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MEMOIRS - "AS TIME GOES BY"

IN A LIFETIME, WE ALL HAVE EXPERIENCES OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER THAT WE NEVER FORGET. THEY MAY BE FUNNY, SAD, UNUSUAL, CONNECTED WITH SOME HISTORICAL OCCASION OR PLACE, OR SOMETHING THAT REMINDS US OF GREAT CHANGES OVER THE YEARS.

AMONG MY THOUSANDS OF TRIPS BY MOTORBIKE, CAR, TRAINS, SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT, HUNDREDS OF GAMES OF GOLF, 50 YEARS OF WORK, AND OVER 40 YEARS OF MARRIED LIFE AND FAMILY, IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT I'VE SEEN, OR BEEN INVOLVED IN, MANY UNUSUAL, FUNNY OR PECULIAR HAPPENINGS, THAT HAVE STAYED IN MY MEMORY.

SO, JUST FOR FUN, AND PERHAPS A LITTLE ENTERTAINMENT FOR ANYONE INTERESTED, I'VE PUT TOGETHER A FEW THAT TOP MY LIST OF MEMORIES. MY FAMILY HAVE HEARD MOST OF THESE ANECDOTES OVER THE YEARS, BUT I STILL THINK THEY ARE WORTH RECORDING.

(FORTUNATELY, EXCEPT FOR THE DEATHS OF OLDER MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILIES, WHICH IS EXPECTED OVER A PERIOD, I HAVE BEEN SPARED ANY REALLY SAD EXPERIENCES, SO THERE WON'T BE ANY IN WHAT FOLLOWS.)

MY INTRODUCTION TO MY FIRST AND ONLY "IDOL" HAPPENED IN 1934, WHEN I WAS ONLY 5 YEARS OLD. DAD TOOK ME TO FOY & GIBSON'S IN THE CITY, AND BOUGHT ME MY FIRST FOOTBALL. HE HAPPENED TO KNOW THAT THE SALESMAN WAS HAYDN BUNTON, THE CHAMPION FITZROY ROVER, WHO HAD WON 3 BROWNLOW MEDALS. I WAS SO TAKEN BY THIS INTRODUCTION TO FOOTBALL, THAT I BARRACKED FOR FITZROY FOR MANY YEARS, AND ALWAYS MADE SURE I HAD BUNTON'S NO. 7 ON MY HOME-MADE FOOTBALL JUMPERS!

I'VE NEVER MET ANOTHER FAMOUS FOOTBALLER SINCE.

ABOUT MY NEXT CONTACT WITH THE 'FAMOUS' WAS WHEN WORKING AT G.J. COLES IN BOURNE ST. FOR 3 MONTHS IN 1943, WHILE WAITING TO START MY FIRST FULL TIME JOB AS A JUNIOR DRAFTSMAN.

I WORKED IN THE HEAD OFFICE MAIL DEPARTMENT, AND ONE OF MY JOBS WAS TO TAKE A VERY LARGE SUITCASE ACROSS THE ROAD TO THE POST OFFICE TO COLLECT THE MAIL IN THE MORNING, AND TO DO A RETURN TRIP IN THE AFTERNOON, WITH ALL THE MAIL GOING OUT TO THEIR 83 STORES,

I WAS JUST 14, ABOUT 4 FT 10 INCHES HIGH, AND BUILT LIKE A JOCKEY, SO HANDLING THE FULL SUITCASE WAS QUITE A JOB! MOST TIMES, I DRAGGED IT ACROSS BOURKE ST. BECAUSE I COULDN'T CARRY IT.

ONE DAY, AFTER I'D DRAGGED IT INTO THE LIFT AND GONE UP TO THE 4TH FLOOR, I WAS PULLING IT BACKWARDS OUT OF THE LIFT, AND STOOD ON SOMEONE'S FOOT AND NEARLY KNOCKED HIM OVER.

IT WAS ONLY A.W. (ARTHUR) COLES, ONE OF THE FOUR ORIGINAL BROTHERS WHO STARTED THE COMPANY AND WAS, AT THE TIME, CONTROLLER OF AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION FOR THE GOVERNMENT. (THIS WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WAR).

NATURALLY, I WAS MOST EMBARRASSED, BUT HE LAUGHED AND SAID SOMETHING LIKE "THAT'S A BIG LOAD FOR A LITTLE BLOKE", AND PUSHED IT A BIT FURTHER TOWARDS THE MAIL ROOM. THAT WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST TIME HE HAD HELPED WITH THE MAIL SINCE THE COLES BROTHERS STARTED OUT!

"FLYING VISITS"

WHILST I DID A FAIR BIT OF FLYING (AS A PASSENGER, AND MOSTLY ON BUSINESS), BETWEEN 1952 AND 1992, AND JUST A FEW TIMES SINCE, MOST OF THOSE FLIGHTS WERE MUNDANE, BUT A FEW HAD SOMETHING TO MAKE THEM SPECIAL OR MEMORABLE.

