

TRIBUTE TO STANLEY CHARLES MOSS
CHRIST CHURCH, ST KILDA
19 AUGUST 2016

My father, Stan Moss, was born on the 11 December 1921. He was born at the family home in Little La Trobe Street, Windsor – not far from where we are here today.

He was the youngest of six children to Frederick and Margaret Moss. Four months before he was born, an older brother Edgar, aged eight, died from diphtheria.

Stan became aware from quite young age that he filled a void caused by the loss of a very much loved brother. This probably accounts for Stan's *nervous childhood disposition* as his older sisters Peggy and Gwen later recounted.

In 1926, the family moved to 31 Izett Street, Prahran and the same year he started his schooling at Prahran State School.

Following Edgar's death the Moss family became closely associated with St Matthew's Anglican Church in High Street.

Stan attended Sunday school from kindergarten to bible class. He joined the church choir and was a member of the Church of England Boy's Society or CEBS.

Along with the rest of the family he cheerfully involved himself in parish activities.

During the Great Depression, when Stan was eleven, his father was killed in a traffic accident. This deeply shocked the entire family, particularly Stan who was very close to his father.

It also brought great financial hardship, but gradually the closely knit family recovered in support of their mother.

For his secondary schooling, Stan went to Hassett's Business College in 1936. After gaining his Intermediate Certificate, he secured a junior position with the Colonial Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

It was at the Colonial Mutual in 1941 that he met a young stenographer, Betty Symes.

With the political situation in Europe worsening, Stan together with his older brother Ken, joined the 29th battalion – Militia.

A three-month camp at Puckapunyal, Seymour, in the rain and mud, quickly cured him of any thoughts of joining the Army.

With his mother's reluctant consent, Stan joined the Empire Air Training Scheme. He was inducted into the Royal Australian Air Force in April 1941, aged 19.

Initial flying training was conducted at Essendon before he was shipped to Canada to undertake further training. From there Stan was posted to Britain for advanced flying training and then operational training.

Casualties sustained in this fast-tracked aircrew training programme were high. On a training exercise and in a freakish accident, he was the sole survivor of a head-on collision with another Blenheim bomber over the North Sea.

Somehow Stan escaped from the cockpit of the doomed aircraft and parachuted into the sea where he survived in a one-man dingy for three days. Unbelievably he was spotted and rescued by a ship separated from its convoy in a storm.

A short time after joining another squadron, Stan participated in the well documented low-level day light attack on the Philip's Industrial Complex at Eindhoven in Holland.

His plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire. Despite suffering severe wounds from shrapnel, he crash-landed the Ventura bomber in a field. All his crew survived.

After three months in hospital, where Stan spent his twenty first birthday, he was transferred to a prisoner of war camp at Lamsdorf.

Now Polish in territory and renamed Labinowitz, the site of this camp today is a prisoner of war museum.

It was in this camp, Stalag VIII B that a New Zealand padre invited Stan to join a group of young men studying theology under his tutelage. A captured British soldier, an ex-lay member of an Anglican religious order, taught him Latin.

His studies as a prisoner-of-war subsequently enabled him to pass his matriculation for entry into Melbourne University on his return to Australia.

With the advance of the soviet armies in the east and in the middle of winter, allied prisoners-of-war were force-marched 500 miles west to another camp near Hanover, Germany.

Some prisoners did not survive the rigours of the intense cold on the open road. During the march, there was an incident called the *Halberstadt Shoot Up*.

Mistaking Stan's fellow prisoners of war for a German military column, allied fighters attacked killing eight and wounding thirty-five of their own men.

In mid April 1945, the second British army liberated the camp and within days Stan and other captured aircrew were repatriated to Britain.

Throughout the four years he was overseas, he and Betty corresponded regularly and agreed to marry as soon as circumstances allowed.

Stan commenced tertiary studies in 1946 and graduated three years later with First Class Honours in History from Melbourne University. Next, Stan gained his theological qualifications, also with first class honours.

Time as a deacon lay ahead before the archbishop was accustomed to sanction marriage for young clergy.

Stan's friend and mentor, Geoff Sambell, supplicated the Archbishop to allow an earlier marriage.

And so, on the second of February 1950, Betty and Stan were married at the Trinity College Chapel.

It was a very happy occasion and a day that set the pattern for a blessed life-long union and an enriching family life until the end of his days.

Their subsequent parish ministries were deeply rewarding and many affirming and life long friendships were made.

These included the inner city parish of North Melbourne, a parish at Kallista in the Dandenong Ranges and St George's Malvern.

Later, as a full-time Archdeacon of the Diocese of Melbourne, Stan had many and varied responsibilities to the Mission to the Streets and Lanes, various Anglican schools including St Michael's Grammar school, Melbourne Grammar School and Merton Hall.

He was the member of the Council of the Diocese and other governing boards and committees for more than seventeen years.

His active ministry concluded after ten years at St John's Toorak.

During the twenty-eight years of his retirement Stan remained active by undertaking locums, and working in support of his old college through the Trinity College Foundation.

He also helped various ex-service associations in a modest way participating in their gatherings and remembrances including ex-prisoner of war associations.

However, Stan's closest long-time and dear friends were his fellow students at college and those ordained with him.

To them he would want me to express his deep gratitude for their stimulating company, support and loyalty over the years.

Stephen Moss CSC
18 August 2016