

# *Desmier*

## *Family History Newsletter*

**December 1995**

**Issue No. 2**

### **Editors Note**

Firstly I would like to thank all of those people that wrote to me saying how much they enjoyed receiving and reading the first copy of the newsletter. It looks as though there will be enough people interested in the idea and in their family history for the newsletter to continue for quite a few editions if those people that have promised to write contributions do so. At this stage I will try and keep the main part of the newsletter to four pages but I may increase the frequency of publications to three or four times a year depending upon the amount of material I have available at the time. With this edition I have enclosed a print out of some descendant box charts. This should help readers to see how they might be related to people mentioned in the major articles in the newsletter. At the top of the supplement I have printed what we know about the first four generations of the family that were in either Pondicherry or India. Beneath I have printed the three main family groups forming the fifth generation of the family on the Indian sub-continent. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, it is convenient to divide the family into the Northern clan which expanded from Hyderabad, Sind and the Southern clan which remained in southern India branching out from Tiruchirapalli. I will try and describe the relationship of those people mentioned in articles to the people identified on on or other of these box charts.

As I mentioned I have several good stories that I have been sent to me for inclusion in future editions, however, they are all on families that have descended from the northern clan. How about some contributions from families descended from the southern clan so that I can keep some balance to the newsletter?

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity of wishing everybody a happy and healthy time over Christmas period and New Year. I will try and send out a new Issue during April.

*Rick Desmier*

### **Her Big Sister came to her 100th Birthday Party!**

On 20th October 1995 **Laura Weeks (nee Aquino)** celebrated her 100th birthday. A special guest at the celebration was her elder sister **Sybil Currie** who was 102 on December 14th of this year. Sybil and Laura are the 2nd and 3rd daughters respectively of **Esther Dorothea Desmier** of the Northern clan who married **Tomas Aquino**, a doctor whose family had been in the sub-continent for more than 200 years and were amongst the pillars of society in Goa.

Laura still lives at her home in Beckenham, Kent and with the help of her daughters Yvonne and June and other family members gave a party for her family and friends.

Laura married **Victor Weeks** in Bombay in 1921. Victor worked for the newspaper "The Times of India" and eventually became a manager for the paper. Soon after the war the family emigrated to the UK. The couple had one son, the eldest child, **Alban**, and three daughters **June**, **Yvonne** and **Colleen**. Alban worked as a Senior consultant and is now happily retired; June settled in Capetown, South Africa for many years; Yvonne worked for the Food and Agriculture Organisation based in Switzerland and Colleen



*Laura Weeks on her 100th birthday (seated) with her sister Sibyl and daughter Yvonne.*



*Laura Weeks with her children  
From the left standing: Yvonne,  
Alban and Colleen;  
Sitting: Laura and June.*

emigrated to Rhodesia. Colleen now lives in Harare where she has a senior secretarial post. Both Yvonne and June now live close to their mother.

Sybil married **Anthony Currie** in Bombay. Tony originally came from Liverpool and in India worked for Dunlop's. Sybil lives at a nursing home near Bromley, Kent. Sybil and Tony had one son who was killed during an air raid whilst on leave in England during his war service with the RAF.

*Thanks to Robert Gibbs and his brother Alfred for the photographs and facts for the above article. Their mother Othelia (Bijou) was the elder sister of Sybil and Laura.*



### **In Memory of Herbert Stanley Louis Desmier** **18th July 1910 - 20th November 1994**

Herbert died at home in Nuneaton Warwickshire one and a half years after having being diagnosed as having contracted Myeloma, a form of cancer of the blood. Herbert was 84 years old.

Herbert was born in Toungoo, Burma the eighth and last child of **George Thomas Edwin Desmier** and his wife **Stella Maude (Clarkson)**. Herbert's mother, Stella, died shortly after his birth and Herbert was raised by his maternal grand-parents.