MY FIRST PLANE TRIP WAS IN 1952, WHEN I WAS WITH LIGHTNING FRUIT GRADERS. I FLEW TO CAIRNS WITH OUR WORKS MANAGER FOR A 2 WEEKS VISIT, TO GET DETAILS, AND MAKE SKETCHES, OF SOME MACHINES THAT WERE IN SHORT SUPPLY IN THE CANGFIELDS AT THE TIME, (PLOWES AND GRUBBERS).

IT WAS A FASCINATING TRIP, BUT QUITE A LONG DRAG - 12 HOURS FROM MELBOURNE TO CAIRNS! WE HAD A DCA TO BRISBANE, THEN A DC3 TO CAIRNS. THE DC3 WAS ON A 'MILK RUN', AND WE PUT DOWN ABOUT 6 TIMES BETWEEN BRISBANE AND CAIRNS. BUT IT WAS INTERESTING, FLYING AT ONLY ABOUT 8000 FEET, MOSTLY ALONG THE COAST, SO WE COULD SEE SHARKS IN THE SHALLOWS, AND DOZENS OF COASTAL SHIPS.

A SIDELINE ON THAT TRIP WAS MY PENS. I HAD A COUPLE OF THE NEW-FANGLED BALL-POINT PENS IN MY SHIRT POCKET, BUT WITH A COMBINATION OF HEAT AND THE ALTITUDE, THEY LEAKED BADLY AND I FINISHED WITH A BLUE AND WHITE SHIRT! I STUCK TO PENCILS AFTER THE FIRST DAY.

IN CONTRAST TO THAT DRAG TO CAIRNS, I WAS ON PERHAPS THE FASTEST ADELAIDE - MELBOURNE FLIGHT EVER, IN ABOUT 1974.

THE CAPTAIN CLAIMED A RECORD AT THE TIME AS, WITH A 130 MILES PER HOUR TAILWIND, OUR 727 TOOK ONLY 47 MINUTES TOWER TO TOWER!

CERTAINLY BEATS DRIVING OR RIDING MOTORBIKES! (MORE ANON ABOUT THAT).

IT WAS A DINNER FLIGHT, AND ONE POOR FELLOW BEHIND ME WAS UPSET BECAUSE THE HOSTESS HAD TO GRAB HIS PLATE WITH MOST OF HIS CHICKEN STILL ON IT, TO PREPARE FOR LANDING!

ON ONE OCCASION, AFTER A VISIT TO MELBOURNE FROM ADELAIDE, I COULDN'T GET A SEAT ON THE USUAL 8 a.m. 727 FLIGHT TO ADELAIDE.

BUT, AS THEY HAD A FORMER FRIENDSHIP GOING AT 7 a.m., ON A "STAGING" FLIGHT TO ALICE SPRINGS, I TOOK THAT.

I HOPPED ON BOARD AND, WHEN THE DOORS CLOSED, I WAS THE ONLY PASSENGER! IT TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE MOST PLEASANT FLIGHTS I EVER HAD, WITH 2 HOSTESSES ANXIOUS TO PLEASE, (OR PERHAPS TO RELIEVE THEIR BOREDOM), I HAD 2 BREAKFASTS AND NUMEROUS COFFEES.

THEN I SPENT THE REST OF THE TRIP ON THE FLIGHT DECK WITH THE PILOT AND HIS OFFSIDER, TAKING IN THE VIEW. FROM ABOUT 14000 FEET THAT DAY, YOU COULD SEE THE COUNTRY VERY CLEARLY, INCLUDING THE WELL-DEFINED STRAIGHT LINE OF THE STATE BORDER, THE LOORONG, THE MURRAY FOR MILES IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, AND ALL OF THE SMALL TOWNS IN THE ADELAIDE HILLS.

WHILE ON ADELAIDE - MELBOURNE FLIGHTS - IT WAS PERMITTED AT THE TIME (THE 1960'S AND 1970'S AT LEAST), TO TAKE A CHILD UNDER 4 YEARS OLD, AT NO CHARGE. SO, MOST OF OUR CHILDREN HAD AT LEAST ONE FREE TRIP TO MELBOURNE, WHICH INCLUDED AN OVERNIGHT STAY WITH NANA WASH WHILE I WENT ABOUT MY BUSINESS.

AGAIN, MOST WERE UNEVENTFUL, BUT MARTY TOOK THE BUN ON ONE TRIP. AFTER WE HAD HAD A DRINK, I ASKED IF HE WANTED TO GO TO THE TOILET, AND HE PIPED UP "YES, STOP THE PLANE!" NO DOUBT HE WAS ACCUSTOMED TO OUR STOPPING THE CAR WHEN ANYONE NEEDED TO GO TO THE TOILET, SO IT WAS LOGICAL TO HIS 3 YEAR OLD MIND!

