



EDDIE

THE RISE AND RISE
OF EDDIE MCGUIRE
show business, politics & footy

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Everyone has an opinion about Eddie McGuire.

As a journalist, mine has changed in an unexpected way. My admiration has grown the more I learned or heard about the man. Which is unnerving; that's not how it's meant to be. Journalists are taught to start at cynical and dig down.

The more you dig into Eddie McGuire's life, the more his achievements overwhelm his foibles. His achievements for the Collingwood Football Club and the city of Melbourne are public. His achievements as a broadcaster are lauded, debated and pilloried daily. And his achievements for charities and the country's underprivileged are largely private.

Which is not to say this book is a hagiography. Far from it. Just that some of the known foibles – the temper, the vicious tongue, the occasional abuse of workers of lesser status – don't illustrate his broader story. One of Eddie McGuire's favourite sayings is 'If I'm upset, everyone's upset'. Even Kerry Packer chided McGuire for being too hard on others.

The shortcomings are also outweighed by his empathy. Many speak of favours done or doors opened by McGuire with nothing asked in return.

In some respects, Eddie McGuire's story is little different to those of so many other high achievers in that it is built on an intense work ethic. Sam Newman says he is 'the most driven person I have ever met'.

Where his story differs from others is in its ordinary beginnings. He is not driven by childhood absences or abuse, vengeance (although he can be a good hater), or any other negative spark. It is a simple rags to riches tale driven by the love and lessons provided by two strong parents. His father admired effort, not success.

Effort would bring its own rewards; McGuire is a living example of that. He enjoys the trappings of success but he's quick to note that money does not define him. Activity, progress and achievement define him.

He seems to have an honest desire for improvement, not success. He wants to make things better, for his family, for Collingwood, for Melbourne, for Australia, for the less-fortunate, for Indigenous Australians. He is a progressive, because that improvement requires change. And he doesn't believe any problem is as monumental as everyone thinks.

Consequently, the perennial questioning of his conflicts of interest becomes moot. He argues that a man with many masters will always have conflicts of interest. Besides, the many interests denote activity. Action. Progress. How can you question that?

If you're part of that progress, he'll do anything for you; if you're not, he just wants you to get out of his way. McGuire doesn't tolerate obstruction or criticism. Such is his self-belief, criticism can't be assessed coolly. It becomes personal.

Only recently has he learned to pick his fights. A decade ago, it was not unusual for McGuire to spend 20 minutes on the phone discussing or berating a journalist from some far-flung newspaper who'd slighted him. He learned in Broadmeadows that if you allow people to stand over you, they'll kick you to death.

His father told him to run away from attackers at a hundred

miles an hour but that the day would come when you had to fight – so make the first one count. If you hit, make sure they stay hit. And Eddie says he did at school once, belting a classmate who ‘wanted to have a crack’, just to let him know Eddie McGuire doesn’t back down. He once asked radio host Steve Price during an argument whether he wanted a left from Toorak or a right from Broadmeadows.

What you see is what you get. Despite his reach, there is a simplicity to him. He’s not a superman, he just commits entirely to the three priorities in his life: family, Collingwood and work. Not always in that order. And he just goes.

Friends speak of a stable, consistent man who they don’t have to second guess. ‘If you scratch the surface of Eddie McGuire, you know what’s underneath? More Eddie McGuire,’ said Harold Mitchell.¹ They know that Eddie can be easy to read, even if many try to read in too much. His language, like his priorities, is simple. He deals in stock phrases – ‘Don’t you worry about that!’, ‘Only the best for Collingwood’ – and sporting analogies because they cut through. He is not only an effective communicator, he is efficient. And if you truly know him, you know the briefer the sentence, the clearer he aims to be. When he uses a three- or four-word sentence, he means business.

The confidence that came from a stable, loving childhood propelled him. For a 13-year-old boy to sit in press boxes with hardened journos and believe he could join them – and, very soon, beat them – is testament to his drive.

Indeed, McGuire is a quintessential optimist, someone who believes they are never involved in something that doesn’t work while anything they do is guaranteed to succeed. And if it doesn’t work, a quintessential optimist has the ability to disassociate themselves from the failure and plough on. As Sam Newman explains, ‘I expect the worst and hope for the best. He expects the best and then expects it to get better.’

That optimism is also a curse. Some friends warn that his constant need to attempt something, no matter how difficult, can also lead to his undoing. He tries to play out of position, and can be smashed for it.

Yet McGuire's inner belief allows him to prevail. The optimism keeps him moving forward and not looking back. Not regretting. The messes are for others to clean up. The fights aren't worth continuing.