Herbert followed his father's footsteps by working for the Burma Railway. During the war Herbert served with the British Army in Burma. For his war service Herbert was awarded the Chouwinghee and Burma Star medals and was mentioned in despatches by the then Governor of Burma, Sir Hugh Dorman Smith for *Loyal, resolute and devoted service during the Burma campaign* It was during the war on 8th March 1943 at Kirkee near Poona that he married Florence Barbara (Christenson). In October 1949 Herbert, Florence and their 4 children; Stella, Edwina, Cheryl and Herman emigrated to UK. Their youngest daughter, Penny was born in Nuneaton where the family settled shortly after their arrival. Herbert worked in the UK for Coutaulds.

Herbert is remembered by his family and friends as an exemplary person in the fashion of a devoted husband, father and a friend. He was a simple family man who never craved, nor even liked outside interests. He was also renowned for unrivalled feats of strength that earned him the nickname "Garth". He could lift 220lb with his teeth, make chains by bending nails and on his 75th birthday was pictured in the *Nuneaton Tribune* holding an 8lb mallet out at arms length and was described as "Nuneaton's premier physical culturist".

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*The following article about Herbert and his father George Desmier was contributed by Herbert's wife Florence.*

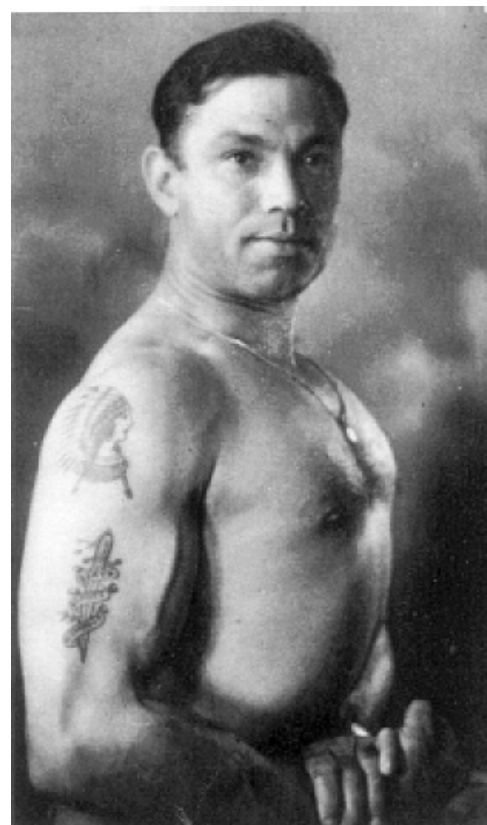
George Thomas Edwin Desmier fell in love with an Anglican's daughter Stella Maud Clarkson. In those days (1800's) if Catholics married someone from another religious sect they had to do so

"Behind the Altar". Young Desmier was not going to be dictated to; and so he caused quite a stir when he (as a Roman Catholic man) married an Anglican girl in her church, denounced his religion and had all eight children brought up as Anglicans. These were the pioneers who defied convention and hacked their way through the jungle - breaking down unnecessary barriers or hindrances - others

followed. Some for good and others not so good. However, he repented years later on his death bed and when he received the last rites he requested the Roman Catholic priest to baptise the eight children. Herbert, the youngest, was then six years old. Now, moving away from the Desmiers, Herbert's maternal grandfather held a high position in the Masonic Lodge in Burma. Herbert's eldest sister, Dorothy Edwinson, said he was a sort of bishop, had a cap, like our RC bishops wear and held the staff on ceremonial occasions. He was a member until his death in about 1931. He lived in Toungoo, Burma and when he retired (his designation being Station Master) from the Burma Railways built his house there in the District he loved. All the Clarksons are buried in the only RC Cemetery - Toungoo Burma - but when the Japanese occupied Burma from 1942 - 1945 they shipped back to Japan (among other things) all the beautiful or ordinary tombstones. Among these was Herbert's mothers of course. A large one inscribed "Rock of Ages" an angel on either side holding this inscription which was in the form of an arch.