HE'S A SEASONED TRAVELLER NOW, AND I HAVEN'T HEARD THAT HE'S ASKED THE PLANE TO STOP SINCE!

WHILE IT'S RARE THESE DAYS TO HAVE A LONG-DISTANCE FLIGHT THAT HOLDS ANY INTEREST (UNLESS YOU ARE HI-JACKED, OR AN ENGINE FALLS OFF), WE HAD A BIT OF ENTERTAINMENT ON A FLIGHT TO LONDON IN 1967.

I WAS ON A ROUND-WORLD TRIP WITH OUR MANAGER IN ADMIDE, RAY KRETSCHMER, AND WE HAD TO STOP OVER FOR 2 DAYS AND A NIGHT IN SINGAPORE, DUE TO A PILOT'S STRIKE.

THE SINGAPORE - LONDON FLIGHT, BY BOAC 707, WAS OVERNIGHT, WITH STOPS AT CALCUTTA, KARACHI, ROME AND FRANKFURT.

ON BOARD WERE A TEAM OF MANCHESTER UNITED SOCCER PLAYERS WHO HAD BEEN TO AUSTRALIA. UNLIKE SOME SPORTS TEAMS THESE DAYS, I RECALL THAT THEY WERE WELL-BEHAVED.

THE 'UNUSUAL' IN THIS YARN IS ABOUT OUR TOUCHDOWNS. - NO ONE TOOK MUCH NOTICE OF A SMOOTH LANDING AT CALCUTTA.

WHEN IT WAS ALSO VERY GENTLE AT KARACHI, SOME OF THE SOCCER TEAM GAVE A FEW HANDCLAPS.

AT ROME, MORE CLAPPING FROM MORE PASSENGERS!

WHEN APPROACHING FRANKFURT, MOST PASSENGERS WERE WAITING ON THE LANDING, AND ALMOST EVERYBODY CLAPPED WHEN IT WAS A SMOOTH ONE.

BY THE TIME LONDON WAS DUE (AFTER BREAKFAST) EVERYONE WAS DWELLING ON THE TOUCHDOWN.

WE SWORE THE PILOT KNEW, AS HE HELD THE PLANE JUST OFF THE GROUND FOR WHAT SEEMED HUNDREDS OF YARDS, AND THEN LET IT DOWN LIKE A FEATHER. THIS TIME, INSIDE THE CABIN WAS LIKE A FOOTBALL MATCH!

THE CABIN ERUPTED, WITH EVERYONE CLIPPING AND CHEERING.

AND THAT'S NOT ALL - WHEN WE STOPPED, THE CAPTAIN CAME OUT THROUGH THE FIRST CLASS CURTAINS, DOFFED HIS CAP, TOOK A BOW, AND WALKED THE LENGTH OF THE PLANE TO THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE!

ON REFLECTION, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN 2 DIFFERENT PILOTS AT LEAST ON THAT 16 HOURS TRIP, IN WHICH CASE THEY COULD BOTH TAKE A BOW.

THERE WAS ANOTHER STANDOUT TRIP, IN 1978, THAT GAVE ME GREAT FAITH IN SMALL PLANES. ALTHOUGH I HAD BEEN ON SMOOTH TRIPS FROM MELBOURNE TO WELLINGTON IN A TWIN-ENGINED BEECHCRAFT, THIS WAS MY FIRST FLIGHT IN A 4 SEATER CESSNA.

TONY JONES, OUR SALES DIRECTOR, HAD BEEN VISITING US AT WELLINGTON, AND WAS DUE TO RETURN TO MELBOURNE. I HAD TO GO DOWN FOR SOME REASON, AND ONE OF OUR PRODUCTION MEN WAS GOING DOWN FOR A COURSE.

THE USUAL WAY WAS TO FLY FROM DUBBO TO SYDNEY, THEN TO MELBOURNE. BUT, AS THERE WAS SOME STRIKE ON THE COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS, TONY CHARTERED A BUSH PILOT IN DUBBO, TO TAKE THE 3 OF US TO MELBOURNE IN HIS CESSNA.

THE FIRST HOUR OR SO WAS SMOOTH SAILING (OR FLYING), BUT SOON AFTER, A STORM FRONT APPEARED AHEAD. WITHIN A FEW MINUTES, THE SMALL PLANE BEGAN TO SHAKE AND PITCH AND YAW, AND WE HELD ON TO WHATEVER WE COULD. AS WE GOT NEARER THE BLACK CLOUDS, WE COULD SEE LIGHTNING LEAVING THE CLOUDS AND STRIKING THE GROUND!

A FEW MINUTES LATER, WITH THE WINGS FLAPPING, AND US HOLDING ON FOR DEAR LIFE, THE PILOT SAID "THERE ARE NO BLOODY HEROES IN THIS GAME", AND TURNED BACK. (THIS WAS ABOUT 5 SECONDS BEFORE BOTH TONY AND I WERE GOING TO SUGGEST IT!).