'You never look down the ladder of life and try and kick people off the rung behind you, you just keep going as high as you can and enjoy it,' he said in 2004.²

His drive encounters doubts, though. He admits to opening his diary at the beginning of a day and fearing he won't make it. More than once he's stopped his car while reversing out the driveway, looked at his diary again and steeled himself, saying 'You've just got to keep going.'³

Eddie McGuire has lived the most private of public lives. Since marrying his wife, Carla, his family life has been largely out of view. Beyond their weekly appearances at Collingwood matches, Carla and sons Joseph and Alexander remain out of his spotlight. McGuire has not sold his family's story or been seen in magazine features, and his primary fear when hearing about this book was the invasion of his wife and children's privacy. Carla was once misquoted by *The Age* and vowed not to be interviewed again. Behind all the bluster, McGuire cherishes his family. When he travels overseas for work, more often than not the family comes too. What hurt him most among the criticism of his stint in Sydney as Nine CEO was the accusation that he was an absent father.

And the two boys are their father's young men. As Eddie did, they respect their elders; look you in the eye and shake your hand. Unlike those of almost all modern celebrities, his family is not a commodity, so this book respects that privacy. *Eddie* is about Eddie, not his young family.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Eddie McGuire is a solid citizen. He has an unnatural memory for names, trivia and events and has had since primary school. He remembers people and is disarming, with a rare skill of being able to make anyone feel special. That has ameliorated many of his professional sins. He knows a simple drinks party for staff is the most effective of employee satisfaction tricks. He lives in a macro world, yet doesn't ignore his micro relationships.

So far, McGuire has balanced the strange dichotomy of being everyone's mate but still a boss and a leader. That's why his term as Nine CEO hurt him. At his television peak, he was the most egalitarian star since Bert Newton. They share many traits: strong belief in family, loyalty, and a sensitivity to criticism balanced by a resignation that blows will come.

Two of the major blows in his life hurt hard. The accusation he used the term 'boned' and his mistaken insult of Indigenous footballer Adam Goodes are the mud that stuck.

His actions across a long period show McGuire is neither derogatory to women nor racist. But in the broad sweep of his extraordinary life, Eddie McGuire has got away with other things he should have been slapped for. Life evens up. And it does so more quickly if you keep going, relentlessly, like Eddie McGuire.

McGuire holds dear US president Theodore Roosevelt's paean to the doers:

'The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena ... who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.'

Eddie McGuire is still in the arena, tasting many victories and few defeats. He is an extraordinary, unfolding, very Australian story.

Michael Bodey
July, 2015

CHAPTER 1

A BROADY BOY

The outer Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows remains an indelible marker in Eddie McGuire's life, just as Glasgow marked the journey of his father, Eddie Snr.

But the suburb didn't define Eddie – his parents did. If someone is a living embodiment of nurture over nature, it may just be him. There are good people in all suburbs, but the nature of the suburb in which the McGuire children were raised suggested the four siblings could easily have become just more anonymous grist for the manufacturing mills.

Bridget and Edward McGuire were an odd couple, the product of a marriage that defied the 1801 'Act of Union' defining the United Kingdom's disparate countries. They ignored any Scottish/Irish prejudice and simply formed their own union.

Eddie's mother, Bridget Brennan – known as Bridie – was the eldest daughter of an Irish farmer in County Roscommon, the stereotypical mid-western heart of the republic of Ireland, an area of rolling green paddocks and low stone fences. Like many other young women at that time, Bridie was taken out of school at the age of fourteen to help on the farm and look after her younger siblings.

It is not surprising that she later left home determined she would not replicate the fate of the other poor women in her county, escaping with a cheap ticket on a ‘cattle boat’ that was taking stock to market to England.

The man who would become Bridie’s husband, Edward McGuire Snr, was born in 1918, and grew up in Hamilton, in the Scottish lowlands just outside Glasgow. He began work as a thirteen-year-old during the Great Depression, leading a ‘pit pony’ in the coal mines below Glasgow. Like Bridie, Edward was determined to forge a better path.

Glasgow manufactures hard people: it is Scotland’s Struggletown against the white collars, castles and culture of Edinburgh, but Edward’s optimism belied the gravity of his upbringing and softened those hard Glaswegian edges. However, that hardness has another side – loyalty to a cause – and that was something Edward took to heart. McGuire was Catholic, so one of his most passionate causes was the Glasgow Celtic Football Club, whose enmity with the Protestant Glasgow Rangers constituted one of sport’s most brutal rivalries. The hostility between the two clubs began as a PR exercise to excite interest in their early matches; it later resulted in fights, murders and ultimately the inexplicable bankruptcy and winding-up of the Rangers in 2011.

