

GO WEST YOUNG MAN.

I had heard that I might go a long way in the Bank.

Didn't realise they referred to a transfer from Bellingen to Pilliga.!!!

Think that move may have been per favour of Auditor "Banana Bill" who had just visited. Don't think he liked footballers. (He did have Harold Lee travelling with him.)

At 7am caught the Brisbane express No 3 (not as fast as 1 or 2) at Raleigh—Friday prior to June long weekend, 1955. Saw lots of countryside as we travelled through the day.

Arrived in Sydney about 3 pm. (First time to see the Big Smoke.)

Met with a couple of teacher chums from Bellingen. Enjoyed a beer and a laugh at the Great Southern Hotel. At dusk one of the fellows who lived at Epping took me on a tram/ train ride over the Harbour Bridge to see the sights and lights.

Left me on North Sydney station. Thanks fellows!!!!

Found my way back to Central (eventually).

A railway pie and a pot of tea was the "meal" for the day.

Boarded the Mudgee Mail (snail) about 9:30 pm. Woke as cold as a mother in laws love and peered out through an iced window at the bleak desolate station of Lithgow. Who would have thought that 3 years later I would be working there? NOT the platform, Silly, in the town.

Reached Binnaway at about 10 am. No food at the station so had to settle for an "almost cool" bottle of DA for brunch. This was partaken of in a bough covered lean-to. (Would you believe I have recently met the daughter of the Station Attendant ??)

Caught the rail motor a little time later. Woke with a start, mid afternoon, with sunlight flashing through the trees. --- God, hope I have not missed my station. Didn't realise Gwabegar was the END of the line.

No transport to Pilliga but luckily cadged a lift with George the "Picture Show Man". They did not drink so was unable to express thanks at the Pub.

Private board had dried up in Pilliga, so I, by necessity, had to board at the pub. What a shame!!!! Stored my luggage in the room, cleared some dust from my throat and crossed the road to advise the Bank Manager, I had arrived.

Max Arncliffe with gas pressure lamp held on high (like Scrooge) answered the door. Introduced myself to get the response ----"What have you done wrong?"

Lovely welcome!! After dinner met Dick Anderson, my predecessor, and we partook of number of ales. He was celebrating his departure, me - my arrival.

Couple of weeks later I was seconded as the cashier in the bar at the Picnic Races. In that role I met most of the locals. I found them to be mainly good hard working people who would do a good turn before a bad one.

WORK.

Slickered the ledgers weekly and the cash daily. Learnt other jobs to prepare me for the future. Wasn't it a "bugger" that on completing the second page of T.A. return--- to discover you put the carbon paper in back to front? Start again – tap, tap, tap.

Undertook to be responsible for the running and maintenance of the electricity generator and the "Chocolate wheel" toilet.

After a few months Max moved on and Ian Middleton (Middo) arrived. Had collected a heel to the eye playing footie. So greeted the new Manager with a stitched and black eye. ALWAYS makes a good impression. Max and Ian were entirely different fellows.

"Admiral" Baxter conducted an Audit through the year. Not a bad bloke "after hours". Had a social night and he spent the following morning admiring the blue wrens in the tree behind the tellers box. Architects flew in and landed on the road. (Provided a talking point for the townsfolk). They approved the painting of the branch. A soft green was selected. Met the painter 15 years later at Merrylands. Strange!!

Police used to bank C.B.C. in those days, and the Policeman's wife used to cash the cheques. Brought her young son with her. I used to press the round stamp on his wrist and "ink in" hands to represent a watch. He escaped from "custody" one day and toddled across the road to visit "Twery". I looked after him until I could contact Mum on the phone. While I was attending customers, sonny got hold of a round stamp at the ledger desk. He put "watches" ALL over his arms and legs. When Mummy Police came to collect him, she was "not happy Jan", as she needed to bathe him again, - a task she had just completed. I had to lay low for a few days and avoid any police around.

SPORT.

Played "Cup" footie and cricket. Was pals with Bozo the barman and handy man. Was good to have communication and friendship, as he was ½ and I 5/8 in the footie team. Could scheme together. Also helpful that our paydays were on alternate weeks --- short term loans.

