



Noel McCall

Born in 1930 at Parramatta, Noel became a customs agent in a liquor bond store when he left school. After several years of employment in that capacity with various importers of spirits he went into the hotel business, where he managed a number of hotels, large and small, in NSW and in north Queensland. Some of these were for periods of several years, others were short-term, on a relieving basis. Noel left the hotel business in 1979, and spent the last years of his working life organising the liquid refreshments for a large commercial insurance company. He has three grown-up children and lives now with his wife at Point Clare, NSW.

I was born in Parramatta in 1930. The first job I ever had was on a fruit run. My father died when I was about 12. We were good Catholics, but there was a bloke up the top of the road that ran a fruit market, and he was a good Seventh Day Adventist. I used to work with him Fridays till sunset, and then from Saturday night through to Sunday night. I used to get ten pound a shift off him. I thought "Gee, this is good money!" I realised that he was overpaying me, but I didn't realise why until much later - he was helping out my mother and me. Some weekends I'd earn twenty pound, which was heaps of money in those days. He got his value out of me, but he helped me go through school and he kept my mother and I going. My father was on a little pension when he died, which we continued to get, because he was a Broken Hill miner who had silicosis and was on a dust pension. It wasn't much to survive on, and there wasn't much social service around like there is today.

Later on as I grew up I still worked with him, even after I left school. He taught me to drive the truck, and seeing that I needed the money and I worked he let me take the truck out on Saturdays with no colours on it and sell fruit, even though it

was against his religion. So we survived that way when I was a kid.

After school, apart from the spare time job with the fruit, I went straight into McCallums (Whisky) as a clerk in their office. I'd done the Leaving and passed four subjects, which wasn't bad for me. I went to Marist Brothers Parramatta and they encouraged you to stay on if you could, and helped the poorer parents along a bit with reduced fees and things like that. In those days that was the main form of social services that you got. My pass wasn't good enough to get me into the public service, so I had to get a job out of the paper, which is how I started at McCallums. There was only five of us in the whole office. I started off in the Shipping and Customs. I was shown what to do - I had a bit of intelligence and you could teach me, and I wanted to be taught because I wanted to earn money.

At the same time I was running with Western Suburbs (athletics). I stayed at McCallums until I was married. I had the opportunity to go to the Empire Games in New Zealand as a half-miler, but you had to pay your own way. Nancarrow Breweries in New Zealand had the agency for McCallums whisky at that time, and I'd got quite friendly with the young Nancarrow when he'd been sent across to Sydney to learn the business here - we were about the same age - and he said that I could go across to New Zealand and work for them while I was there. But bloody Arthur Hodson from the Athletic Association asked me how I could afford to go and I told him about the job that I was going to, and down the drain went that chance! As far as they were concerned it changed my amateur status. If I hadn't told him I'd have probably got away with it. But you learn - I was young, and stupid. I kept running and that, and Arthur and I got on very well years later - there was no animosity. (Arthur was the President of WSAAC.)

At McCallums we used to do two bottlings a day, and out of each bottling the customs bloke (me, in this case) used to get two bottles. It didn't matter whether it was scotch, brandy, or Australian whisky, you still got two bottles. I didn't drink in those days because I was a mad athlete. I used to take the grog home and put it in the wardrobe, and my mother, who was a good Catholic, used to give some of it to the priest. (*Laughs*). We used to keep the priests in grog!

I got a job working at the races at Randwick while I was at McCallums. I started off picking up glasses there and working in the bar. The best bar I worked was the Oyster Bar, and in the corner of the bar Tilly Devine used to have her table. You had to keep that table for her every week. In those days you'd get forty or fifty bob for the day's work, but I used to get five quid just for keeping the table for Tilly! That was where she did her betting and some of her underworld business from. Bottled beer was still hard to get, and each barman would have a quota. Each day you'd have the option to buy three bottles of beer for 2/6 a bottle. Beer was so scarce that you'd have no trouble getting ten shillings a bottle for it elsewhere. I'd usually take that home, but I'd bring in some of the spirits I was getting from the McCallums bottlings. After they'd had a good day at the races, punters who knew about it would come up to me for a bottle or two of whisky, and I'd get ten quid a bottle for it. They'd take it off with them to drink at Chequers or somewhere like that. Or if they hadn't had a real good day I might sell them some Australian whisky for five pounds a bottle. I was coming away with rarely less than forty quid for a day's work at the races. It was top money for those days. It paid for my house at Rydalmere that I renovated after my mother died.

About this time I'd got engaged to Pam, my wife. Her mother was Manageress at the races and her father was a builder, and he renovated the house for us, which

was considered to be out in the bush in those days. You used to have long engagements in those days but when the house came up when my mother died they encouraged us to get married earlier than we'd planned. We had to find a weekend when there was no race meeting on to get married, because just about everyone was working at the races, or was in that sort of life, who were to be our guests.

We had the wedding reception at Bronte House. I could get the spirits, and her father could get the beer. Whisky was on quota to the pubs in those days. (This was in the days of the Liquor Royal Commission.) The idea was to bribe a publican with the spirits, in exchange for beer, which we went ahead and did. I was able to get together about fifty cases of spirits, (which was like rocking horse dust in those times), and had them added to the quotas of various pubs. The publicans in turn then sold us the beer from their allocations from the brewery and subsequently we purchased a 36-gallon keg from the *Woollahra Hotel*. But Bronte House would only let us take in nines, so we had to swap the 36 for a couple of 18s from the *Four in Hand* at Paddington, then change the 18s for four nines with a pub down in Erskine Street. You see, in those days the breweries used to note down the numbers on the keg, and the same numbered kegs had to go back, This was set up by the Liquor Commission so that everyone got the quotas they should, and not more or less.

Away we went to the wedding. It was a top nosh - about 100 people, I suppose. (Pam's parents paid for the wedding, but sometimes I say that I paid for it for the rest of my life!) We went to Surfer's for the honeymoon, and when I got back they were still having terrible trouble getting all the kegs back to the right pubs so the numbers would be right when they were returned, because naturally all the kegs weren't emptied all at the same time. It was a ballsup!

While I was at McCallums, Bob Menzies brought in the national training scheme - everyone had to go into the army and do three months. Everyone I was working for thought I was too old to be called up because I was working over my age - I'd put my age up so I'd get more money. I would have been about twenty one, I suppose, and by then I had the qualifications as a Customs Agent and could do as I liked. But I didn't want to go into the army. I was working at the fruit run, I was working at the races at Randwick as a barman, and I was working doing other little odd jobs in the Customs for other people. I was hungry. I was mean. I wanted money. So I thought I'd better leave McCallums and get my age right or I'd lose all that and they'd put me in the army.

So, after a brief spell at Bells, a friend put me onto a job as a customs officer at Black and White - (James Buchanan's). Cawseys took Buchanans over, then after a while Cawseys was taken over by Toths, and I got interested in the brewery side and the hotels. (Toths took over Cawseys because they didn't have a scotch whisky - this was when all these corporations started to gobble each other up.)

In all of these places my job was pretty much the same, as a customs agent - looking after their bottling, paying their duty, importing the stuff for them. In those days you'd probably handle three shipments of bulk whisky from Scotland a month. It came out in 60-80 gallon hogsheads. (The wharfies used to drill little holes in them, then put in a straw or something to get it out with, and when they were finished they'd get a wooden golf tee, belt it back into the hole, and nip the top off it. We used to lose a lot. It was that strong when it came out. It was always about 3 or 4 O.P. at least, and we broke it down to 33 U.P.) It would go into the

Bonds for bottling, and there'd be so much for wastage, so much for spillage, and you'd pay so much per proof gallon after it had been bottled. You didn't pay any duty at all until it was bottled and crated and sold to a wholesaler ex-Bond. Stuff that we sent to New Zealand we'd get paid for the product and the bottling but wouldn't pay any duty at all - they'd pay that over there. That, basically, was the job of a customs officer.