Edward did not want a miner’s life, and he worked hard to graduate from the mines to become a tool maker. He was still in his teens when he realised he had to leave Glasgow to find a better life, as the religious gulf also divided opportunities. He recalled applying for jobs with Protestant employers and being shown the door if he let slip that he supported Celtic, thereby showing his Catholicism more loudly than if he had held a rosary as he spoke.

Such witless discrimination angered him; the banality of any kind of discrimination would be impressed upon his children. Conversely – and in a sweet moral contradiction – so too would the joys and benefits of passionate and blinding loyalty to people or a cause.

Edward served as a Scottish soldier in World War II, and in his later years his eldest son, Frank, would talk of him firing his .303 rifle into the air at the massed enemy overhead in the Battle of Britain. But, like so many men who experienced the horror of war, he didn't discuss his service with his family.

When Edward met the young Bridie Brennan at a Butlins Holiday Camp, neither of them was holidaying. She was working as a waitress, he as a toolmaker doing maintenance. They started married life together in Glasgow and later dreamt of opportunities – not so much for them, but for their two young children, the eldest, Evelyn, born in England, and first son, Frank, born in 1957 in Scotland.

At the time, brochures and advertisements were floating around pointing out the benefits of a life in Australia. The wide blue skies Down Under appealed to Edward and Bridie, and so did the promise of a better future, so they saved the ten pounds needed for the family to sail to a new life. They left from Southampton on the *Castel Felice* in 1958, and landed in Port Melbourne with two children, two suitcases and five pounds, 40-year-old Edward's innate optimism again to the fore.

Theirs was a meeting of personalities and intelligence. The couple appreciated the possibilities of a new start, away from the sectarianism, bigotry and drudgery of northern Britain under the conservative Macmillan government. Decades later, Bridie was very clear about why they migrated: to give the kids a chance.¹

The McGuires took a year to the day from arriving to move into their allocated three-bedroom pale-pink concrete Housing Commission home at 74 Gerbert Street, Broadmeadows on 6 March 1959. It was one of Edward Snr's proudest days, walking into his own version of paradise (even though he thought the suburb was 'tombstone territory'),² and vindication for leaving everyone behind (although two of Bridie's brothers had also moved to Melbourne, one of whom they camped with while awaiting their new home).

Almost as soon as they moved in, they planted a plum tree in the yard to help colour the barren landscape of the new industrial suburb on the windswept northern outskirts of Melbourne. They were next door to the grasslands acquired by the Menzies government to build a new 'jetport' at Tullamarine (which would open in 1970), in a suburb in which the first house was built in 1953. The plum tree was the extent of any external adornments because Edward wanted the yards clear for family cricket and football in his own 'castle'.

Back then, Broadmeadows wasn't literally the end of the line – it was in fact on the country line to Wodonga built in the late 1800s – but it was the end of Melbourne: a fringe suburb lacking basic infrastructure beyond a train station. It may have taken the title Struggletown in the 1970s from Richmond and Collingwood, but to Edward and Bridie it was a dream come true.

Edward landed a job at the Board of Works as a 'powder monkey', and he started working explosives a week after alighting from the ship in Port Melbourne. He stayed with the same employer until he retired as a storeman at 65, but held other part-time jobs along the way to help the family get ahead; he was a hard worker and a loyal man – traits all his children would inherit. Edward Snr respected hard work above all else. He didn't admire success per se, rather the 'goers' who strove for it.

Teachers and friends recalled the sunburn around Edward Snr's neck and up to the shirtsleeves of an otherwise pale Scot who was not bred to dwell under the Australian sun. Edward would later tell his kids that with 'a job, a house and the sun on your back', nothing could be finer. He laughed when he said he could never be homesick for Scotland because Broadmeadows had 'so many scotch thistles'.

Edward and Bridie were of the generation that had endured the war and survived the Great Depression, and both had learned to be grateful for all they had. Their good fortune would be ploughed not into their own indulgences, but into their children's future.

And they had reason to be grateful. Such industrial Housing Commission suburbs were booming in the 1960s on the back of full employment and the realisation that the world – or at least the distant island of Australia – might not need to repeat the deprivations of the first half of the twentieth century. Work was steady in Broadmeadows, but many basic services were lacking. Communities made do, and did so happily in many of those outer suburbs that consecutive governments appeared to set and forget. Driven by determined women like Bridie, those in the community fended for themselves. The men didn't wait for others to deliver; they joined forces and did whatever needed to be done. Edward helped to build the local Catholic school, St Dominic's, to which he would send his children.