WE PUT BACK TO DENILQUIN, HIRED A CAR, STOPPED THE NIGHT AT ECHUCA, AND CAME ON NEXT DAY TO MELBOURNE.

I RECALL THAT I WASN'T REALLY FRIGHTENED - MORE FASCINATED BY THE SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW AHEAD. AS TONY JONES PUT IT APTLY, WHEN RELATING THE DRAMA TO OTHERS - "IT LOOKED AS THOUGH THOR HIMSELF WAS AFTER US!"

AS I SAID, IT GAVE ME GREAT FAITH IN THE STRENGTH OF SMALL PLANES - AT LEAST THAT ONE!

RAGS TO RICHES (MORE OR LESS).

ONE INSTANCE OF GOING FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS, (AND OTHERS IN REVERSE), HAVE ALWAYS STUCK IN MY MIND.

WHILE ON THE TRIP WITH RAY KRETSCHMER IN 1967, ONE OF OUR VISITS IN AMERICA WAS TO THE BORG-WARNER COMPANY IN CHICAGO. (BORG-WARNER HELD A SMALL INTEREST IN RALPH MCKAY LTD., AFTER PROVIDING SOME KNOWHOW AND EQUIPMENT FOR A NEW DISC PLANT IN MELBOURNE IN THE EARLY 1960'S).

AFTER BEING ENTERTAINED AT DINNER BY A COUPLE OF THEIR

VICE-PRESIDENTS (THE ONLY TIME THAT I'VE EATEN FROG'S LEGS!), THEY ANNOUNCED THAT WE WOULD BE PICKED UP BY COMPANY CAR THE NEXT MORNING, TO VISIT THEIR DISC-MAKING PLANT.

THEIR "COMPANY CAR" TURNED OUT TO BE A VERY LARGE BLACK LINCOLN CONTINENTAL, DRIVEN BY A VERY LARGE BLACK CHAUFFEUR IN A BLACK UNIFORM!

AFTER GLIDING THROUGH SOUTH CHICAGO FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR, WE PULLED UP AT A BORG-WARNER FACTORY, THANKED THE BIG BLACK BLOKE, SAID GOODBYE AND FRONTED UP AT THE RECEPTION. BUT, WE FOUND WE WERE AT THE WRONG FACTORY, AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN SOME MILES NORTH OF CHICAGO INSTEAD OF SOUTH! WE RAGED OUTSIDE, BUT "MIDNIGHT" HAD GONE. THE RECEPTIONIST, AFTER A COUPLE OF PHONE CALLS TO HEAD OFFICE, CALLED A TAXI TO TAKE US TO WHERE WE SHOULD HAVE GONE, AT THE COMPANY'S EXPENSE.

THE EXPENSE WOULDN'T HAVE WORRIED US, BUT THE TAXI DID!

IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE OLDEST, MOST CLAPPED OUT YELLOW CAB IN CHICAGO. AND IT WAS DIRTY, IT RATTLED, YOU COULD SEE THE FLOORBOARDS, AND IT TOOK OVER AN HOUR TO GO FROM SOUTH TO NORTH CHICAGO!

RAY AND I COULD ALWAYS RELATE THAT CONTRAST IN CARS WHENEVER ANYONE RAISED A SUBJECT WHERE THAT YARN COULD BE THROWN IN.

NOW, THE REVERSE :-

WHILE ON THE WAY BY SHIP TO EUROPE IN 1954, WE STOPPED OVERNIGHT IN SINGAPORE. APART FROM THE USUAL BIT OF SOUVENIR SHOPPING, A GROUP OF ABOUT 8 OF US (BLOKES AND GIRLS), CALLED INTO RAFFLES TO SEE "HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES". WE HAD A BOTTLE OF TIGER BEER AND THE GIRLS HAD TO TRY THE FAMOUS "SINGAPORE SLING". BUT, APART FROM LOOKING, THAT WAS THE EXTENT OF OUR VISIT TO RAFFLES.

IN 1967, WHEN RAY AND I WERE HELD UP IN SINGAPORE BY THE PILOTS STRIKE, WE BOOKED INTO RAFFLES FOR THE NIGHT.

BY CHANCE, I WAS GIVEN ROOM NO. 1 AND RAY HAD ROOM NO. 2. MY 'ROOM' WAS A 3 ROOM SUITE, WITH A LARGE BEDROOM, A SITTING ROOM, A SMALL WRITING ROOM, AND A LARGE BATHROOM.

THE SUITE OPENED OUT ONTO A WIDE INDOOR BALCONY, OVERLOOKING THE "ELIZABETHAN" DINING ROOM, WHERE WE HAD A VERY NICE DINNER, ATTENDED TO BY ABOUT 6 WAITERS! AND THE COST FOR THAT

ACCOMMODATION WAS \$ AUS. 25 A NIGHT! (PLUS MEALS). (I STILL HAVE THE ACCOUNT).

