

THE KEY OF LIFE

RALPH HENRY GREEN PLAYING FOR A GROUP OF BOYS FROM TUDOR HOUSE SCHOOL, MOSS VALE WITH MY SISTER JOC IN THE LATE 1950S.

RECYCLED, REPURPOSED, REMEMBERED . . .

by Julia Green (with thanks to Brian McDonald who suggested I put this together for the Braidwoodians who knew my Dad)



PART ONE:

THE STORY OF THE PIANO MIRROR

Written for Kalina 8yrs, Stefan 4yrs and Kristian 1yr

The story of the Piano Mirror is a story about your Great Grandfather. His name was Ralph Henry Green.

He was born in Sydney in 1914, and he died in Braidwood in 1988. He was your Dad's grandfather, and your Granny's father.

And he was a musician. After he left school he studied at the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney where he played the piano and the organ. He was a deeply emotional man, a Scorpio, and especially suited to playing the pipe organ, which is the most powerful of all instruments.

Great Grandpa Green was the Music Master at Tudor House School in Moss Vale for many years. He taught piano and singing to lots and lots of young boys there. He was also the Choirmaster, and he directed many musical performances, plays and operas.

After he left that work, he always had a baby grand piano to play, and when we were

THE LIFE OF KEYS

children my sister and I loved listening to him play. He mostly loved classical music but could play almost anything we asked him to. He thought rock and roll was repetitive and boring!

When he and your Great Granny Green moved to Braidwood in 1975, he was unable to take his piano with him.

I was sad that he no longer had a piano at home to play, so we decided to help him buy one. Some special friends gave us a very kind donation as they knew how important music was to your Great Grandpa.

He got a very big surprise when we gave him a card with money for the piano fund! He said in a thank you letter he felt "like a blob of blancmange and fair speechless", and that it was "a fantastic surprise and one of the nicest experiences that has come our way".

Then we took him shopping and he quickly found a German instrument he liked very much! It was soon installed in his Braidwood home.

Playing that piano helped him get ready to play the organ at the Anglican Church in Braidwood, which he did almost every Sunday for 13 years. He also played for weddings and funerals at St Andrews, and other places around Braidwood.

After he died, the piano lived with me in Yarralumla for many years, then in Karwin Avenue, Springfield, with your Aunty Jess and her family. Your Uncle Troy played it and used it to teach music to many other children. For a short while your cousin Miles was learning to play piano too. It was lovely for the piano to be useful again.

But there came a time when the piano was no longer able to carry a tune well, it was getting very old.

But it was still very special to our family.

Can you guess the end of this story?

Your Uncle Troy and his brother very carefully took the piano apart, and saved all the special bits. The most special bits are the piano keys, and some of those keys are what your piano mirror is made from!

So, when you look at yourself in the mirror, you can think about your Great Grandpa and all the music he played in his life. He made many many people happy with the music he played!

Written by Granny, with love
(Julia Green) November 2018



PART TWO:

THE PIANO BOX, aka A LEPRECHAUN'S PIANO

I neglected to mention in Part One that Dad's Braidwood instrument was an Upright Piano.

"The tallest of the vertical pianos is the upright. Today this term is usually used to refer to the older, tall pianos - Grandma's piano. If properly preserved these old pianos are some of the most aesthetically beautiful and durable instruments ever made. The key is "properly preserved". If not properly maintained an old upright's only value is as a large piece of furniture, beautiful to look at but nerve racking to listen to". (bluebookofpianos.com)

Some time passed after the making of the piano mirrors, and the dismantled decorative wooden housing of Dad's piano sat waiting in the garage. The idea to create a storage box from these panels came quickly. It took a little longer to find the perfect craftsman to understand what I had in mind, and to do the job.

Enter genius woodworker and fellow tango dancer Robert Crombie. In the blink of one eye Robert had the pieces in his workshop, and in the blink of the other eye he called to say the job was almost done. My turn to feel like a blob of blancmange and fair speechless. Up on his workbench was Dad's piano, beautifully repurposed, without legs and pedals, and looking for all the world like a piano for a very small person.

And back at home the piece has pride of place and is ever so useful as a voluminous storage box.

Moral of this story: think again before dumping that old piano!

Julia Green 2020