Something as basic as a footpath was a luxury. Bridie, like other workers from the suburb, left her muddy shoes on the Broadmeadows station platform and changed shoes to travel to the city. That was their lot: make do. The family settled in and quickly Broadmeadows became home.

The suburb was invented in 1952 by the Housing Commission to supply workers for the big manufacturers in the area – Yakka, Nabisco and Ford, to name a few. Occasionally Bridie worked shifts on an assembly line to supplement Edward's income. Evelyn and Frank would walk to school each morning with the smell of Nabisco's baking biscuits propelling them on.

The third of the McGuire children, Edward Joseph McGuire, was born at the Royal Women's Hospital on 29 October 1964 (his younger sister, Brigitte, was born four years later). Though his birth certificate might have registered his name as Edward, he was always going to be Eddie.

The new child slotted into a happy family. Bridie was always there for the kids but, when she worked afternoon shifts, Edward Snr would load all the kids into the car and drive to the Nabisco factory so they could have dinner together in the car during her break.

Once they were all at school, the boys would run home from St Dominic's at lunchtime to eat with their mother before she left for work. Bridie was the kids' great educator, and it was no surprise that one of them – Evelyn – would later become a teacher. Bridie taught all her children to read aloud before they went to school, and took great pride in both her sons' first television reports. Eddie recalls his mum telling him to 'read with expression'; she was proud of all her children, and showed this often. She photographed Eddie's first TV news report on Ten off the television screen in the lounge room.

Television provided Eddie one of his earliest memories. He has a scratchy memory (it must have been because he was a toddler) of urgent news reports of a missing Prime Minister, Harold Holt, in December 1967, when the telly was camped in his sister's bedroom as his dad relaid the linoleum in the kitchen.³ Like many kids of the 1970s, the novelty of global events coming alive in his home via the wonders of satellite – Muhammad Ali's fights, the 1972 massacre of Israeli Olympic athletes – made a lasting impression as news, sport and television coalesced in his young mind.

The McGuires were a close family because they didn't have other relatives within coo-ee and a young Eddie could sense his parents' loneliness. He had his brother. Frank was eight years older than Eddie, and already a local sporting hero when Eddie carried his footy gear to training for him. They shared the same tiny bedroom until Frank left home, and as they grew up they would joke about how they'd had to take turns getting up in the morning because they didn't have enough space to stand in the room together.

Edward Snr told Frank that his duty was to take care of his younger brother, but that was an easy task when your younger brother idolised you. One of Eddie's earliest memories was of an eleven-year-old Frank carving up a football match the first time St Dominic's won the local premiership. Frank kicked seven goals

and was feted from the Jacana Reserve, with his young brother beaming.

It was also an easy task for Frank, knowing his younger brother could fend for himself. After trailing Frank and his mates to the Broadmeadows Swimming Centre one summer's day, a young Eddie was thrown into the deep end and bombed by each of the boys. Frank looked on from the side of the pool knowing his kid brother wouldn't cry and wouldn't drown.⁴

Frank allowed Eddie to tag along as early as five, despite the age difference, as they wandered through paddocks and stormwater drains and hung out at the prehistoric local BMX track. Eddie appreciated he grew up a little faster under his big brother's tutelage, seeing a little more of life when Frank was a teen than most little brothers.

As they got older, Frank's aura only bloomed in Eddie's eyes, but so did the magic of footy. The young Eddie idolised boxer Lionel Rose but years later, when Nine's *This Is Your Life* asked McGuire for his three heroes, he named Muhammad Ali, Frank and Collingwood full-forward Peter McKenna. Footy trumped boxing as far as local heroes went, but it was inevitable that Frank would still be in the mix. It is telling that Eddie nominated Peter McKenna as one of his favourites, as McKenna's showbiz demeanour would unwittingly influence Collingwood decades later.

While Frank and Eddie shared a bedroom in Broadmeadows, incredibly they didn't share a favoured football team. Frank was a passionate Essendon supporter, and the Essendon home ground, Windy Hill, was the closest Victorian Football League (VFL) stadium to the McGuires' Broadmeadows home. Eddie may have wanted to follow in Frank's footsteps in most aspects of life, but not in this case. As far as footy goes, Eddie McGuire has always known his own mind.