Once I'd got a Customs Agent ticket, which I got through the United Distillers, I used to do private work when I had a bit of spare time. You'd lease yourself out to a customs agent like Rudders, or someone like that and they'd call on you when they had a surge of work. I'd handle the odd bill of lading for them, pay the wharfage or whatever and give them a bill at the end of the week with five or ten percent added on for doing it. You'd get a quid that way. There was a lot of work around in those days, because they were the boom years, of course.

There was no formal training to be a customs agent - no tech or anything. You just had to get someone to show you what to do - how to read what they called The Good Book - the Bible of the business, which was the big customs classification book. It hasn't changed all that much today, except that a lot more is done overseas before the stuff comes here - though I suppose containers coming in would have caused some changes.

Wet bonds - they were the liquor bonds. There were dry bonds that would only handle clothes and soft goods etc, then there were timber bonds that only handled timber, and oil bonds etc - people specialised in various sections. When you specialised in one area you could get a clearance in three or four days, but if you didn't know the ropes it might take you weeks. Same with export. If you knew your way around and knew who to go to you could get it on the wharf at the head of the queue - otherwise you could have a truck standing out in Hickson Road for days. Sometimes they'd wait all day and still not get in, so they'd give you a mark to come back to tomorrow and take your place in the queue.

Later on, when I was working with a bottle shop in the western suburbs - the bloke who owned it was a very mean guy. Beer was pretty hard to get at the time, and there was a lot of beer being sent overseas somewhere. The trucks were all down there loaded up with it. Some guy got to know the bottle shop owner well - took him out to lunch and for drinks and all that, then told him that they could get him some of this beer that was waiting to be sent overseas. They said it was a shipment that they couldn't get onto the ship, and would he be interested in taking it. They took him down to the wharf and showed him these trucks of beer out in the queue. The money involved had to be cash, of course, and when he'd handed it over the blokes who said they could get the beer for him made a show of walking into the sheds. They hung around in there for a while, then slipped out another door on the other side, then got in their car and drove off! Not knowing this, the bottle shop owner hung around waiting till it was nearly dark, then he went up to one of the truck drivers and asked him when he would get his beer, only to find out, of course, that there wasn't going to be any beer. End of story!

From Black and White, after Tooths got into 'em, I ended up at the Surrey Hotel at Bondi Junction. It was the number three pub in the state in those days. It had the biggest draught beer turnover in the state, but it didn't have a bottle trade because there wasn't enough room for bottles. I started off there as the office man. We had a staff there of over 100 in those days. It was a pub and a half. Eventually it became a Millers pub, then it became the Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club. We only sold one brand of beer - Reschs, and nothing else. The cellar was

only big enough to hold beer for one day - we used to get daily deliveries from Waverley brewery. We'd get I think it was around ten "pigs" (which are 54 gallon kegs) a day, as well as a couple of 18s and a couple of 9s for the upstairs bars. There was no coolroom - it was all Temprite, which is an instantaneous cooler right behind the bar, like we have now. If you had both a Temprite *and* a coolroom, that was the ultimate, and you had the best beer in the village. There was two bars - one big long one went right through from Oxford Street to Spring Street at the back. They split the bars eventually and made them two island bars, but when I was first there I suppose there would have been, without exaggeration, at least thirty people pulling beer between four and six pm and we had four cashiers going flat out.

After you'd had a bit of general pub experience, Toths used to send you out to relieve in other hotels to see how you'd go, then you'd come back and get a bit more training, then go out and relieve somewhere else. My boss at The Surrey was a bloke called Bill Wright. People used to say that if you could work for Bill you could work for anyone. He was tough. But he was good.

On Christmas Eve we'd get a delivery in the morning before you opened at ten o'clock. They'd pull out yesterday's empties, set up the cellar with another ten pigs, then after lunch at about two o'clock they'd come back and pull out the morning's empties and deliver another lot. Then at night, after we'd shut (it was six o'clock closing then) they'd come back with more to tide you over the Christmas holiday demand. There'd be barrels of beer everywhere - in the hallway...you name it. You couldn't stack 54 gallons of beer on top of each other, they were too big. And it was all man-handled in and out of the cellar on ropes.

(One of the things that you never do, when handling kegs, is put your fingers over the edge - you always roll them with the flat of your hand on the keg. If the keg bumped against another keg, or against the wall, you could lose your fingers. It wasn't uncommon to see blokes working in the breweries in those days with some of their fingers missing. It was the first thing that they told you. There is an art to standing them up, too. I could stand up a cask of whisky on my own. You use the weight. That's why I've got two crook knees now, and have had to have them replaced. Kegs have got a camber on them, and you gently rock it so that the fluid gets going. After you've rocked it back and forwards a few times you can feel when you've got it, then you can just - Phswttt! - stand it up! You couldn't do that with a 44-gallon drum because it's flat and has no camber on it to let you rock it. And if you ever want to lift anything really heavy - say you and I wanted to lift a keg here, now - you and I could lift it easily. (*Stands up to demonstrate*). You put the drum in between both of you, steady your legs, then put your foreheads together so they brace off each other, then you lift.)

The Surrey was a famous pub in those days for the underworld characters that used to go there. Dulcie Markham was a regular. She was known as "The Kiss of Death". Everyone that she married ended up getting shot. There were lots of shady characters who were regulars there - and there was never any trouble with them in the hotel - they'd always sort things out outside. They looked on the pub as *their* place, and if anyone came in that you didn't want, they'd get rid of them for you.

There were lots of funny things happened while I was at *The Surrey*, but one stands out in my memory. At the end of each day you had to go round and measure the waste in the drip tray, and if there was more than five ounces you were in trouble - (they'd send you away to have lessons as a barman). They used

to give preference for employment as barmaids to women who had worked in a milk bar because people working in a milks bar had to put up with more shit than you did in a pub. If you played up in a pub they threw you out, but, just like with young kids today, in a milk bar you could get away with murder. But in licensed premises in those days you used to be able to give them a smack across the teeth and throw them out. (You can't do that today, of course, because you'd get charged with assault. That's one reason why I'm not still in pubs, but that's another story.)

Anyway, there was a bloke called Fronky who was a regular, and Molly was a barmaid at *The Surrey*. They'd been living together for a while ("living in sin" as they called it then), and Molly had gone off with another bloke. Fronky was very much upset by it. This was in the time when we had six o'clock closing, then you'd open again at seven o'clock after the tea break. Fronky came in this day pretty full, and when we tried to get him out for the break between six and seven he was a bit slow to go. Molly was the head girl of the section. She'd done her till and was cleaning up the bar while I'm measuring the waste. Suddenly I heard a great crash of glasses, and I looked up to see Fronky's hand disappearing over the edge of the bar as he fell to the floor. What had happened was, Fronky had stood up on the lip of the bar down on the floor and dropped his old feller on the bar and said "There it is. Don't you want it?" Molly had a wire tray full of glasses in her hand at the time, and she just brought it crashing down on Fronky's old feller! When I looked over the bar, here's Fronky out like a maggot with his old feller still up, with blue stripes and red marks all down it from the tray, like a barber's pole! They had to cart him off in an ambulance, and the sheet still looked like a tent as they carted him away!

I had a bit of a disagreement with Tooths after I'd been there about three years, over a bloke I'd sacked and who they wanted back, so being young and cantankerous in those days I told them to shove the job up their arse. I went to work at the *Three Hs* at Hunters Hill, which was a Tooheys pub near Joey's college. I was getting a bit wiser now - survival cunning, and I went to work for Tooheys purposely, which paid off later). Tooths had trained me to be one of their top blokes, and it only took a few weeks before they contacted me again and offered me a job at Keogh's pub at Ryde as a cellarman, which got me back into the Tooths fold again.

But getting back to the Hunter's Hill Hotel. It was a wonderful business, run by a good Catholic man who lived there then. It wasn't an official policy, but it helped if you were Catholic to work there. (You got an extra shilling a week in your pay, for one thing.) We couldn't work out why suddenly the amount of business we were getting really picked up. It turned out that Clive Churchill, who worked for Lonergans at the *Sawdust Hotel* at Gladesville, was having trouble getting the blokes out of the bar at closing time. You had to have the place spotless when it re-opened at seven, or the police would be right onto you if you didn't. Clive's way of getting them out was, as soon as six o'clock came, he'd get the hose out and start to hose the floor! The customers didn't like that, so they came across and drank at the Hunters Hill.

