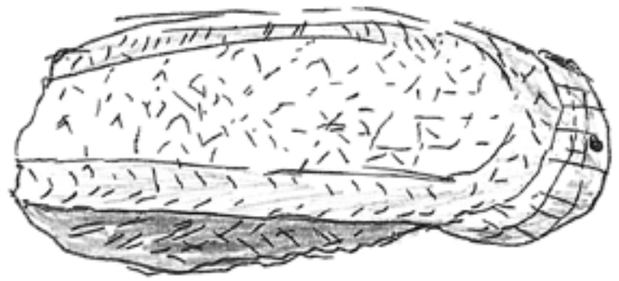
ARMOUR

NEXT >>

My old doctor came to visit this week he is 80 years old.
Well he came with the right attitude.
We remembered things, he wanted to know about my family and I had to explain how they had all died.
Who would have thought I would be the last one.
I'm not offended by that.
The doctor left his hat behind.



I was born in Zeehan hospital in 1959.

I was born with no arms just one finger on my left shoulder.

Mum was a Zeehan girl she was one of seven children,dad had come from Hobart his father was a jeweller…sargisons

Zeehan was much bigger then.
As far as I know it had the biggest population in Tasmania in the 50's and 60's.

This is weird though,there were no roads to Zeehan, only the Strahan,Zeehan,Burnie railway.

I remember trips to Hobart as young as three 'cos it was a difficult trip.

Well the way I see
it people thought

here's a kid with no
arms what can we do
for it.

When I was 4 or 5

I got my first artificial

ARMS.

I had to stay at

WINGFIELD REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

In Newtown Hobart for a long time.

I slept in a ward,next to the nurses station and remember a light always shining at night.

I had a pedal car and one Saturday in 1964 2 nurses took me to the football.

I remember a huge laundrette next to Wingfield that did all of the hospitals laundry.

My family moved to Somerset and as I was growing up every 2 years I got a new set of arms from Hobart.

They often broke, the wires would fray and our neighbour John Kuys had a soldering iron and he would work on them.

<< BACK

NEXT >>

Then in 1972 when I was 13 I had a back operation,I had a plaster all around my body.I was in hospital a long time then spent 6 months at home in plaster lying still in bed.

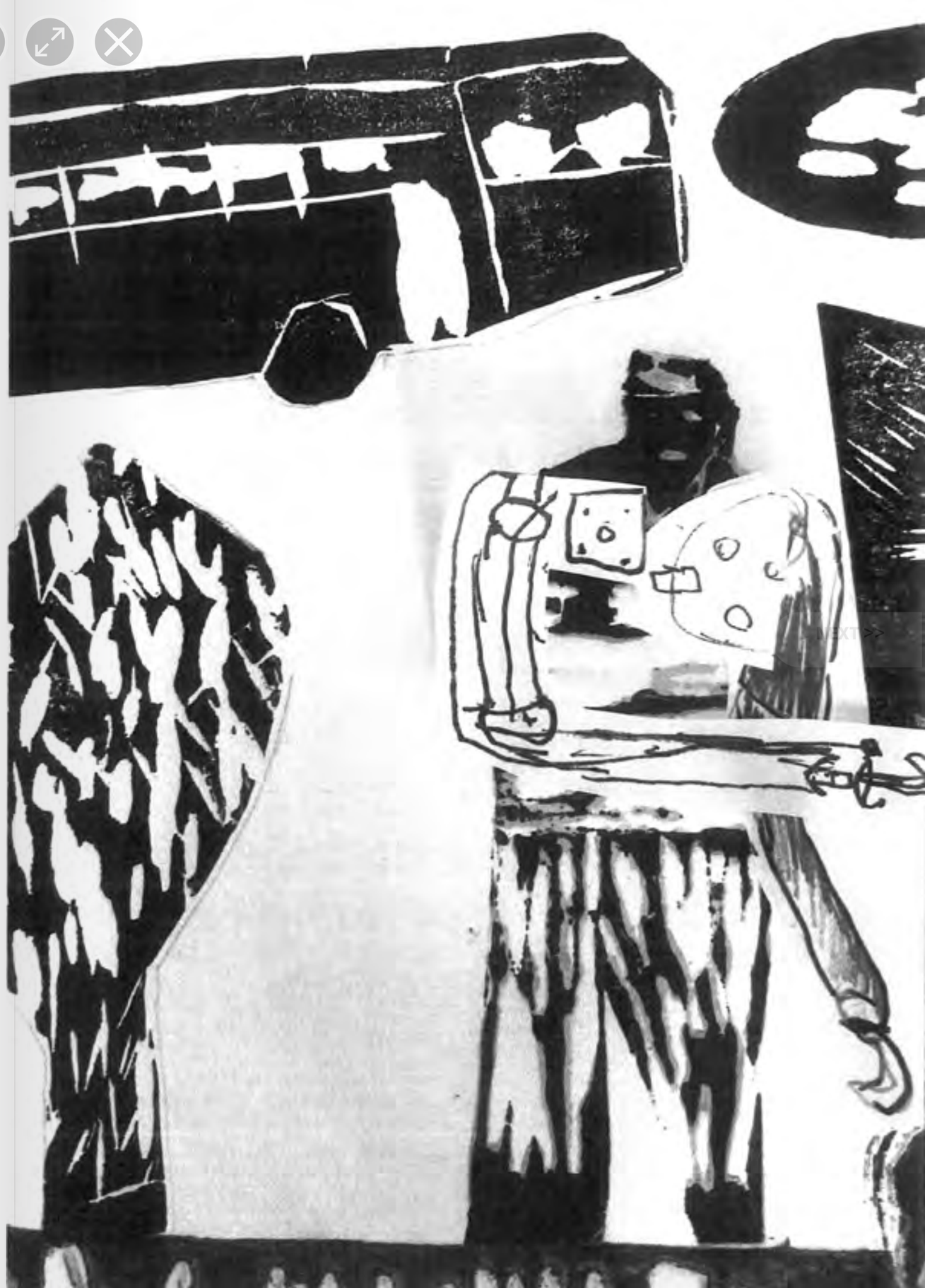
It was boring I remember taking photos on my camera with my feet and dad giving me a sips of beer.