AND 2 YEARS LATER, ON THE WAY HOME FROM A STINT IN THE PHILIPPINES, I STAYED THERE AGAIN, IN THE ROOM ABOVE (NO. 21). THAT WAS NOT QUITE AS ELABORATE AS ROOM NO. 1, BUT THE COST HAD CREPT UP TO \$ AUS. 32. (THOSE WERE THE DAYS WHEN ONE AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR WOULD GET 3 SINGAPORE DOLLARS).

SINCE THEY'VE 'UPDATED' RAFFLES, AND EXTENDED IT WITH A HIGH-RISE NEXT DOOR, I DOUBT I COULD AFFORD A DRINK IN THE BAR NOWADAYS!

THE VISIT TO SINGAPORE, IN 1969, TURNED UP A SURPRISE FOR ME. EARLIER THAT YEAR, TED AND MARGARET WOOD HAD VISITED US IN ADELAIDE, AND BROUGHT A ROTARY EXCHANGE STUDENT WITH THEM - AN INDIAN LAD FROM SINGAPORE NAMED 'ABID'.

APPARENTLY, ABID HAD WRITTEN HOME IN GLOWING TERMS ABOUT HIS VISIT TO ADELAIDE.

BEFORE I LEFT THE PHILIPPINES TO HEAD HOME, I WROTE TO ABID'S FAMILY, SAYING THAT I WOULD LIKE TO CALL ON THEM, JUST TO SAY 'HELLO', WHILE IN SINGAPORE.

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE THEN, AT THE AIRPORT, TO BE MET BY ABID'S MOTHER, FATHER, SISTER AND UNCLE! I WAS USHERED INTO THEIR MERCEDES, TAKEN TO RAFFLES TO BOOK IN, THEN TO THEIR OFFICE FOR AFTERNOON TEA, AND TO MEET 'GRANDFATHER', AN OLD RETIRED FELLOW WHO SEEMED TO DO NOTHING BUT SMOKE AND DRINK TEA ALL DAY. (THE FAMILY WERE PROSPEROUS IMPORT/EXPORT TRADERS).

THEN ABID'S UNCLE TOOK ME IN HAND. HE WAS A 'RUGGER' TYPE, BEEN TO SCHOOL IN ENGLAND AND, OF COURSE, KNEW SINGAPORE BACKWARDS. WE SPENT A COUPLE OF HOURS DRIVING AROUND THE PLACE, AND HE KEPT ASKING IF I NOTICED ANY DIFFERENCE SINCE MY LAST VISIT 2 YEARS AGO. AFTER SOME TIME, IT STRUCK ME - THE WHOLE CITY HAD BEEN CLEANED UP CONSIDERABLY. AND HE, LIKE OTHERS, WAS QUITE PROUD OF IT.

I WANTED TO BUY SOME THAI SILK, AND THEN I SAW AN EXPERT TRADER GET TO WORK!

I THOUGHT THE SILK AT THE FIRST PLACE WE TRIED WAS O.K., BUT HE SAID, "NO, THERE'S PLENTY OF OTHERS". WHEN WE STARTED, HE KNEW NO MORE ABOUT THAI SILK THAN I DID, BUT AT EACH OF ABOUT 4 OTHER STORES, HE PICKED UP SOME MORE DETAILS ABOUT VARIETIES, QUALITY, ETC.. THEN WE WENT BACK TO THE FIRST STORE AND HE PROCEEDED TO TELL THE OWNER ALL ABOUT THAI SILK! AND BARTERED A GOOD PRICE FOR ME.

WE THEN WENT HOME FOR DINNER WITH THE FAMILY, AND NEXT DAY, BACK TO THE AIRPORT IN THE MERCEDES. AND ALL I HAD WANTED TO DO WAS TO SAY 'HELLO'!

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING ABOUT SINGAPORE THAT TURNED UP SOMETHING UNUSUAL TO WRITE HOME ABOUT - EVEN ON MY FIRST VISIT IN 1954.

DURING A SHORT STOPOVER BY THE SHIP, ON OUR WAY TO EUROPE, A GROUP OF US (AS MENTIONED BEFORE) SPENT THE DAY LOOKING AROUND, ABSORBING THE SIGHTS AND SMELLS (IT'S CALLED 'ATMOSPHERE'), OF THE PLACE.

IN THOSE DAYS, THE SMELLS WERE MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN THE SIGHTS!

TOWARD EVENING, WE DECIDED TO HAVE A RIDE ON A 'TRISHAW', (A BICYCLE-PROPELLED RICKSHAW), AND RETURN TO THE 'SURRENTO', WHICH WAS LEAVING THAT NIGHT.

