It was 1952 and migrants were arriving from many parts of Europe. Families, young men and women seeking a better life after leaving their war torn countries. Young men, in particular, especially with skills, were being recruited to help build Australia into the nation it has now become.

Among these, was Antonio Bardini, who, after leaving the Bonegilla Migrant Camp in Albury, Victoria, came to Melbourne to start his new life in this far off Southern Land, Australia.

He was born in Canalò, Treviso, a city in the Veneto region, approximately 31 k. north of Venice. I, on the other hand, was born in Melbourne of migrant parents from Friuli, a region north-east of Italy, bordering Austria and Slovenia. My father migrated to Australia in 1927, and my mother in 1935.

I was soon to meet my future husband Toni, and his many "Trevisani" friends, in particular Severino Bettiol, who was from Cusignana, a town not far from Canalò. So we were eventually introduced to Ernesto Martini and his wife Amelia, good friends of Severino's, and also were neighbours in Italy.

Both Toni and I took an instant liking to them both. Typically Italian. Their family was everything to them. Hard working, honest, and I have to say, just the most wonderful couple. You were always made to feel very welcome whenever in their company. Many happy times were spent together at their home, at ours, Phillip Isle, just to name a few.

However, the best of all, were the "card nights". They were unforgettable evenings. We discussed politics (some became heated) our families, reminisced about the past, wondered about the future, ate and drank great food and wine, but most of all we laughed, lots!!!

So it was with great sadness and dismay when Ernesto fell gravely ill, and left us so prematurely in such a short time. We remember him with great fondness, and he is still sadly missed to this day. We still have card nights from time to time, even though a few are no longer with us, and to finish, we are so happy that our friendship has continued with Ernesto's beloved wife Amelia, stronger than ever.

Gladys Bardini

August 2009.