When the plaster was removed I stayed home my back was too delicate,my old doctor remembered I did a lot of correspondence work.

Eventually I went back to wearing my arms and I kept wearing them till 1991

Then I stopped,my back was too sore from all the weight and work.

<< BACK



They often broke

I couldn't wear them camping because they would get dirt or sand in them.

The arms were fixed in Hobart.I remember mum putting me on the coastliner bus,it left smithton at 6am and got to somerset BP at 7.10.

I would get to Hobart around 1pm go to davey st repat centre and they would fix my arms in the 3 hours before I got back on the bus at 4pm to be home by 8

The arms hung on the wall.They were made of fibreglass which made them very heavy.They had metal wires,hooks for hands and leather straps held both sides together.

Because the hooks and wires were difficult my shirt stayed on the arms.

The left arm was a dummy arm, there to balance the weight so it just hung there

but it had a hook too so it would catch on things.

The shoulder caps were big and fitted on my shoulder and chest,but they didn't breathe.They got very sweaty in summertime and chaffed at the bottom.Later they drilled holes in the caps to try and let air in.

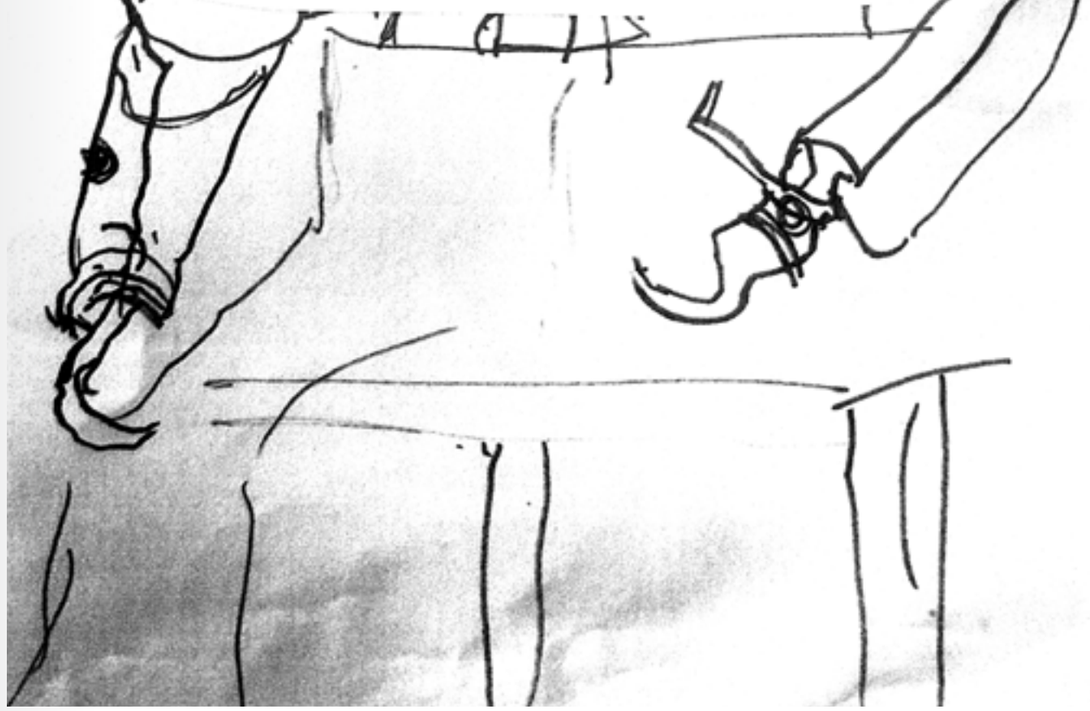
On the left cap there was a button on a box about the size of half a matchbox.There was a hole in the cap for my finger so I could operate the button.My finger was hidden all of the time so I couldn't use it for anything else.

Sometimes I moved it under my shirt and people wouldn't know what was happening!

The wire cables ran from the left side around the back then down to the right arm and metal hook.

Eventually they added a spring to the elbow so the arm didn't just fall,because being heavy it would hurt my leg.

For a while I also carried a small gas bottle strapped to my leg to operate the arm.



As far as I know Larry Goring the man who made most of these is still alive.

Because they were on the wall I would carefully back into them.First though I had to step into the leg strap that went around my thigh.

I had to get into the shoulder cups then with my teeth fasten a strap across my chest.They were connected at the back with a leather strap.

Then I tried to line up the sides of my shirt then pressed chest first to the wall to fasten it with Velcro that mum had sewn on.

OPERATING ARMOUR

I worked the arm with my shoulders.

Shoulder forward opened the hook

Shoulder back closed the hook

A shoulder shrug and the leg strap controlled the angle of the arm and elbow and the finger button locked and released the position.

No I don't
miss my arms

Sarge

<< BACK

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