There were always tough games against Walgett. The local copper Sergeant Black used to coach the team at Walgett, and used to "accommodate" his players (early Sat. arvo) at his "facility" -- to prevent them "over training." !!!

A game against Burren Junction was unusual. They "scarified" the bare earth to make it a little softer. Hard game. ---- "problem" when someone ran into our vehicle that was to take us home. Couldn't move it until some repairs the next morning. Four guys slept very cold and uncomfortable in the Jaguar. Not much room!! Woke next morning and could not bend my left knee. Transport was delayed until PM. Could not get the taxi from Pilliga. Rang Max to tell him where the keys were hidden. Unable to control the situation, so when the sun got on my knee that allowed some movement. Joined my companions in some intake of lubrication. That helped. Travelled home via Wee Waa where Doctor prescribed some medicine and gave me a work certificate for one week. Max very seldom visited the pub, but was the first face a saw on our return. Told me he had contemplated ringing HO to report my AWOL. Production of the health

certificate closed that subject ---- and I was at work the next morning. Max strange bod. Had that knee replaced in 2004.

I was Captain/ Coach of the under 18 team playing Gwabegar at their home ground. Game was proceeding with vim and fun, "until" they ran on 4 senior players from another team that played in a REGISTERED Group comp. Soon realised that they intended to play rough with the lads. Was not allowing them to slap my boys around ----- so led the team off. When order was restored the game continued in the correct manner. I got a number of votes for Mayor from Pilliga, ---- not many from Gwabegar or Baradine.

The captain of the cricket team was an older gentleman, Mr Campbell. He had lost the sight in one eye but could still bat and play well. He had played at a much higher level when he was fully equipped.

A "remarkable" game was played against Merah North in 110 % in the shade. Their opening bat had been a G.P.S. 1st 11 player. Chased leather for hours. The Umpire later advised that if anyone had appealed in the 1st over, he would have given him "out". SILLY US. To make matters worse, the guy responsible to bring the "water bag", --- forget it !!! Hours in the sun with nothing to drink – and we were BEATEN. Returned home via Wee Waa. The first Pub we saw had a record turnover for a Sunday evening.

On a few occasions large Cups, won at footie and cricket, adorned the bar counter. Generous graziers on visits to town would fill them up with beer. Only a few "Townies" were in the teams. Whilst the gesture was greatly appreciated, it was a relief to see the bottom of these trophies.

Played tennis in a weekend round robin tournament. Was runner up to Herbie Holcombe, an old marvel, about 30 years my senior.

Got a dose of Boree bug, caused by black soil in wounds and lack of fresh green Veg. Able to remove skin wide and long from affected legs, and without pain. Treatment of Metho, applied, not ingested, cured it in about 3 weeks.

Sundries.

Shuttlecock played in front of the pub, was enjoyed by J.C. – publican - Titto the "Law" – Middo and myself. ¾ hour game gave a good breakfast appetite and strong blood flow for the day.

Darts team from the pub exchanged visits with Burren Junction and Gwabegar. Fun nights with jibes and laughter. Had a chance of victory when Pommy Jim was in town to assist.

Down to the river black soil flats at 6 am Saturday to gather worms for fishing trips (2) behind a single disc plough, snatching fat large worms. Discovered some caution was required as I grabbed a baby black snake in error. Before he could bite he took a LONG flight. Set off after Saturday morning work (remember those days?) Returned Sunday arvo with a number of village homes then having fish on the table.

The diary card must have come out at Staff Office, as after 12 months exactly - I was 40. Had a good send off with a number of folk. I really ENJOYED my 12 months at Fullist. A total non sportsman could not have had the opportunity of my experiences.

Again travelled over the June long weekend. Managed a lift to Werris Creek where I spent a restless noisy night at a Railway Pub. Caught a train next day to DUNGOG.

Boarding house was great, with a lovely lady, 2 sons and a husband who owned a butcher shop. What joy!! Top fresh meat, FRESH vegies (a change) and comfortable bed.

Staff consisted of ---- Mr Hopalong Cassidy Manager - seemed a nice man. Earl Anscombe, Accountant, a good bloke but with a shirt full of ulcers. T.W. Teller. Jan Fisher - Ledgers. A top officer. Warren Wade - Junior. A lovely young fellow who's Dad had the local electrical store.