Collingwood's Peter McKenna was the VFL's rock star. Essendon's full-forward, the bespectacled Geoff Blethyn, had

nothing on Collingwood's rangy full-forward with the long hair, who played with a grace that seemed out of kilter with the hard edge of the Collingwood Magpies. Off-field, McKenna was a different cat too, embracing television, co-hosting GTV-9's *Hey! Hey! It's Saturday* with Daryl Somers before an ostrich replaced him, and even releasing his own singles, 'Things to Remember' and 'Smile'. Despite being photographed in an Essendon jumper as a three-year-old, Eddie was fascinated with McKenna, and Collingwood would become his team.

The passion the two McGuire brothers shared for footy was divided by their separate club loyalties, and it was inevitable that there would be tears. Eddie recounts hearing the final siren of the 1970 Grand Final, after playing along with his brother in the backyard to the call on the radio. He reacted to Collingwood's unlikely loss to Carlton with the naiveté and confusion of a young prep student, believing – as his neighbour had misinformed him – the loser had another chance: 'Never mind, there's always next week.'

McGuire ran inside to be coolly told by his elder brother there was no second chance: Collingwood was done (as a Bombers' supporter, there would have been considerable joy derived from pointing this out). It was the first time that McGuire recalled feeling a pain other than being physically hurt. Losing still hurts.

Frank thought the young Eddie would get over his Collingwood affliction. He was wrong. When Evelyn came home from school one day with a typewriter, Eddie asked his brother to type 'I love Collingwood' on the new machine. Without looking, Eddie proudly took the sheet to show his father, who read out what Frank had typed: 'I hate Collingwood'. Eddie was incensed. A psychologist might be able to decipher whether Frank's slights prompted a lifetime of underdog rhetoric from Eddie, but after the day his dad returned home with a Collingwood jumper there was no turning back.

His mum dutifully sewed the plastic number 6 of Peter McKenna on the back and Eddie stood proudly at the front gate wearing his new black-and-white guernsey as he awaited his brother's return from school. The passion and loyalty displayed by this young Broadmeadows kid would never leave Eddie McGuire.

If the jumper set young Eddie on his path, his first live VFL game sealed the deal. In round two of 1971, Collingwood played Richmond at the MCG in front of 82 000 people and McKenna kicked nine goals. Eddie was there. He could almost touch McKenna as he lined up from the boundary line just around from the infamous Bay 13 in the dark, cold Southern Stand. McGuire still lights up at the memory of the curve of McKenna's back and the dead-straight drop punt spinning backwards and glistening in the low winter sun peeking through the Members' Pavilion.

Any hope Frank had of Eddie's Magpie obsession waning was gone. Eddie laid his Collingwood jumper out at the foot of his bed the night before a big match. He'd found his tribe. The MCG and Victoria Park would become Eddie's mythical, magical places. Young Eddie had been to Arden Street, Windy Hill and Princes Park, which were all near the Broadmeadows line, but Collingwood's home ground, Victoria Park, was something else: two train rides away.

Victoria Park held a particular pull for Eddie because he deduced that almost every time Collingwood's name was first in the Friday night tips on the TV news, the team would win. Later Frank would disabuse him, pointing out Collingwood's sizeable home advantage.

Subconsciously perhaps, McGuire also wanted to belong, just as his dad belonged to Glasgow Celtic. He had grown up absorbing his dad's passion, and the loyalty, strength and identity his father gained from that club was what would appeal to Eddie. He would come to appreciate the same kinship his father felt at Celtic Park.

When one Friday night Edward ventured that Eddie might like to go to the footy the next day, the youngster was suspicious that his dad would renege when he realised Collingwood was playing at the distant Victoria Park. He hesitantly told his dad the next morning that Collingwood was playing at Victoria Park, not the MCG. His dad knew. Eddie couldn't believe it. His father had taken Frank to many games but this was something else. This was Collingwood's home ground.

After wrapping their supermarket lemonade cans in newspaper to keep them cold next to the fruit and nut chocolate, PK chewing gum and a bit of cake packed by Eddie's mum – Dad's little rituals after the Saturday fry-up lunch – Eddie practically floated with joy as they walked to the Broadmeadows station.

Broadmeadows was the first station on the line and, as they went further, more people would alight on their way to Windy Hill or Arden Street. Then Collingwood fans started jumping on board, including someone with a Collingwood cheer squad duffel coat that excited the young Eddie no end.

They alighted at Flinders Street to change for the Hurstbridge line, although Eddie panicked as they arrived at Collingwood station, urging his dad to get off. Eddie Snr told his son to sit down. Young Eddie feared his wonderful day was about to be destroyed because they'd missed their stop until he realised no one else had moved.

