**Alan James McKean Inglewood 1965**

Alan McKean had lived in the bush country around Arnold, near Kingower and Tarnagulla in central Victoria since he was 16 years old. At the age of 29, in 1965, he was working at a eucalyptus factory in Inglewood, married to Ruby and with three young children. He was a reserve member of the Inglewood Urban Fire Brigade, and responded – along with his brigade mates – when the call came on a Sunday afternoon to help with a fire that had broken out in bush country in the Kingower Ranges and was threatening property. (He may not ever have known it, but his previous family home at Arnold West was among the houses lost in that fire.)

At about 4 o’clock in the afternoon, after they had been burning a firebreak in an effort to contain the outbreak, his Inglewood brigade mates saw Alan disappear behind a thick pall of smoke that had been blown towards them. They waited for him to re-emerge, then raised the alarm when he didn’t. By nightfall, hundreds of volunteers had gathered for a search that went on well into the following day. The news, when it came, was tragic – Alan McKean’s body was found in the scorched and still smouldering bushland.

His daughter Dianne was just 8 years old. She remembers policemen coming to the door of their Inglewood home on that Monday afternoon to pass on the news they were dreading. She says the next few days were a blur – the children spent most of the time in their bedrooms while their mother tried to cope with their loss.

Alan McKean’s wasn’t the only death in that fire – eight other people also lost their lives. Most tragically, seven women and children from one extended family, killed when their car hit a tree as they were trying to reach safety. Their menfolk were fighting the fire.

Ruby battled on, raising her three children, marrying again ten years later and having two more sons. In 2018, at 85 and widowed for the second time, she is still bright and busy – babysitting her great grandchildren.