

Peter's stories

6TH MAY 1995

Dear Dave,

You asked me for my early recollections of family life to compare with those of your own. In the same way as two people can witness the same event and recall it in different ways so too, I am sure, are the differences in our recollections of home life when we grew up. As the youngest brother my memories do not go back as far and with my asthma I missed many of the treats you and John would have enjoyed whilst I would be at home in bed.



My earliest memories are of a seaside holiday. There was a pebbly beach and sea. I remember walking towards the water and into it so the waves came above my head. Mum came to the rescue and carried me back to dry land. I was told it was Bognor Regis in 1949.

My memories of the prefab are sparse. I remember the oblong shaped building with its flat roof, the narrow strip of garden going all around. We were the second row back from the road and our prefab was served by a narrow path. There was a lamp post in the road with a rope swing; I would have been too young to play on it. Inside I remember our bedroom being off the kitchen (was that really so?), and our three iron framed beds.



On moving to Harland Road I remember snow on the ground, and pushing the pram with all our toys and clothes inside. I don't remember, but was told that mum sat on the stairs and cried when she saw the state of the house, a house she had seen built from new and had lived in from 1931 when she was still a teenager. It is a house I still remember fondly as home and I have many happy memories of growing up there. The back room was our play room. A bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling, no curtains for many years, lino on the floor and a train set built in the corner of the room—underneath this was a long box divided into three with our respective toys, blue for me, red for you and green for John. Everything was colour coded, our tooth brushes, flannels and toys.

The front room was the living room with chairs for Mum and Dad either side of the fire, the dining room table in the center and the radio in the corner. I always remember the radio being on, the Archers, Journey into Space, "The Goon Show" and on Sundays Wakey Wakey or Archie Andrews followed by Forces' Favourites. In the winter we would sit in front of the fire and make toast with toasting forks, and eat it with Marmite or dripping.



Bath time was always a communal affair with John sitting at the tap end beneath the geyser, you in the middle and me at the shallow end. I remember the flame in the geyser, the noise of it and the clouds of steam as the hot water filled the bath to the two inch limit. I remember filling the bath with suds, playing submarines, being wrapped in warm towels and mum playing little piggies with my toes when she dried me. I hated having my hair washed and the feeling of not being able to breathe when mum poured jugs of water over my head to wash off the suds.

At bed time John had his own room whilst you and I shared the back room with our two iron framed beds and bedside tables which I recall as being orange boxes painted and divided into two to form a shelf. I spent many days in bed when I was young with my asthma. And I remember the view of the trees over the back. Do you remember the vet over the back once had a donkey in the garden that would "eey oor" for hours at a time?

Pete