The boss at the Three Hs had a son who was a Marist Brother, and of course the Marist Brothers ran Joeys. The boss left, and another bloke took over, and about this time there was a great eruption at Scots College or some other private school about the senior boys drinking in hotels. It was in the papers and the publicity was bad. The new fellow at the Three Hs wasn't a Catholic, but he was having no trouble with the boys from Joeys, or the teachers either, who were all

Brothers in those days. They'd get into their mufti and come down and have a beer, sometimes with the senior boys, sometimes in different bars. A lot of the boys were well over eighteen, and were cockies' kids with their own cars and everything. So what does the new publican do? He wrote to the newspapers, saying how he had no trouble with this sort of thing, and dobbed them all in without realising what he was doing! There was a big clamp-down at Joeys as a result of this and many of the teachers got moved because the Bishop didn't like what was going on, and the publican couldn't work out why his trade dropped off! He'd buggered up everything. Then *he* got moved too!

I wasn't at Hunters Hill long, because I took up the offer at Keogh's, but I was only there three weeks when Toths contacted me again. There was a freehold pub at Gulargambone that sold only Toths beer, and the publican had bad dermatitis and had to get out of the pub for the summer. I went there to take over while he was away. Gulargambone is the other side of Dubbo, between Gilgandra and Coonamble.

At this stage, the furthest west my wife had ever been was Wallacia - she'd never been over the bridge at Penrith, let alone to Dubbo! She wore it to Dubbo, on the way up, and by the time we got to Gilgandra it was getting dark. The other side of Gilgandra we hit the dirt road, and there were no streetlights. The wife had never been anywhere where there were no street lights. We finally hit a bit of sealed road and came into Gulargambone. One pub, about fourteen banks (every bank was represented there because of the cockies' money), three churches, two milk bars, and a garage. That was Gulargambone in those days. There used to be two pubs, but the guy I went to work for had bought the pub on the other side of the road five or six years earlier and burnt it down so there'd only be the one. Their family owned a lot of property around the area and the pub at Lightning Ridge. He was a good bloke, though. I can't knock him. I went back and helped him out several times in later years when he needed someone. He was a very good fella - always paid cash, too. He'd give me a cheque for "droving fees" and tell me where to go in Dubbo to get it cashed. I never asked any questions.

It was a beautiful old stone pub, lovely and cool inside. No air conditioning of course, but big ceiling fans, big verandas - it was magnificent. (It's been burnt down too, subsequently, and rebuilt.) Of course Gulargambone is a very big town now with two high schools and everything. When we were there I'd say there would have been about five hundred whites and five thousand blacks. There was a big mission there on the Castlereagh.

It was a very very hot summer. There were seventeen days in a row when the temperature never dropped below 100, and that included night time. In the day it would be 120 - 130 outside. My wife had brought some nice gear with her, white pants and nice tops and things, and they got pinched the first time she hung them out - didn't even have time to dry! We soon learned to wear old clothes and never to leave anything lying around.

You couldn't serve aborigines in those days. They used to have to have tickets to drink. If they were good fellows, and had proved themselves, then they had a ticket to drink. We only had five abbos in the town who could be served. One of them used to work for us as a yardman, and he was a good guy. One was a horse trainer. But I must admit that we did sell grog to them to take away. You weren't supposed to, but... somebody would come into town with a truckload of plonk and sell it to them in any case. The boss used to buy it by the railway van. One month it would be McWilliams, the next Penfolds, then Lindemans, and so

on. He used to spread the business around - he was very even-handed about it. At night you'd be working in the bar after hours and you'd open the back door, put your hand out, grab whoever was there and pull his head into the light. If he was white, and he wanted port it was 4/6 - if he was black it was ten shillings. That was in those days. (*Laughs*). Everyone seemed to have plenty of money, because if you wanted to go and trap rabbits you'd get 7/6 a pair for them. And I'll say this about the Abos there then, they worked - not like the ones now. I haven't got a lot of time for them, but there were some reasonable ones amongst them. You always had the scumbuckets, but the worst were the whites that used to go and get mixed up with them. They were the ones who caused the trouble.

The boss was President of the Jockey Club up there, and he had lots of money, don't worry. (Because of his dermatitis he used to scratch himself a lot about the face, and the blokes in the bar would bet on what part of his face he'd be scratching when it came five o'clock, or whatever.) He came back up one weekend for the Gulargambone Cup. I couldn't go, because I had to look after the pub, but the wife went with him to the race. She had a good day and won some money, and when the race came with the boss' horse in it she thought she'd better back it. When he heard about this he took her aside and told her not to. It was a typical bush track with the inside fence and a stand, not far from the Castlereagh River. Come the race, and the boss' horse is leading, and when it got to the top of the straight it just kept going - round the back of the grandstand and down to the river! The jockey said it bolted! Nobody could do anything because the boss was the chief steward, the president of the club, and just about everything else! Of course things like that only happen in the bush - or we say they do. (*With a meaningful look.*)

One Saturday there was an old bloke in the pub, and two young blokes were picking on him. You never had a fight in the pub in those days. If there was a fight they'd go outside or down into the paddock where they could have a fair go. After a bit the old bloke said to the two young blokes "Righto. One out. You. I'm takin' you first." He gave the bloke no option, just took him outside and Bang! - hit him. By the time the young bloke had hit the ground his mate had left the pub and was up the end of the street going across the tennis court in the dust. The wife came out, and seeing a bit of blood on the old bloke she asked him if he wanted her to patch him up. "No, love, no," he said, "the bark'll mend, but do you think you could sew up the rip in me shirt? I've got no-one to do it." (which she did, naturally enough).

From there I came back to the *Regent Hotel* at Kingsford. I got the job because I'd worked with Tooths and Bill Wright. This is 1957, the year that the King died and Liz became Queen, also the year that Sir Falcon won the Sydney Cup. Old Bill that owned the pub owned Sir Falcon. I understand it was the only year that the Sydney Cup was solid gold. He gave me a start straightaway. It was quite good money. I'd only got back from Gular a couple of days previously and we hadn't got settled in or anything, but he wanted someone for the coming week, and insisted that I start the next morning. I reported for work at quarter to ten the next morning and he took me upstairs and showed me this gold cup. All the racing identities used to go to his pub, and in the saloon bar he'd arranged a display to show off the gold Sydney Cup that he'd won the year before to all his cronies. My job was to just stay in the saloon bar all day and keep my eye on the cup. I don't know what I would have done if anyone had jumped the bar and taken it, 'cause I wasn't given a baseball bat or a gun or anything! After the first week I got a bit of time off to organise the family, then I took over the running of the pub.

One night this young kid came in to have a drink and I told him I couldn't serve him because he was under age. He didn't bung on an act or anything - didn't call me a mongrel dog or anything like some of them used to. The next Saturday the owner is getting pissed in the little private bar off the saloon with a bunch of his cronies and he calls me in. I walk in, and this little pinhead bloke that I'd refused to serve was in there with them. The owner asked me if I'd been having a bit of trouble with him and when I explained what had happened he told me that the bloke was his jockey, and was old enough - his name was Mel Schumacher! He was still apprenticed at the time, but he was the jockey who'd won the Sydney Cup on Sir Falcon the year before.

Another bloke that used to work there was a bantamweight boxer. He was a little grub, actually. He used to come there and work every night picking up the glasses. It was like training for him, he ended up fighting so much. He knew he could fight, but he used to pick on blokes who were too big for him. I don't mind a bit of a scrap meself, but I used to pick my mark. If a blue start there, and it was usually started by him. He'd pick off the blokes he wanted, and I'd have to pick off the blokes that were left! One night, he got into a blue with some bloke who was a bad lad, and I went out to investigate. He had this bloke halfway up the wall with his feet off the ground, and was holding him up there with a broom under his chin! I got him down and we sorted it out - I don't know how long he had him up there, but he wasn't real good.