The next stop was Victoria Park station. McGuire couldn't believe the club and ground even had their own railway station! Edward Snr took Eddie's hand and guided him across the footbridge, the youngster too small to see anything above adult belts but enthralled by the cacophony and activity.

Just like the yellow brick road turning to reveal Oz, the footbridge dropped away and Eddie was confronted by Victoria Park's black-and-white-striped stands for the first time. He was agog.

Eddie and his dad made their way down to the right forward pocket, ending up next to the police horses, and the youngster

took in every smell, sound and sight – which were always a little different from the norm at Victoria Park. Where the MCG was an amphitheatre, Vic Park was a cage fight.

Old-timers looked out for the kid, finding him a place where he could see something of the game, away from the farting horses. As his heroes ran onto the ground, the roar enveloped the young boy. He felt it and he was hooked. It was the first time Eddie ever felt part of a community – one he'd never let go.

For all its familiarity, Broadmeadows was not the entirety of the McGuires' community. It was home, and they felt connected, but Bridie and Edward had different aspirations from most in their suburb and it rubbed off on their kids. They believed their children – if not themselves – could move beyond the confines of their home suburb to aspire to something greater. It was why they'd made that long sea journey in 1958. They wanted more for their children and they expected their kids to work hard to get it. They instructed them not to behave like the others down Gerbert Street; they did not want them following the crowd and getting into strife.

And Broadmeadows could be a tough place. Eddie recalls seeing one fourteen-year-old kid in tears in his backyard one day after being given a belting by his drunken father, who'd pulled him out of school. 'No kid of mine is going to be smarter than me,' he was told.

Edward and Bridie knew the way they did things was not the way everyone around them did them but they didn't care. They would do it the right way for their children. Edward wasn't a father who skived off to the pub after work drinking; he returned home to be with his kids and kick the footy with his boys.

Everything about the Collingwood kinship drew Eddie in: the crowd banter, the humour, the achievements of a team that, crucially, attained a level of success that made them easier to support as McGuire progressed through high school in the late

1970s. The wooden spoon year of 1976 was merely a blip before Grand Finals in 1977, 1979 and 1980, and heavy-duty matches most weekends provided an impressionable youngster with enough to talk about and idolise during the week.

‘Fabulous’ Phil Carman was signed to spice up the Pies and fill the void for fans heartbroken by Peter McKenna’s defection to, of all clubs, Carlton. In disgust, Eddie asked his mum to cut McKenna’s number 6 off his jumper and turn it upside down so it represented Carman’s number 9. Disappointingly for Eddie and his fellow Magpie supporters, Carman didn’t deliver as much as promised; crucially, he was suspended for two weeks for striking and missed both Grand Finals in 1977.⁵ It was a further blow, as Peter McKenna hadn’t displayed such flaws.

McGuire remembers standing at the back of the Southern Stand directly opposite the time clock as the siren sounded on the drawn Grand Final between North Melbourne and Collingwood. Years later, he would experience the same feeling as president of the Pies during the 2010 Grand Final. His study of the 1977 matches would set up Collingwood to perform far better in 2010 than they did in 1977.

If the players didn’t always provide the young McGuire with something to love, the supporters would. The twelve-year-old was standing at the station after Collingwood’s 1978 first semi-final victory over Carlton at the MCG when Ray Shaw dominated with five goals and 25 touches. As Eddie stood near the train door in the scarf knitted by his mum, Collingwood jumper and beanie, an aggrieved Blue reached in, ripped McGuire’s beanie from his head and threw it under the train before the door closed. As the train pulled away, the Collingwood tribal unity kicked in. Another supporter offered the kid a new beanie and, through the window, McGuire’s gaze was fixed upon the offending Blue having the bejeezus beaten out of him by Collingwood supporters still crowded on the platform.

McGuire would go to more matches at Windy Hill – which was closer – with his dad taking a piece of wood that he'd balance between two beer cans so Eddie could stand higher and see better (ironically, a tale another Nine star, Daryl Somers, tells of his time watching Geelong at Kardinia Park). Footy fans had to be innovative at their primitive tribal grounds.

Football taught Eddie lessons away from league grounds too. He has a vivid childhood memory of a talk given by colourful St Kilda coach Alan Killigrew at a 'pie night' at Broadmeadows. 'Killer' was not a devout man himself, but he was Catholic and told the impressionable kids to go to Mass and be good Catholics, and that whatever they did in life, to just be the best at it. Nine-year-old Eddie took the legend's words to heart.

These were idyllic days for a young boy. His dad was employed, his brother was the sporting star of the suburb and he ran home each afternoon to watch *Cartoon Corner*, unknowingly beginning a lifelong fascination with TV.