Young George Desmier (Herbert's dad) was also a strong man. Men then in their late forties, early fifties - used to look at the up and coming weightlifter (young Herbert at 19 yrs) and smilingly tell each other "He is his father's son"

Among workmen as we have all discovered there is a bully. A man by the name of Conway was one. Whenever he arrived at a railway running Room or Rest room (for locomotive drivers to sleep the night before they returned home to their town) he would choose one particular reclining chair to relax in and get the best view etc. To him there was no such saying as "First come first served" he would literally kick any man off that chair. Of course one evening George Desmier was "innocently" in that chair. The other railway drivers knew that Conway was on his way down to his chair after his bath and they knew "Sparks" were going to fly. I leave the rest to your imagination. Conway had to concede disgracefully. About twenty years later this (now) old man - still a bully walked down the stairs to His chair to find a young 18 year old Fireman innocently sitting in it. He



*Herbert 32 years old.  
Photo taken Mhow, India*



*Herbert and Florence on their 50th Wedding Anniversary with their family. From left to right: Edwina, Herman, Cheryl, Florence and Herbert, Stella (rear) and Penelope.*

slinked quietly away when Herbert told him not to lose the respect he (Herbert) gave him as an old man in the only way my Herbert knew how. On being asked who the kid was in unison the onlookers said "Young Desmier". This brought back memories to Conway. The old bull now took a back seat.

The Desmiers are all stubborn and could be awkward as well. But I loved Herbert so much - I crawled - meaning I would not and could not retaliate when he was in an angry mood - which thank God lasted only 10 - 15 minutes. As he turned older he was able to "Eat out of my hands" - At 84 years he still did not have one white hair. My children too - ages 51, 50, 48, 47, and 45 have black hair. I guess its a freak of nature, to their benefit; or - they are not Worriers. The saying is "If you worry you turn white" (or grey).

Sadly I disliked this about Herbert's dad (George Thomas Edwin Desmier) He had nothing to do with the innocent babe - because (as some fathers did react in the same way for some reason - genuine sorrow or people's opinions) "his birth caused my wife's death" Herbert was relegated to the grand-parents (Clarkson's) but my Herbert came through and we the family adored him.

*George Thomas Edwin Desmier can be found on the box chart for the Northern clan.*

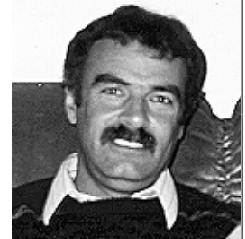
### **NEWS CLIPS**

- ◆ Robert Gibbs made a trip over to France in October and passed through Niort in Deux Sevres where the family originated. Unfortunately it was only a lunch stop for the coach tour he was on so he didn't get much time there. On his next trip he intends to stay in the area and have a better look around. In the mean time he is planning a trip to India this January.
- ◆ *Terry Desmier (son of William E, Northern clan and my father) has settled in to his new home in Angle Vale after emigrating from Hurstpierpoint in Sussex last January. He is keeping busy laying out his garden and getting fruit and nut trees established.*
- ◆ Heather Desmier (married to Julian, son of Cyril Desmier, Southern clan) is a french teacher at a school in Surrey. She has offered to help translate the copies of the old documents we have received.
- ◆ *Michel Maumon is continuing to help researching the family back from Charles Julien Desmier in France. He is hoping to be able to identify some families in France with which we have common ancestors.*
- ◆ Rita and Barry Calderwood (Rita is descended from the Northern clan but we aren't sure exactly how) have moved into their new house on a 15 acre property in Queensland, Australia close to their daughters families. Prior to having their house built they lived in Perth, West Australia. They are now surrounded by Australian wildlife such as kangaroos, snakes and kookaburras.
- ◆ *A new society called "The British Ancestors in India Society" has recently been created to help and bring together those interested in family history studies in British India and Burma. A quarterly magazine will be produced. Anyone interested in joining the society can contact the founder Mr Paul Rowland, 2 South Farm Avenue, Harthill, Sheffield S31 8WY for more details.*

*This newsletter is edited by Rick Desmier. I intend to produce a new edition every six months or so, depending upon contributions. If you have any articles, news or comments for future copies please send them to me at:*

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*If you have a relative who did not receive a copy of this newsletter and you think that they would like their own copy please let me know.*