Then I went back to the fold at Tooths - to the *Winsome* at Lismore - back to the bush. In the meantime I had one or two jobs relieving here and there. I think the one I did just before going to Lismore was the *Greengate* at Killara, just before they sold it. That was one of the biggest pubs I'd ever been in. They had a huge saloon bar then - (now Dr Johnson's Brasserie), with something like 22 panels with three or four taps on each panel, because they pulled old, new, and Reschs, and just about every beer you could think of. It was Tooth's showpiece. It was magnificent.

Anyway, we go to Lismore. To the floods. *The Winsome* is between the two bridges - a three story pub with a cellar downstairs for the kegs and the motor room. It was a pretty big old rambling pub. We lived on the first floor, where there was reasonable accommodation for commercial travellers and that, and the top floor was all let out on a permanent basis to PMG or bank blokes and the like. It was good accommodation - only about seven quid a week, and they used to get a fixed breakfast, a cut lunch, and a fixed dinner at night. It was good bread in those days having twenty six rooms always full, and they all paid every fortnight and never got behind because they needed the accommodation and they knew that if they didn't pay someone would move in the next day who would. There were no problems like you've got today, because everyone was working then, you've got to remember.

We'd get big floods there, even if it hadn't been raining much in the town. They'd get heavy rain out the back round Nimbin upriver, and as the pub was near where the two arms of the Richmond River meet it would flood easily when the river hit the incoming tide - because the Richmond was still tidal. Lismore used to get flooded about every four years. The biggest one was when the Queen was visiting there. They used to bolt a big flood gate onto the cellar door where the motor room was, but by the time we got there the local engineer advised us not to put the gate on as it was better to let the water come in, then go out again. I had to undo all the bolts holding down the electric motors, and when the flood came a number of us would take the motors upstairs.

They explained to us why we should leave the doors off. When a really big flood came the water got in over the top of the flood door and the basement filled with water anyway, and the water pressure meant that they couldn't get the door off again afterwards, and it was a big job pumping out the water, whereas if you left it off the water came in and went out again and caused much less damage.

Apparently in one really big flood the water came up to where the word "Bar" was on the doors - about three or four foot below the ceiling. A lot of the townspeople were flooded out, and several families came to stay in the pub till the water went down. One day at the flood's height, when it was pretty well up to the first floor, a cow came swimming by, and someone got the bright idea that if they pulled one of the veranda rails out and coax the cow onto the first floor veranda, all the people staying there would have milk. So they did this, and ended up with a couple of cows on the first floor veranda! The floods were up for a few days, and the kids and everyone's got milk, and everyone's living there happily. Except they forgot, as the water went down, to kick the cows out! It took a week at least before they could get a crane or something in to get the cows down, and by this time the pub's dried out but the cows are still up there and there's cowshit everywhere. But they had milk!

We were there during one flood, and all I took was 17/6 in the bar one day. It was the only sale I had. A bloke rowed across and got a case of beer off me. The floods leave an awful mess, but the advantage of a flood over a fire is that at least you've got something to clean up. You just hose it all out and fumigate it, and away you go again.

There was a funeral home opposite the pub in Lismore. There is a big Hindu community at Woolgoolga, and two brothers there had had a fight, and when it was all over one of them had been beheaded. The Hindu, if he does it, he does it properly - Ghurkha fashion. Lismore was the only place on the north coast that would permit a sandalwood funeral pyre. Non-Hindus are not supposed to go and see it, but on this occasion the funeral director asked me if I'd like to see it. It turned out he really wanted a driver for one of the mourning coaches. I said I'd do it. It was frightening. There's no coffin or anything, except a paper sort of thing, and it's put up on top of a pyre made of sandalwood. There's a big ritual goes with it. But it's bloody frightening, because as all the muscles contract as it's being burnt, the whole body just sits up! I'll never forget it. Once seen was enough for me!

There was a bloke I knew opened the new pub at Evans Head, and as I was a representative for Tooths in that area in those days I went to the opening. I went over again to see him a bit later because I'd heard that he wasn't going too good - trade had dropped off. There was a bowling club in the village, and it stuffed the bowling club when the pub opened. But after about a week the bowling club's going full swing again and the pub's kaput. The new publican had decided that you couldn't go into his pub without shoes etc, and this was in a fishing village with holiday makers and all that as well! He was rather thick. He used to own the pub on the road from Grafton to Casino. He burnt that down, got the money and that's how he got the pub at Evans Head - and went broke again.

After Lismore we went to *The Cecil* at Cronulla. It no longer exists. It was a Tooths hotel and we went there to fill in before I went to *The Park* at Bathurst. We'd never been to a really plush pub before, with chefs and the whole business. It was one of the really ritzy pubs of those days. Tooths really looked after you very well then - they treated you as part of the family. My wife was pregnant, and

they preferred families to look after their pubs for them because in the long run they had stability. When we went there, they arranged for us to have a nurse for the baby.

When we first went there Lord and Lady Carrington came to stay there. He was High Commissioner out here in those days. Top guy. They were staying for a week, and we were petrified! After about the third day he summoned me to his room, and I wondered what it was all about. It was a bit of a step from Gulargambone to dealing with Lord Carrington. He said to me 'This place is giving me the shits. I can't go anywhere without some bastard's following me. I love a beer. Is there anywhere we could go and have a beer of an afternoon away from all the fuss?' (Bathurst was very very pukka in those days). I said to him "Well, you can come down the back stairs and go into the back bar of the pub, and I'll just introduce you to the others by your first name. You can have a drink there with me. I'm there at four o'clock every afternoon." (I always used to drink in the Public Bar because that was your bread and butter.) So he'd come down at four o'clock and drink schooners with the PMG blokes. And that was Lord Carrington - one of the fellas. Then he got me to take him to play golf one day. We went with one of the PMG blokes we used to drink with in the afternoons, and he told him who he was when we were out on the golf course. He nearly had a coronary, that bloke! (*Laughs*). He was a top guy. He certainly put us at ease.

We had some characters come through there. A well-known and well-connected judge stayed there - all the judges and people like that used to stay there. The coppers used to come and look at the book to see who was going to be the judge, so they could arrange to be on leave if it was someone they didn't like. This particular judge was no trouble to us, but he used to be a real stickler for the rules. He used to take the room on each side of his so nobody would disturb him. This was fine with us because it meant we were getting paid for the two extra rooms without having to service them. And we had to supply a private maid for him, which he paid for, of course. But the coppers didn't like him because he'd be walking through the park, say, across to the court house, when the tipstaff was supposed to be so many paces away from him, and if they weren't he'd stop them and put them in their place halfway across the park. He was a real prick.

Another judge used to like to play golf, and he'd give us a ring from the court and we'd have a car ready to take him out to the golf course. He used to like to get away from all the legal fraternity, too. We only used to play the seven nearest holes - I think he just wanted to get away for a little while on his own and have a drink. He wouldn't drink at the pub, but he used to drink up at the golf club. I never paid - he always put the money on the bar. Most of them were pretty good people, really.

While we were there a mate of mine, Tony Paskins, took over the pub at Oberon. He was a well known footballer, and he'd been put into the pub at Oberon by Ray Stehr. Tony was new to the bush. He'd gone there to play football. He led Oberon to some big victories, and he was the idol of the west. He had a couple of lovely kids and one day another mate of mine, Richo, who was a stock and station agent at Oberon saw the kids and said to Tony: "They your kids, Tony? You should get 'em a horse now they live here. We've got a horse up the back there that would be just the thing for the kids. It's very very quiet, and would give them no trouble at all. You can have it for ten pound if you'd like." Well, Tony thought this sounded alright, so he handed over the money, but he was still a bit unsure about it because the kids had never been near a horse, ever. "Could the kids pat

it and all that?" "Anyone could pat it," said Richo, "it's as quiet as anything. Go up and see Edna, my wife, and she'll show it to you." So up goes the whole family - Tony, his missus and the two kids. Edna sends them up to the back paddock behind the stock and station agency to have a look at it. Tony came back and said to Richo "I can't see any horse up the back there. All there is is a dead one under a tree." "Well," says Richo, "I said it wouldn't give you any trouble, didn't I?"! Tony had already paid Richo for the horse, and Richo did the right thing and put the tenner on the bar and bought drinks for everyone. Tony didn't mind all this too much, because his customers had ended up with his money, Richo hadn't pocketed it, and everyone was happy enough. But a couple of days later the Oberon Shire had to take the dead horse away, and because it was now Tony's horse, he got the bill for seven pounds from the Council for its removal!