He threw himself into everything he could: judo on Saturday mornings, school footy, and his role as an altar boy at St Dominic's. Like his brother, Eddie was a better-than-average under-age footballer.

He also hoovered up information. During primary school, he read Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory*, the story of John West, a boy from the desperately poor fictional suburb of Carringbush (a thinly disguised Collingwood) who rose through cunning and bribery to a position of power and wealth. Eddie didn't identify with the criminality, but he was impressed with 'the way (West) was able to do things. I thought: Oh, OK, he saw an opportunity and took it.'⁶

Eddie recognised opportunity when it came along, and his entrepreneurial flair was evident early in his life. He sold his parents' old lounge to neighbours, adding a fee for use of his billy cart as he rolled it three doors up the street. He bought and sold a little more. He ran a 'lucky numbers' competition in the corner of St Dominic's primary school playground and rigged the numbers so

that he wouldn't lose.⁴ An old schoolfriend once told a newspaper reporter that the young McGuire was also an accomplished amateur light-fingers, a claim McGuire hurried to deny. A Grade 3 report gave him an N ('needs to improve'), although the youngster liked its statement that 'Eddie always wants to win'.

Like many of their neighbours, the McGuires didn't have a telephone until 1976, but Bridie and Edward Snr worked hard for their children and Eddie didn't go without. He had Adidas footy boots, not the clunky plastic boots of so many of his mates.

The siblings were taught to compete and learnt that hard work paid off. The McGuire kids knew to aspire to something and work hard to make it; Eddie aimed higher than most. In Grade 4, he wrote a policy speech outlining what he would do when he became prime minister. His teacher, Sister Therese, liked it because he argued teachers should be paid more.⁷

Life wasn't always easy, though. When Eddie was in Grade 5, Bridie fell ill and couldn't work, meaning money became tighter. It wasn't footy boots or new footy jumpers that were at stake. Eddie was told if he couldn't win a scholarship, he wouldn't be following his siblings. Evelyn, the oldest, was among the first in Broadmeadows to win a Commonwealth scholarship to secondary school, setting the bar for the rest, which Frank jumped over, gaining entry to the Christian Brothers College (CBC) in St Kilda. His brother was expected to follow.

Eddie could sense his parents' apprehension, but he also had a strong competitive instinct that would not allow him to be out of step with his brother. A series of events heightened the stakes, as Frank was doing his Higher School Certificate, Edward Snr's job at the Board of Works was under threat and Eddie himself was having a tough year at an overstretched school.

He wasn't the best student at St Dominic's but, as any parent knows, individual teachers can influence an education immensely. In their opinion, Eddie didn't have a good one that year.

When Frank was admitted to CBC, Brother McCarthy, appreciating the McGuires' financial circumstances and Frank's talent, implored Mrs McGuire not to let Eddie go to the local Therry College when he was of age. Now, given the family dramas, it looked like Eddie might not even make it there but would have to attend Broadmeadows High instead.

In March of Eddie's Grade 6 year, he had his CBC entrance exam. Months earlier, he had confided in a stern nun, Sister Matthews, that he had to win the scholarship for his family's sake. He picked the right woman as his confidante.

She pulled him aside and said 'Right, you sit here' and proceeded to test him. She then told her young charge that every day he would sit in a seat near the side of the blackboard where there would be a separate board and books set aside for him. He was in an accelerated learning class two decades ahead of it becoming the fashion. By the time of his exam, Eddie was practising on Form 4 scholarship exams, while at home Frank gave him English essays, his dad taught him long division and his mum worked on his reading and expression. His own innate intelligence combined with all this study meant Eddie nailed the CBC exam; however, he still had to wait nervously for the results. At the time, Eddie used to run home during the school lunch break to check on his sick mum, have lunch with her and do shopping errands. He timed himself as he ran to and from school because he was so competitive. He kept striving to beat his best time while, in his twelve-year-old mind, he was training to become a VFL player.

One day, he ran around the corner of Widford Street into Gerbert Street and saw his mum waiting at the letterbox with the letter from Christian Brothers in her hand. They looked at each other, knowing what this one letter could mean.

Bridie opened it while he watched on, and for Eddie the contents were more valuable than Willy Wonka's Golden Ticket. He was in! He felt as if he was floating on air. Even then he knew:

from now on he wouldn't be defined by Broadmeadows or luck. Now he had the opportunity, his future was in his own hands.

Eddie McGuire Jnr wasn't one to waste opportunity – but a school friend recalls his first encounter with him at CBC the following year. McGuire turned round from his desk and put out his hand: 'Hi, I'm Eddie McGuire. I'm from Broadmeadows.'