SOMEHOW, I SHARED A TRISHAW WITH ONE OF THE GIRLS - NAMED 'CHARLENE', BUT 'CHARLIE' TO HER FRIENDS. SHE WAS A WELL-BUILT BLONDE, ABOUT 21 YEARS OLD, FROM HAWTHORN. (I HAD NO DESIGNS ON HER, AND NEVER SAW OR HEARD OF HER AGAIN AFTER WE REACHED EUROPE).

OUR RIDE TURNED INTO SOMETHING OF AN ADVENTURE.

WHILE THE LITTLE MALLY BLOKE PEDALLED US AROUND TOWN, AND INTO, AND OUT OF, SOME VERY DODGY LOOKING SIDE STREETS, CHARLIE PERSISTED IN WAVING TO ALL AND SUNDRY, AND GOT A LOT OF CURIOUS LOOKS FROM THE LOCALS, MOST OF WHOM HAD PROBABLY NEVER SEEN SOMEONE LIKE HER CARRYING ON LIKE HER! I WAS A BIT CONCERNED WHEN SHE ATTRACTED TOO MUCH ATTENTION.

EVENTUALLY, WE ASKED OUR DRIVER (OR RIDER) TO TAKE US BACK TO THE SHIP, BUT HE GOT BUSHED, AND WE FINISHED UP AT SOME DIM-LIT DOCKS MILES AWAY!

WHILE WE WERE ARGUING WITH HIM, (HE WANTED TO DROP US AND GO HOME), A LANDROVER OF THE SINGAPORE DOCK POLICE PULLED UP, TO SEE WHAT WAS DOING. IT TURNED OUT TO BE THE PATROL WAGON OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DOCK POLICE, A DAPPER ENGLISHMAN, WITH HIS MALLY DRIVER. AFTER SOME YABBERING WITH OUR TRISHAW MAN, HE ASKED ME TO GIVE THE BLOKE A COUPLE OF DOLLARS, SENT HIM HOME, THEN OFFERED US A LIFT BACK TO THE SHIP IN HIS PADDY WAGON!

SO, CHARLIE AND I PULLED UP AT THE GANGPLANK, COURTESY OF THE CHIEF OF THE DOCK POLICE, AND GOT A CHEER FROM THE SHIP WHEN WE EMERGED FROM THE BACK OF THE WAGON AND TOOK A BOW! EVERYONE WAS BACK ON BOARD AND WONDERING WHERE WE WERE, OUR EXPLANATION OF OUR INNOCENT 'ADVENTURE' WAS PLAUSIBLE TO OUR FRIENDS, BUT WE HAD NO DOUBTS THAT MANY OTHER PASSENGERS ASSUMED THAT WE HAD BEEN IN SOME SORT OF STRIFE, BEFORE BEING DELIVERED BACK TO THE SHIP IN THE CAGE OF A PADDY WAGON!

AFTER BEING DIVERTED BY SINGAPORE, BACK TO THE 'RAGS TO RICHES' YARNS.

IN 1955, WHEN DON, STEVE AND I WERE TOURING EUROPE IN OUR VAN, WE USUALLY 'CAMPED OUT', SLEEPING IN THE VAN OR ALONGSIDE IT, AND COOKING MOST OF OUR MEALS, EXCEPT WHEN WE STRUCK LARGE CITIES SUCH AS PARIS OR VIENNA. THEN, WE WOULD PUT UP IN A 'CHEAP' HOTEL CLOSE TO THE CITY CENTRE. BY 'CHEAP', I MEAN IN THE REGION OF ABOUT 10 SHILLINGS STERLING A NIGHT. (THAT'S ABOUT FORTY DOLLARS THESE DAYS).

I CAN'T RECALL WHAT 'CHEAPER' PLACE WE STAYED AT IN VIENNA AT THAT TIME.

BUT, IN 1990, WHEN JEAN AND I WERE PLANNING OUR 'BIG TRIP', JANATHA, WHO HAD SPENT SOME TIME IN AUSTRIA, AND VIENNA AS A 'NANNY', INSISTED THAT WE STAY AT THE 'IMPERIAL', THE BEST IN VIENNA, ON OUR WAY TO LONDON.

SO WE DID, FOR 3 NIGHTS, AND IT WAS WELL WORTH WHATEVER IT COST!
(PROBABLY WHAT IT COST US 3 LADS TO GO HALF WAY AROUND EUROPE.)

ANOTHER "SOCIAL CLIMBING" EFFORT HAPPENED TO ME IN 1960, AFTER JEAN AND OTHER NURSES HAD GRADUATED FROM THEIR MIDWIFERY COURSE.

THEY ARRANGED A DINNER AT THE 'CHEVRON' HOTEL IN ST. KILDA ROAD - THEN ONE OF THE TOP MELBOURNE HOTELS.