Paskins and I were having lunch one day, and we were entertaining the local coppers. You've got to entertain the police, haven't you? (*said with a knowing expression*). You've got to give them the best, so we got a bottle of Blue Nun out. After it was finished, the coppers said they'd like another one. We used to only get three bottles a year of it in those days and Tony wasn't sure he had any more, and went away to look. He came back with another bottle, and when we opened it I shot a look at Tony, because it didn't taste real good to me. But the coppers kept drinking it - they thought it was fine. After they'd gone I asked Tony where he'd dug up the second bottle, and it turned out it was the display bottle from off the shelf that was only coloured water!

While we were at *The Park*, the nurse that we got for the kids was Polish. By the time my young son Stephen was old enough to start talking, he started talking in Polish, and we had to change Trudy from nursing duties then to normal duties around the pub. One of her jobs was to look after the morning tea and the newspapers. One Saturday night we only had one room left, and an Arab couple came in after accommodation. We showed them the remaining room, which had twin beds, but it was no good to 'em. They wanted only one bed, so we gave them back their money and away they went. Accommodation was pretty hard to get in Bathurst on a Saturday night, and it wasn't long before they were back again. They wanted to know who would be sleeping in the other twin bed. I said it didn't matter to me which one of them slept in it. Then I realised that they were worried that they might end up sharing the room with a stranger. I told 'em this wouldn't happen, and they reluctantly decided to take the room. I got their money out of them and they ordered their morning tea and papers and everything and up they go to their room. The next morning there is a great kafuffle in the corridor outside their room, and I went up to see what was going on. There was Trudy, standing on a little table pushed up against their door, with her little fat Polish legs and her bum sticking out, her head in the fanlight over the door, singing out to them that she had their morning tea and papers. I told her to leave it on the floor and forget it, so the rest of the people could get some sleep. I found out later that the Arab couple were not convinced that somebody wasn't going to come into their room during the night and share the room, so they'd moved the wardrobe and the spare bed and put them up against the door so no-one could get in!

Sir Bernard Heinze stopped there one night. His secretary came down and announced that Sir Bernard was allergic to the colour on the trim of the blanket, would you believe, and couldn't sleep in it. We had nothing without that colour, so we solved the problem by improvising - we turned the blanket around and made the bed with it on sideways, so you couldn't see the offending colour, and everything was sweet.

We had a Canadian singer there who was visiting for the Arts Council or something or other. She was very temperamental and caused me all sorts of trouble while she was there. She put the Schlage key in the front door and the front door key in the room door and bugged up the locks, and generally caused all the trouble that you could possibly think of in a pub. We didn't have any porters or anything like that - we had a yardman, old Mick, on in the morning, but the singer didn't check out till lunchtime and he'd gone. She demanded that a porter take her luggage down to her car. Someone had already taken most of it down, and there was only a little light suitcase left anyway. By this stage I was completely fed up with her, and she was prancing around at the top of the stairs saying that she wanted it down at her car. I asked her which one was her car, and she pointed down to it through the window. I went over to the window with the suitcase, and dropped it down! I made headlines in the Adelaide Times over that, about the rudeness of the people in Bathurst!

After Bathurst we went to Byron Bay. I was something of a troubleshooter for Toothy's, by this, and they'd often send me to see what was going on when any of their pubs got into any sort of trouble. I had to go to Byron Bay to repossess this pub for them - the *Pier Astor*, it was in those days, the top pub. The guy that had it I'd known from when I was in Lismore some years earlier and we were pretty good friends. I thought "What a lovely job this is going to be!" I flies up to Casino and gets a cab across to Byron Bay and I gets there just after lunch on Sunday afternoon. I walks into the pub with the letter of demand and all the things that you have to have when you repossess places, and there's his wife there having afternoon tea. She was pleased to see me, and told me that her husband had just gone out, and how pleased he'd be to see me when he came back. "I'll bet he will!" I thought to myself, and things were shaping up to be pretty awkward. I didn't want to tell her why I was there in case she rang him up and he blew through or something like that. She feted me and got afternoon tea for me, and was most hospitable, and all the time I was wishing I could just sit outside and wait till he came back. In the end he comes back. He'd been to the football all afternoon, and was jovial and all that. 'Come and have a drink!' he said, as soon as he saw me. "Look, mate," I said, "let's say hello first, eh? It's not all pleasure." Things turned very nasty after that, and I had to stay at Byron Bay for a few months after he'd gone till they found some other fool to take it over in those days (It's now been rebuilt by Cornell and Delvene Delaney).

After short stints at various other places, the next pub that comes to mind is the *Royal Hotel* at Auburn. The son of the bloke I worked for at Kingsford had it, and he got me to do some work for him. It was an early opener - six till six. Early openers are good pubs to have because you've got all your business done by six o'clock at night, and the nights to yourself.

One day we had an unfortunate thing happen. A bloke dropped dead in the bar. Now Auburn is a pretty rugged old area - especially in those days. Here's this bloke, carked. No doubt about it. So I put a blanket over him while someone went down to the ambulance station which was just down the road. Then the police came and interviewed me about what had happened. I was in the middle of telling them how he'd only had half of his drink, when I realised that his drinks were gone. He'd been sitting there with a schooner and a brandy chaser, and they were nowhere to be seen. They wanted to see what he'd been drinking in case it had been laced or something. One of the barmaids whispered to me: "Old Harry got it." Old Harry, one of the old skid row blokes, as soon as he saw what had happened, came over, leaned over the body, grabbed the grog and pissed off back over to the corner with it! (*Laughs*). I said to the coppers "Well, he's got it

over there, and he ain't dead, so it's got nothing to do with the grog!"

Around the same time I spent some time at *Dorahy's* at Parramatta, which was also an early opener and also belonged to the family that had the Kingsford pub - I used to do a lot of work for them. It was a pretty rough pub then, don't worry. It was rough as can be! There were always blues and fights there. One of the best fights I ever saw was one afternoon there. There were a lot of builders who drank there. Some Lebanese blokes came in selling builder's barrows. There were a lot of Lebanese concreters and that in the area, and they were very cliquy and stuck together. One of the builders went out to look at the barrows, and recognised one of their own barrows. These blokes had skinned them off a job and were trying to unload them. The builders quickly counted the numbers, then went out the back and sealed off the back street top and bottom. There were about thirty or forty blokes on each side, and they fought in the back street. The coppers or nobody came anywhere near them. They pulled palings off fences - they used every possible thing they could lay their hands on. It was the best blue I've ever seen. It went on for about forty minutes, I suppose. They got their barrows back. We didn't do much business in the pub for the best part of an hour. Everybody went out to watch as they fought up and down the street. It was frightening.

At *Dorahy's* you'd get the skid row blokes sitting out the front on the bus seat drinking their plonk out of brown paper bags. Once a fortnight some of the nurses, males and females, from the Parramatta Mental Hospital used to come up there for a few drinks, and some of them used to play pool. One of the blokes from the bar came up to me one morning and said "Hey, Noel, come and have a look at this" and took me down to the bar. Instead of sitting outside like they usually did drinking their brown muscat, here's all the old skid row blokes sitting inside around the pool table with their grog in glasses watching the nurses play pool. I couldn't work this out, until I realised that one of the nurses didn't have any knickers on! They were all sitting up there as straight as dies!