Offer 3 weeks in 4

Joined some fellows on a pig hunting expedition. Discovered that one could run up an almost vertical tree, with the right motivation ---- i.e. when about 4 strides from an almost fully grown pig, with 2 ill-trained pig dogs hanging from its ears. They released – pig charged—I “flew”. Took too long to get wild pig meat edible anyway. !! Travelled in an enclosed Land Rover with said dogs which were fed on raw roo meat --- it was not a pleasant experience. Poor shy Julia probably had the same exposure, - hence – “Emission Tax.”

Attended Come-by-Chance races. Small win. In the evening the generous Atkinsons entertained the “gentry” at the homestead and we “plebs” made do with a keg of beer and a whole beast roasting on a spit. No cost. Do me for a day out.. Day concluded with a Ball.

Taught Middo to drive through the winding tracks of Pilliga Forrest, using Nabob’s green Holden. Sometimes a stiff whisky was required to settle nerves. Got his licence and then bought a car. Years later he told me he had not one accident. Well done!!!

Pistol practice under Police supervision was undertaken. Tins got a caning.

Had a flood through the year. Town closed. The larrikin Melville brothers were stuck in the town so they took me on a tour through miles of foot deep waters. Bit scary as could not detect where table drains were.

Was a laugh though when fellows came to town for a loaf of bread and if they remembered - they bought another loaf before heading home 3 or 4 days later.

For a couple of beers for him and “Uncle Head”, Butcher Moore provided a hair cut when really necessary. Good bloke, good butcher, good hair dresser.

“Bulla” Phelps had given me two beautifully coloured Emus eggs. (Blown.) With a Gem razor blade spent a good deal of time carving the Coat of Arms, from a Florin model. Completed the balance with Aussie motifs. Was proud of the result.

Had two German girls as house maids at the pub, while they were on a tour around Aust. Think they were playing with my eggs while dusting and they broke both of them. DAMM!!! Mine Got! Think they were learning English counting, as a question posed to them at any time, day or night, produced the response of “Nein/ Nine”????.

Sporting a new cream long sleeved sports shirt, was having pre dinner ale and then planned the movies. Was talking to a guy in friendly terms, when he suddenly grabbed the front of the shirt and loosened some buttons. Didn’t know he was “Schizo” who had an argument at home that arvo. –WRONG TIME – WRONG PLACE. About 2 weeks later he was heading home and must have tripped and fell, driving his head into the corner of a cement post. His head needed as many stitches as my shirt. RIGHT TIME – RIGHT PLACE..

I was fortunate to have had the company of a lovely young lady and we enjoyed movies, dances, balls (“White Rose” Group). A few parties. Took evening strolls with a lovely colourful sunset as a backdrop. Sometimes a dip in the bore pool. Good times.

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After 2 weeks in town, celebrated my 21st birthday, ALONE, on a Saturday afternoon. Perched on a bar stool, middle of winter, had 2 rums and beer chasers and then home. WOW!!! YIPPEE!!!

Couple of weeks later sent on holiday. – Queensland sun on the bod. Goodo!!

Back to work which I was enjoying and meeting the people of the town. Had a laugh when folk whose surname began with S named their new son Philip Ian. Guess he got the nick name of "Pot", in later years.

Was liking work, Board, and Town – when after only 2 months a young Officer, for personal reasons, had to be moved bank to his home town. ----- Off T.W. went.

Train to Wauchope and then bus up the hill. When I left Dungog on a Sat. morning, was dressed comfortably in slacks and a short sleeved sports shirt. On arrival at my destination I had added a sports coat, an overcoat and a Travelling Rug wrapped around me. IT WAS SNOWING. !!-- WELCOME TO WALCHA....

To the boarding house I went. If Dungog rated a 98%, "Old Ma Blakes" got a 2%. One lunch offering on a Sunday, in the middle of winter, was ONE thin slice of Devon and A slice of beetroot. Luckily it must have been pay week as I was able to afford a T-bone steak and the lot, at Harry's Café (White Rose)...

So the life of a young Bank Johnnie was shunted along.

Terry Smith. (T.W.)

P.S. What a coincidence, I commenced this story in July, and in the August Bulletin where photos of PILLIGA and DUNGOG branches. ???????