Eddie was never going to deny his roots – no matter what. He prided himself on saying he was from Broadmeadows, which was some distinction at a school largely drawn from wealthy suburbs heading in the opposite direction along the leafy Sandringham line. Similarly, he proudly wore his Collingwood jumper in the St Kilda stronghold.

His path at the inner Melbourne private school was eased by the reputation of his elder brother, who had dominated in both sport and scholastically, eventually becoming the school captain.

Schoolfriends and teachers recall Eddie as the same bloke we know today: personable, charming, cheeky and very talented. He wasn't the smartest student in the class, but he had a capacity for the humanities. His wit was always in full tilt and he had a keen eye for detail. He had a passion for facts, absorbing them quickly, and appreciated history and its context. Particularly school history. Even at school reunions today, McGuire remains the old boy recalling the minutiae of who did what when. McGuire did a lot, all the time.

He played the euphonium in the school band, dabbled in the theatre group (playing the president of the football club in the Alan Hopgood play *The Big Men Fly*), was a house prefect and competed across most sports, including athletics, cricket and football. The skinny student at one point held the Associated Catholic Colleges 4 x 100-metre record and he was vice-captain and best and fairest of the football team, although it still rankles that he didn't follow in his brother's footsteps to become school captain.

Frank was the one everyone anticipated would go on to do incredible things, although CBC expected that of all its students.

The expanding list of high-achieving old boys includes News Corp CEO Robert Thompson, TV host Daryl Somers, author Morris West and documentary filmmaker Damien Parer (whose *Kokoda Front Line!* was Australia's first Oscar win). Four old boys would be AFL club presidents during the 2000s: McGuire, Melbourne's Paul Gardner, St Kilda's Greg Westaway and Greater Western Sydney's Tony Shepherd.

He may have participated in many activities, but footy was everything for the young McGuire and he threw himself into the Wednesday afternoon matches, arriving home as his mum waited with a big bowl of soup to soothe his red-raw gums, cut up by his rudimentary mouthguard.

Eddie's teachers loved his spirit. One of them challenged him to a game of squash and McGuire cheekily said he'd thrash him. The opposite was true, with the teacher saying if he won 9-0 it would be written on every blackboard in the school. Reminded of the consequences when down 8-0, McGuire willed himself to win the next four points.

The young McGuire was studious, optimistic and fitted in easily. His charisma was on show early. Teachers could see where he got it from: his mum was quite a formidable woman, not dominated by her partner.

He fitted in, yet felt slightly out of step with those around him, at school and at home. Walking to the Broadmeadows train station at 6.30 a.m. in his CBC cap and tie, and returning at 7 p.m. made him an outsider in his own suburb.

The train ride was instructive though: a literal journey from his present to what could be his future. Eddie would wake up and walk down the muddy paths to the train station. He'd see friends from Sunday mass or the local footy team heading to the factories, some in overalls. On the train, he would see the different strata of society. At Broadmeadows and Glenroy, the working class jumped on, before suits and suitcases started appearing at Moonee Ponds and

Essendon. The student holding his euphonium would theorise about what kind of jobs they held: were they lawyers, clerks, somebodies?

Rattling past the Newmarket slaughter yards, everyone smelled the blood and guts of primary industry before the workers alighted for the factories and port around North Melbourne. Eddie would change lines at Flinders Street. A different kind of passenger altogether alighted from the Sandringham line as Eddie jumped on the train that went past South Yarra and the brothels that backed onto the train line, through to Prahran, before getting off at Windsor, at the shabby end of Chapel Street. It was a daily lesson in Melbourne's many social and economic strata. His parents might have thought they'd left class distinctions behind in Glasgow, but they were alive and well every morning for young Eddie to observe.

Eddie spent forty minutes more than any other student travelling to school, and that journey was a transformation. In winter, he'd leave home in the dark and arrive home in the dark at a railway station not known for its hospitality. If Frank was home, Eddie would call from the public phone at the train station, letting it ring three times then hanging up to save money while still alerting his brother to pick him up in the car.

That daily journey from Broadmeadows to CBC was as distinct as a ride from Liverpool to Eton. And Eddie had his own 'Mr Chips' in the form of a dapper teacher, Bill Humphreys, who inspired the young Eddie McGuire with English and the writings of Shakespeare.

One view of destiny stayed with the student: 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.'⁸

In his mind young Eddie knew he was going to go somewhere – Broadmeadows might have been his home, but it wasn't his destiny.