AS IT WAS A 'GIRLS ONLY' SHOW, I TOOK JEAN AND TWO OTHER GIRLS TO THE HOTEL, AND ARRANGED TO COLLECT THEM AT ABOUT 10 P.M.

SO, WITH TWO HOURS TO KILL, I DROVE BACK TO THE CITY AND DECIDED TO HAVE A BITE TO EAT FIRST. TO AVOID ANY WAITING AT A RESTAURANT OR HOTEL, I WENT TO "POP'S PIES" STALL IN FLINDERS ST. AND GOT MYSELF AROUND A DISH OF PIE AND PEAS, AND A CUP OF TEA.

I THEN WENT TO ONE OF THE NEWSREEL THEATRES, WHICH RAN HOURLY SHOWS OF NEWS, CARTOONS AND SHORT FEATURES.

AT ABOUT 10 P.M., I WAS BACK AT THE 'CHEVRON', BUT THE GIRLS WERE ONLY ABOUT TO START ON THEIR DESSERT.

SO, THEIR WAITER TOOK PITY ON ME, PUT ME AT A QUIET CORNER TABLE, AND BROUGHT ME A DESSERT AND CUP OF COFFEE 'ON THE HOUSE'!

SO, THAT NIGHT, I TOOK A GIANT STEP IN THE GOURMET STAKES, FROM DINNER WITH THE DERROS AT POP'S PIES, TO SUPPER AT THE 'CHEVRON'!

GOLF - (SORT OF):-

ONE WOULD EXPECT THAT, AFTER HAVING PLAYED GOLF FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS, THERE WOULD BE MANY MEMORABLE EVENTS TO RECALL THERE ARE, BUT JUST A FEW THAT WOULD WIN A PRIZE IN THE 'FUNNIEST VIDEO' SHOW, IF THEY HAD BEEN FILMED.

THE FIRST WAS IN ABOUT 1952, WHEN WE WOULD OFTEN PLAY NINE HOLES AT ROYAL PARK AFTER WORK. ALLEN AND I WOULD SOMETIMES JOIN UP WITH PETER THOMSON'S FATHER, ARTHUR, WHO WAS ABOUT THE SAME STANDARD AS US. AND PETER WOULD ALWAYS BE PRACTICING SOMEBHERE ON THE COURSE. (THIS WAS WHEN HE WAS JUST BEGINNING TO HIT THE 'BIG TIME').

ONE DAY, ON WHAT WAS THE 7TH HOLE, WE THREE WERE ALL ABOUT 100 YARDS FROM THE GREEN. ARTHUR WAS IN THE LIGHT LEFT HAND ROUGH. HE WAS 'STYMIED' BY A SMALL TREE (WITH AN ANGLE-IRON GUARD AROUND IT), ABOUT 5 YARDS AHEAD OF HIM. BUT, BEING A LEFT HINDER, HE CALCULATED THAT HE COULD SLICE AROUND THE TREE AND REACH THE GREEN.

HIS SHOT WAS WELL HIT, BUT A BIT TOO STRAIGHT! THE BALL STRUCK THE ANGLE-IRON GUARD, SEEMED TO HANG THERE FOR A MOMENT, THEN CAME STRAIGHT BACK AND SMACKED ARTHUR FAIR BETWEEN THE EYES! HE WENT DOWN LIKE A FELLED OX, AND WAS 'OUT COLD' FOR A FEW SECONDS.

WHILE ALLEN AND I WERE CONCERNED ABOUT HIS CONDITION, AND TRIED TO HELP HIM UP, WE COULDN'T HELP LAUGHING AT THE SAME TIME. WHEN HE CAME TO, HE SAT UP AND, LIKE ANY KEEN GOLFER, HIS FIRST WORDS WERE "WHERE'S MY BALL? WHERE DID IT GO?"

MEANWHILE, PETER HAPPENED TO BE ON THE NEXT FAIRWAY, AND CAME OVER TO SEE THE SHOW. ARTHUR WAS STILL GROGGY, WITH A LUMP LIKE AN EGG COMING UP ON HIS FOREHEAD, AND WANTED TO PLAY ON, BUT PETER GRABBED HIS CLUBS AND INSISTED THAT HE WOULD TAKE HIM HOME.

WE SAW ARTHUR A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER, AND HE HAD A BEAUTIFUL PAIR OF BLACK EYES, AND STILL THE LUMP BETWEEN THEM! AND I CAN'T RECALL WHETHER WE LOOKED FOR HIS BALL.

ANOTHER 'STAR TURN' WAS AT ST. ANDREWS IN 1955.

DOV WILLIAMSON, STEVE WALSH, JOHN HOCKING AND I, (THE 4 BLOKES IN THE SMALL PHOTO IN OUR LOUNGE), SPENT THE WEEK WATCHING THE BRITISH OPEN, (WHEN THOMSON WON HIS SECOND TITLE).