Most of the railway guys from Parramatta Station used to drink in the pub, and the railway authorities were after the station porter because he was never on duty - he was always over the pub. He'd been dobbed in a number of times, but he was a nice guy and a very good customer. One day they were sweating on him, and they seen him come across to the pub, and they surrounded the station with the railway police they had then. The porter's mates over at the station saw what was happening and rang him up at the pub: "Harry, you're gone. They know you're in the pub and you've got no chance." So what he did was, he had another couple of schooners and a bit of a think for a while. Then he went out the back way, along the back street where the big fight was before, and in through the butcher's, where he buys the best leg of pork there was in the house. Then he walked over to the gate where they're all waiting for him. "Where have you been?" they asked him, and he said, "I've been getting the stationmaster's pork for him." And he walked straight through and gave the pork to the stationmaster. Nobody got a lot of money in those days, and here's the stationmaster with a great big leg of pork that he couldn't knock back, so he had to say that he'd sent Harry for the pork! And Harry got away with it again.

We were one of the few pubs in those days to have entertainment. We used to have old Queenie Paul. I hated it because we had to carry her little piano up the bloody stairway to the first floor lounge every Saturday afternoon. She'd play up there all afternoon, and the lounge used to be packed with all the old biddies after they'd done their Saturday morning shopping. The place was packed, and every

other pub in Parramatta would be empty. A lot of funny things used to happen up there with Queenie, but this day Bill the barman, who'd called me to see the knickerless billiards player earlier, called me up again. "Come and have a look at this." Outside the lounge there was a phone booth, but it had sort of Dutch doors that didn't go all the way down to the floor. And here's two of them in there having it off! But they're too drunk and in love to notice that it wasn't an ordinary phone booth, and here they are on view for everyone! It was a better show than Queenie Paul's that day!

While I was at *Dorahy's*, the tour for the Pope was on, and the bloke that owned the pub was one of the top blokes in the AJC, and he was going to see the Pope. He was shitty because there was no reserved seats. You weren't supposed to take grog in either, of course, but you could take hampers and that, so he took his golf buggy full of grog and off he went with his family to see the Pope. His wife wasn't too happy about the fact that he had to take grog to see the Pope, but he couldn't see himself going for twelve hours or so without a drink. As he's wheeling the buggy in, the wheels fitted exactly through the slots in a drain grate and stopped it dead. It went arse over head and his cans went everywhere. He gets them all back in, and after being in there for a while he decides it's time for a drink. You've got to remember that these cans had been rolling around all over the place, and the first one he opens up sprays all over everyone - including some nuns! He was relating all this to me the next day, and I asked him if he got to see the Pope. "Not really," he said, "how'd you go?" I said "I almost shook hands with him." "How'd you do that?" For some reason that I can't remember now I'd had to go out to the Little Sisters of the Poor at Randwick and he happened to be visiting there. I got in, but I couldn't get out, because they made me wait till the Pope had gone through. I'm standing there, waiting, and the Papa walks right by!

I was Secretary/Manager of Sydney Rowing Club for a while - the first paid one they ever had. It used to be a pub - the old Red Cow Inn, I think. It was a half way house going up the river from Sydney to Parramatta. You can still see where they used to chain the convicts up when they kept them there overnight while the Redcoats rested.

Then I was at the *Green Park*, at Darlinghurst. It's still at the back of St Vincent's Hospital, and in the cellar there you can still see the slabs that were from the old morgue. That's where we used to store the stock. Old Mrs Mac that owned the place used to get on the grog and she'd call me up to go and straighten things out for her. Up under her bed, next to the pissaphone and all the empty gin bottles she'd have bags of money, labelled with each day of the week. I used to have to sort it all out for her while they took her away and dried her out. She was a lovely old lady.

There were two old regulars there who used to share the same room in one of the boarding houses in the area, a Scotchman and an Irishman. They got into a blue one night and I had to ban one of them from the pub for a while to keep the peace. The dispute was about their parentage - one had called the other's mother a prostitute. After a few days the Irishman came back and tried to get in again, insisting that he had something important to say to Jock, but I told him he'd have to tell him from the door. So the Irishman stood there and shouted at Jock, "Jock, I apologise. You're not a bastard at all, no, really you're not - but your mother was still a prostitute!" and Bang! it was on again!

Then, of all places, we went to north Queensland - to Townsville. We went there

at the time decimal currency came in. There was an outfit called Samuel Allen's who owned about 100 pubs in north Queensland, and some of the pub-owning families I'd been working for over the years had big share holdings in Allen's. They'd been having a few problems with their pubs up there, and they sent me to the *Carrier's Arms* to see what was going on. Niggers up there could be served, provided they behaved. They had their own places to go, a couple of pubs of their own, but you couldn't take grog onto the mission stations, and Palm Island was nearby. There was a black bloke, Wally, who was a PMG foreman and he and a few white guys were going across to Palm Island to put in a new exchange there. Wally was a top guy, a real good man, and no-one took any notice of him when he got on the launch with some grog like the rest of the white men. But when they got to Palm Island the launch driver let the white blokes off, but not Wally. The PMG blokes then refused to work, because their foreman wasn't there to tell them what to do, and in the end they had to fly Wally back out.

There was an RAAF sergeant called Pat who was in charge of the crash boat. Harold Holt used to go up there on holiday and Pat used to take him around because he knew the water, the islands, where the best snorkelling was and all that. Pat came from Balmain, and was a real Irishman and a real Labor man - his father used to work in the old mine down there at Long Nose Point when it was going years ago. This day they're out on an island together. Holt used to like to go out there and stay on the reef for both tides. They'd send him out with a hamper - champagne, caviar, ham and all that, and the boat would go off and leave him on the island just with Pat for the whole day. I think Holt was Treasurer at the time. Pat used to always have a gun with him for emergencies - sharks and that, and he's sitting there with Holt this day and Pat starts to laugh. They used to get on OK, and Holt asked him what he was laughing at. Pat said, "Well, it's like this Harold. Here I am with a gun in my hand, and my old man would shoot me if he knew I was here with a gun." "Why's that?" asked Holt. "Well, my old man's a dyed-in-wool Labor man, and here's me, his son, sitting here alone with a gun with the Liberal Treasurer on a desert island! You're gone!" He reckoned Holt went the colour of his hair, and didn't take his eyes off Pat or go fishing or anything till the boat came back for them!

My job at the *Carrier's Arms* at north Queensland was not exactly to spy, but to help and sort and report for Samuel Allen's - put it that way. The pub was being pulled down around our ears and they were building the new Midtown hotel/motel in its place. They had all the formwork for the foundations laid out, and all the plumbing and drainage pipes in place, ready for the big pour. Townsville wasn't very big in those days, and they had to bring concrete trucks from other centres like Innisfail to handle it. They were all ready this day for the pour, when I had a look at the plans and realised that there were no drain holes for the bar and the toilets. There was great panic and confusion and they had to call off the pour, and I wasn't too popular with the bloke running the show even though it would have been much worse if they'd done the pour. The next thing, they're ready to go again with everything in the right place, and they pointedly got me to check it out again before they poured. I looked at it all, then said, "Well, I think it would be a good idea if they soldered the copper pipes together first, or someone might nick them tonight and put in something else just before the pour." And that's exactly what they were going to do. I was second-guessing him because I'd been there and done that - (you remember I said I'd built my house with the grog from the racecourse!) (*Ironic laugh*).

When they eventually got it all finished and were beginning to fit it all out, I asked "Where's the motor room for all the cooling equipment?" They had none! They'd

forgotten all about it and they had to reinforce the cool room roof and put the motor room up on top of it.

In those days everything came from Victoria for north Queensland. As far as they're concerned NSW doesn't exist. They freighted up the urinals from Melbourne, and everything was prefabricated and pre-cast. But it didn't occur to them that they couldn't get complete pre-cast urinals in through the doors, so they had to cut them all to get them in. Things got quite unpleasant between me and the construction people, and in the end I came back to Sydney for three months on full pay. We stopped off with the family and had a couple of weeks holiday on the way down.

