

The Owen Family

In early 1942 the Owen family of Wau PNG were evacuated due to the imminent Japanese invasion. **Doreen** with her seven children with ages from 10 years to twins aged one month, left her husband **Jock**, who then served in the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles as part of a guerrilla force. They flew in a Junkers G31 tri-motor aircraft from Wau to Port Moresby and then spent nearly a month zig zagging in the 'SS Katoomba' to Brisbane where the family was billeted in the famous Canberra Hotel. Maleny's much loved GP, **Dr. Tony Parer**, Doreen's cousin, then promptly housed them in the old Dunlop homestead where the Maleny State School was subsequently built. There, reunited with Jock, who had walked over the Owen Stanley Range and was discharged as medically unfit, the family lived for the remainder of WW2.

Patricia 10, **Timothy** 8, **Josephine** 7 and twins **Judith** and **Peter** 5, recommenced their schooling at the Maleny State School in 1942; infant twins **Margaret** and **Dorothy** were of course too young and a new baby, **Anne** arrived in 1943. Nurturing a young family of eight children with rationing of foodstuffs, clothing and footwear was hard. Under the stern guidance of School Principal **Matthies**, weekly air raid practice, complete with the obligatory siren and slit trenches were put in place. Wearing shoes to school was not common and there was a horse paddock for those children who rode to school. The Owen children all learnt to swim in the swimming hole of the Obi Obi Creek adjacent to the Showgrounds. Highlights included the Nambour area interschool sports. The family retains fond memories of the kindness and dedication of the State School staff for which the family is most grateful.

Convoys of Allied service personnel through Maleny frequently attracted many waving supporters. Vivid memories of the Allied success in the Coral Sea Battle and VE Day remain. The presence of the farm workers, the distinctive uniformed Italian POW's attending Church on Sundays, was a common experience. The visits to Maleny of famed Australian cinematographer **Damien Parer**, Doreen's brother, who attained international recognition and a well-merited Academy Award for his *Kokoda Frontline*, are remembered with great fondness and through the family photographs taken by him at the time. Our family is conscious of the generous assistance given to this evacuated family by the Maleny community which relieved much of this displaced family's wartime difficulties. A link still remains with the Maleny community with the retirement to a Policeman Spur Road property of **Anne (Minter)** who with **Mary (Slingsby)** are the two younger Australian born Owen children.



Owen Family 1943 - Back: Doreen Owen, Josephine holding Dorothy, Margaret held by Patsy
Front: Timothy, Baby Anne, Peter and Judy