunset Park in Hermiston could get a new playground funded by Moda Health if fans vote for it through a Portland Trail Blazers fundraiser.

Assist Program two weeks ago, which was looking for parks to feature in Eastern Oregon. Sunset Park fit the

bill perfectly, he said, and they are excited about the possibilities for the neighborhood.

Go vote

To vote for the Hermiston Sunset project, go to www.trailblazers.com/assists.

"It's really a gem," Fetter said. "I'm excited to see more people out there."

The winner of this year's Moda Assist Program will be announced and presented with a check at center court on Saturday, April 1 when the Trail Blazers host the Phoenix Suns.

Umatilla Electric Cooperative
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Umatilla Electric is offering the following scholarships for the 2017-18 school year:

ACADEMIC

Twelve \$2,500 scholarships are available for members of UEC and/or their dependent children who are enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or undergraduate program at a two- or four-year college. Apply online at: www.oregonstudentaid.org.

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

A \$5,000 scholarship is administered to a college student who has completed their freshman year and is interested in pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering-Power Systems. Apply at www.oregonstudentaid.org.

LINEMAN TRADE

A \$2,000 scholarship is available to members and/or applicants whose parent or guardian is an active member, and are interested in the Line Construction trade and will be attending an accredited Line College. Go to: UmatillaElectric.com to download the application.

For more information visit our offices in Hermiston or Boardman or our website: UmatillaElectric.com.

You can also call us at 541-567-6414 or OSAC at 1-800-452-8807.



Deadline is March 1, 2017

Flowers • Candles
Jewelry • Plants
Balloons & More!

Put a smile on the heart with the power of flowers.

Cottage Flowers
HWY 395, HERMISTON
541-567-4305
Mon-Sat 8am-6pm • Sun 12pm-5am
www.cottagefloweronline.com

TAX SEASON GIVES YOU TONS OF WAYS TO FILL YOUR FREEZER!

Sampler BOX \$100 (Reg. \$125)

BOX INCLUDES:

- 2 T-Bones Steaks
- 2 Rib Steaks
- 2 New York Steaks
- 2 Top Sirloin
- 1 - 3-4 lb. Boneless Chuck Roast
- 5 - 1 lb. Pkg Extra Lean Ground Beef

541-567-2011
253 W. Hermiston Ave. Hermiston

E.O.M.S.
EASTERN OREGON MOBILE SLAUGHTER