The next place I went to after that was the *Panania Hotel*, which some of the Directors of Samuel Allen's owned. I was there for the opening in 1966 and stayed there till 1970 - getting towards the end of my career. By then we're getting into modern times, and all the taps were bayonet fittings. I'd been to previous openings where someone had pinched all the taps at the last minute so that when they came to pour the beer at the opening they couldn't - just as a joke. So the morning of the opening at Panania I went and took all the taps out and put them in the safe in a suitcase. There was great panic when they discovered the taps were gone, but they were impressed when they found I had them safely tucked away. It was a real hot day, and we had the Mayor of Bankstown, politicians and everyone else for the official opening, and the mob are outside knocking the doors down to get in. We had to open the doors and let 'em in early, and by the time they'd opened the pub officially I think I'd already taken about \$1000 in the public bar! They must have run free trains to East Hills that afternoon, and when somebody rang the Fire Brigade to attend to a bushfire they couldn't get through the throng outside because it was completely blocked off with cars and people.

There was an Assistant Commissioner of Police used to drink down that pub. (Funny thing, that - how there always seemed to be coppers around!) I knew who he was, but not many others did, except a few coppers. Mostly he used to park out in the back carpark and come in through the back entrance, get a schooner of beer and a schooner of squash and go and drink it out in the car with his wife. That was his privacy. There was another bloke there who was the Pilot Master for Botany Bay, name of Arnie, and this day he and Arnie both got on the grog together. At the end of the session Arnie says to the Assistant Commissioner, (not knowing who he was), "Jock. I'm not going to let you drive. You're too drunk." Jock insisted that he was going to drive, so the next thing Arnie puts him under citizen's arrest! He took him down to Revesby Police Station, marched him in and announced, "This man is under citizen's arrest!" and insisted on his rights to do so. The police there couldn't do anything with the Assistant Commissioner because you had to get somebody of equal rank or higher to handle anything of this nature.. They eventually got somebody to come over and quieten everything down and sort everything out. After a while it became clear to Arnie that he'd done the wrong thing, so for the next fortnight he took ship' stores on board and never came off the pilot boat in Botany Bay!

I was approached to do a job for the Shelleys, they were into pubs as well as soft drink - they had quite a few pubs. I'd never met old man Shelley, but I arranged to go to his place at Tarban Creek to discuss the job. There was huge storm that morning, and by the time I get to his street there are floodwaters everywhere, with people getting things out of their houses and garages. I could see that it was no good looking for Mr Shelley's house in such an emergency, so I just bucked in

and helped them. When it was all over and things were cleaned up a bit, there was this old white haired bloke and another younger, taller feller. The older one invited everyone that had helped back to his place for drinks, including me. I said I couldn't go because I had to get to an appointment with a bloke in the area. "Who is he?" he asked me, and I told him. "I'm Jack Shelley!" he replied, and the tall bloke turned out to be his son. They were most impressed with the help I'd volunteered, so I had no trouble there.

Then I went to Epping for about four years. I'd been asked to look after the pub many years before but I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I had a house at Epping, and I've never believed in working where you lived. Anyway, he made me an offer I couldn't refuse and I went. It's funny to go back to a pub that you've been barred from. I got into a blue there one night about ten years earlier and I barred myself. It was all over not being given the right change - it was during the changeover to decimal currency. The manager was using it as a chance to round the prices up the wrong way, and when I chipped him about it one thing led to another and I ended up barring myself. (The same thing happened to me at the *Great Southern* over them putting too much of a collar on the beer, and my mate and I ended up being asked not to come back.)

The last pub I worked at was at Westfield Parramatta. I was General Manager there from 1977 to 1979. It was a good place. It was a pretty up-market pub, and the glass picker-uppers, or "bar usefuls" were called "bus boys". It was an easy pub to run. I didn't have much to do most of the time except collect my pay. It was a good job! But the pub scene was changing.

After that I left the pub business and joined an insurance company, and I worked there till I retired. I was with Switzerland Insurance, which was commercial and industrial - big motor insurance, big shipping, big industrial, big public liability, big workers' comp. I went in there to look after the mail room for them. When they found out I could handle grog I looked after the Board Room, as well as supervising the mail and subsequently the bar. When I first took it over, their cellar had more value in it than I had in some of my pubs! They were bought out by MMI, and they didn't need me any more and they offered me so much to leave. I said "Thankyou very much". Then they found out they did want me after all, but I told them it was too late. I had my knees replaced, which was caused by lifting kegs and by sporting injuries that I never looked after.

Q: *I'm not sure about the difference between a publican, a manager, and a licensee. Could you clear me up on that?*

OK. Well the publican generally is the licensee. He generally is the owner of the property as well - he owns the freehold, or he owns the lease from a brewery or a private person. Then there's the lessee - he can hold the license, or he can lease it from a brewery or a company or whatever. Then a manager can be put in by a company or a private person, and he can hold the licence too, provided he's nominated to do so. And by law then he's got to have full and unfettered control of the pub - he can't be interfered with by shareholders or anyone else. He is legally responsible by licensing laws for the operation of it. Then again, the licensee could have a manager under him.

In a small pub the person would do it all himself because he couldn't afford anyone else, and he'd probably be the cellarman as well, and the cleaner. I've

been in pubs that have been that small that I've been the cleaner - not of the floors and toilets inside the pub - but definitely I'd hose down the street, do my own cellar and keep it clean, polish the copperwork (though I don't think there's much copper around now). I'd do all my own pipes and everything. It all depends on the size of the pub. If it was a country pub you'd probably open up the Public Bar yourself, Mum'd probably be doing the dishes inside, or some of the rooms. This is if you owned the pub - and of course the more you did for yourself the more money you made. You'd have a girl that might come in at ten o'clock when the Bar opened and she'd do the general cleaning, and serve a couple of blokes while you went on and did the cellar, or you might polish the mirrors yourself or something like that. If you're real lucky you might go and play golf - but the pub's got to be a bit bigger before you can do much of that, or you have a very understanding wife.

A manager could have an assistant manager. Take me at Epping, for example. The guy who owned the pub was a millionaire. He used to hold the licence himself, but with all his bottle shops and everything else it got too big for him. When he offered me the job I held the licence as well, so I became the licensee and my name went up over the door. I had full control and he left me alone completely. He used to come there and give me my Tuesdays off and my holidays. (He'd stuff the pub up sometimes while I was away because he'd have a drink, play up with everyone and take money out of the till to have a bet, play two-up and everything else. I'd come back and balance the tills and get a cheque off him for however much was missing and away we'd go again.) But even though I didn't own the pub, and I was the licensee, I had a manager under me. And had a night manager. I had a cellarman. But we had a staff there of over 40 people. I got it to where it was rated number nine pub in the state. That's worked out on how much licence fee you pay, which in turned is linked to the amount of your purchases.

In those days, if you controlled your stock well and bought it through the brewery correctly, you could have up to 60 days - sometimes even more - credit. If you could work it so that you only held a week's stock, you virtually didn't have to have money in the bank. You'd get monthly accounts and 21 days to pay if you were in the bush and fourteen days in the city. Everything finished on the 28th of the month, so if you bought on the 29th you didn't have to pay for that till the 21st of the month after! But Elliot and Bondie and Co cut out all that.

I did all the buying for Epping, 'cos I knew how to buy, and I used to do a lot of buying for the bottle shops as well. This is fifteen years or so ago I'm talking about here. Computerised stock control has changed a lot of this too (if you're big enough to have it). The *Epping Hotel* these days is run by Rosemount Wines, and they'd have it down to a fine art.

Apart from that sort of thing, I don't really see all that much change in the pub business due to changing technology. Towards the end of my time, when Carlton took Toothy's over, they brought in the kegs that are self-stemming. I think they're an excellent idea because blokes find it more difficult to put water into the beer, or slops back into the keg. That was very common practice years ago. Now no names no pack drill here, but a very big guy in Newcastle in the hotel trade and the racing game had several hotels. He used to bank up three 36s of Reschs (you could only do this with Reschs because it was a stronger beer. It was brewed properly and was a better beer, whereas with Toothy's, out of Kent Brewery and Erskine Street Brewery you got about four different beers - Old, New, Lager, White Horse and Country Special. Resch's Brewery only put out Resch's and

Waverley Bitter, and there wasn't much Waverley Bitter around.)

Anyway to get back: You could bank three to four 36s on a new bank of good Reschs - they'd be all connected together then the beer would go into the taps upstairs. The gas used to go into the kegs at one end and push the beer through them all. Between the end keg and the gas you'd put a nine gallon keg of water - hot water, for some reason I never found out - and nobody could tell. But you couldn't do that today with the new kegs because they're only small, and they have a fitting that stops you putting anything back into them. There was plenty of skullduggery went on, don't you worry!

Any idiot can tap a keg, but you still had to do it properly - you had to put the stem in straight or you wouldn't get all the beer out of the keg. And if you didn't put it in tight enough the top could blow out of it. When I first started they had wooden bungs in the keg, and you had to drive a cork through. You had to be careful not to drive the cork right in or you'd have beer going everywhere. Then you had to make sure it was tight - in those days you had to screw the stem into the wood, a bit like a self-tapper. Later they became plastic.

I always maintained that the cellar was the most important part of the pub. If you didn't have good beer, you didn't have customers. I was a bit crazy as far as the cellar went - they taught me to be that way at the Surrey at Bondi. You had to wash your pipes every night and leave no beer in 'em. The stems in those days had to be broken down and washed all through, and you'd do your pipes properly at least once a week, and if you could do them twice a week then all the better. When you had a full-time cellarman he could do them twice a week, but as things got more competitive and labour costs went up most cellarman had to help in the bottle shop or the bar or do other things around the pub as well. Many publicans did away with their cellarman and did it themselves so often the cellar work slipped, and the quality of the beer slipped too. You're still supposed to put methyl violet in the drip tray - that's to stop you putting slops back into the keg - generally they'd put it into the Old beer because it was darker.

As I went round from pub, most times I was going in as manager for Toothy, or for some company that owned the pub and didn't like the bloke they had in there. How did all this moving around affect the family? Well, the children weren't a problem early in the piece, when they were young. They were born in Bathurst, and when they got older the boys ended up going to boarding school but the daughter wouldn't go. She ended up with seventeen different blazers so she must have gone to at least seventeen different schools! But our kids were young when we travelled. When we settled down and I did a lot of relieving work we had the house at North Epping and the family stayed there, though the kids came with us when we went to Queensland and that, also up to Byron Bay. That was when I had to start thinking about staying in each place for at least three or four years.

You ask me to describe what my average day as a publican was like. Well it all depends on the size pub you were in. Take Bathurst, which was a good, top class country pub. I'd get up in the morning, open the office before the office girl/receptionist got there, and I'd probably do the books or something like that in the morning, as well as checking out any guests who might want to leave early. The girl would come on at, say, eight o'clock and I'd go into the dining room and have breakfast. I did my own cellar there. We had a full staff of barmaids there - one in each bar. I'd usually do the lunch break in one of the bars. My wife looked after

the house, but she'd take over from the receptionist while she had her lunch and any other breaks.

I used to try not to be involved in the serving of people at night in the peak period because I considered it better to be on the outside of the bar saying hello to people and conning them. But if things got busy you'd jump in behind the bar. If you were running your own little pub you'd probably serve the shift after tea. I used to go a lot to help out at the Green Park at Paddington, but I never ever worked in the bar there - I used to run the pub for Mrs Mac. You have the wages to do, and you generally had to look after your own group certificates in those days - then there's the records of paying for the goods and all that, but it all depended on the size of the pub and how much you could organise yourself. I have an accounting background so I had no troubles. There was a fair bit of clerical work to be done at Epping and my wife used to handle that. There was a staff of forty or fifty and they were all casuals, all working different hours, and no pay was the same from one week to the other. And there were a lot of accounts to be paid there because with a pub that size we were dealing off everyone you could think of.

There wasn't as much accounting when I was working for Tooths. You had to keep a big book and list everything in it, but every week you'd send that to the Brewery and they'd look after it all. You'd have to keep your eye on the balances of each till in case someone was dipping in. I used to get suspicious if the till was dead right all the time - it should be a little bit out occasionally I always think.

When I first started in pubs I didn't realise why we all were given a wrap-around uniform to wear, and why they didn't like the men to have cuffs on their pants. It was because you could easily slide the odd two bob into your cuffs, and if you had a wrap-around on with no pockets you had nowhere to put money. I used to sit on a till at the *Surrey*. We had two tills to each bar and you'd be working six or seven people off you in those days. Beer was only shillings and pence in those days, and you had two bobs, and pennies and ha'pennies and threepences and everything, so it wasn't too hard for a good barman to slide two bob down into his cuffs. And two bob was two bob. Then, a full-time barman's wage was seventeen pounds six shillings a week.

The pub business and the racing business used to overlap because in both you had time off during the week. You had to do something during the week. There were always annual golf days - it didn't matter whether you were in the north, south, east or west or metropolitan or whatever, they had these golf days that were made up of the police, the publicans, and the sinners. The "sinners" were anyone else - often your customers or business associates. Then there were golf days for the priests, the publicans and the police. They were quite common. We used to have cricket days as well - they still have an annual AHA cricket day at the SCG, but golf days were regular. It's the sort of thing I miss a bit, these days.

I got out of the pub business because I reckoned that I'd been going round the business for thirty years and I'd never been knocked off or held up. I'd never been belted, and I was a bit over fifty then, and I'd never lost a fight - well... I lost a couple of fights, I suppose, but I never suffered any serious damage. Things were getting very tough and very tight, so I decided I'd had enough. And they're my thoughts about pubs now. I wouldn't go back into pubs now for quids. It's just too hard. A mate of mine has been knocked off four times. I said to him, "After I'd

been knocked off the first time, with a gun, you know, there would have been no chance of me going back. I'd figure that I'd escaped once..." He used to keep the fact that he'd been done over from his wife. I told him he was a bloody fool. The reason we left the pub at Epping was because one night our son was out late and didn't have his keys, and we'd locked up and gone to bed. To get in, all he had to do was walk down the steps near the station, jump over the rail, and get on to the veranda. Easy as that. I'd say that at any stage of the game there would have been fifty thousand dollars in cash in the place, because there's that many tills, floats and takings - and that excludes the money we used to put in the night safe that wasn't on the premises. And if some bloke's got a gun at your throat and you fumble over the combination or can't remember it or something... your gone! I reckon I'd done my turn. I wasn't going to push my luck. Let me die in bed.

But looking back over my life working in pubs, it was fantastic! I'd do it all again - I would have got into it a bit quicker, probably. I might have had a nibble at a couple of pubs myself moreso than just managing them. I should have realised - after all, I had the ability to do it because I was making all this money for other people. But I was reasonably paid, and very happy. I look at it this way: my family and I were eating fillet steak and oysters when they were kids. They wanted for nothing (which is probably wrong). They had good clothes, we always went away for holidays twice a year, always had transport provided. They had everything, and I don't want much more than what we've got now - I'm quite happy.

I've only just recently started to get used to the idea of retirement. It left a big hole in my life. If I hadn't had my knees done in the first year after I retired I don't know what I would have done. I can't play golf now because of my knees, and I used to bowl - now my knees are better I'll probably go back to that. I'm a Friend of the Laycock Theatre - I go there and work in the bar, sell programs, ice creams (and see all the shows from the back). I'll do as much of that as they'll give me, because it's something for me to do. I like being with the people. I drive the truck for St Vinnie's on a Thursday, and if they need someone on other days as well, then away I go. That gives me two or three days at home, which is all I need. The wife's home at weekends - (she's still working). I'm occupied now, but that first twelve months was a bastard. It was very, very difficult.

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