WE COULDN'T PLAY ON THE OLD COURSE THAT WEEK, BUT HAD A ROUND ON THE 'EDEN' COURSE ONE DAY, AND ON THE 'NEW' COURSE ANOTHER DAY. (THERE WAS PLENTY OF LIGHT TO PLAY TILL AFTER 10 P.M., AFTER WATCHING THE OPEN ON THE OLD COURSE).

THE 'NEW' COURSE IS EVEN BARER THAN THE OLD COURSE, BUT THERE ARE CLUMPS OF TEA TREE - LIKE SCRUB HERE AND THERE, APART FROM THE HEATHER.

WE HIRED CLUBS FROM 'OLD TOM' MORRIS'S PRO SHOP. IN THOSE DAYS, THEY STILL HAD MOSTLY HICKORY SHAFTED CLUBS.

NOW, DON HAD A VERY AGGRESSIVE SWING. ON THE 4TH. TEE, HE TOOK AN ALMIGHTY SWING WITH HIS DRIVER, AND THE BALL WENT OFF STRAIGHT AND FAR. UNFORTUNATELY, THE CLUB THEN SLIPPED OUT OF DON'S HANDS, AND BOOMERANGED AWAY ABOUT 30 YARDS, LANDING HIGH IN A CLUMP OF TEA TREE!

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED TO FIND A HICKORY-SHAFTED, WOODEN HEADED CLUB IN TEA TREE OF THE SAME COLOUR? WE COULDN'T SPOT IT FOR SOME TIME.

MEANWHILE, THREE LOCALS CAME ON THE TEE BEHIND US, SO WE CALLED THEM THROUGH. THEY THANKED US AS THEY PASSED, THEN ONE SAID TO DON - "OCH, LADDIE, HAE YE LOST A BALL?" AND DON, IN HIS BEST AUSTRALIAN, REPLIED "NO, MATE, I'VE LOST MY BLOODY CLUB!"

THE SCOTSMAN WENT OFF SHAKING HIS HEAD.

WE FOUND THE CLUB SOON AFTERWARD, BUT WE NEVER LET DON LIVE IT DOWN. THOUSANDS HAVE LOST A BALL AT ST. ANDREWS, BUT DON COULD BE THE ONLY ONE TO LOSE A CLUB!

ONE OTHER GOLF ANECDOTE COULD GAIN A PLACE IN THE VIDEO SHOW!

EARLY IN OUR GOLFING CAREERS, WE PLAYED ON MANY PUBLIC COURSES, INCLUDING IVANHOE. ONE MORNING, WE WERE AMONG A BUNCH OF ABOUT 20 HOPEFULS, WAITING OUR TURN TO HIT OFF THE FIRST TEE.

ONE FELLOW STOOD OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB. HE WAS DRESSED TO THE NINES, HAD A NEW BAG FULL OF CLUBS (WHEN MOST OF US HAD ONLY ABOUT 7), AND EVEN HAD A BUGGY. HE JUST HAD TO BE A CUT ABOVE US 'WOOD DUCKS', AS MARTY WOULD HAVE CALLED US, AND WAS CLIPPING THE HEADS OFF DAISIES WITH WHAT LOOKED LIKE A DECENT SORT OF SWING.

WE ALL EXPECTED TO SEE SOMETHING SPECIAL WHEN HE TEE'D UP - AND WE DID! HIS PRACTICE SWINGS WERE FORGOTTEN AS HE LUNGED AT HIS

BALL WITH THE TOE OF HIS CLUB, THE BALL SHOT TOWARDS 'COVER POINT', HIT A LARGE TREE ABOUT 20 YARDS AWAY, AND CAME BACK HIGH OVER OUR HEADS,

IT LANDED ON THE CLUBHOUSE ROOF BEHIND US AND, IN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, WE COULD HEAR THE BALL RATTLING DOWN THE TIN ROOF UNTIL IT 'CLUNKED' INTO THE GUTTER!

I CAN'T RECALL WHAT HAPPENED THEN, BUT I GUESS 'THE CHAMP' HIT ANOTHER BALL, AND HURRIED AWAY FROM THE EMBARRASSED SILENCE!

MOTORBIKES:-

FROM 1950 TO 1956, I RODE MOTORBIKES IN ALL SORTS OF WEATHER - HOT AND COLD, RAIN AND SNOW, IN AUSTRALIA AND ENGLAND.

AS WITH AIRCRAFT FLIGHTS, MOST WERE UNEVENTFUL, BUT A FEW STAND OUT.

IN 1954, IT WAS A VERY COLD WINTER IN ENGLAND, BUT LITTLE SNOW BEFORE JANUARY '55. AT MASSEY FERGUSON, WE WOULD PLAY BADMINTON ON WEDNESDAY NIGHTS IN THE RECREATION ROOM UNTIL ABOUT 10 P.M.

I WAS STILL LIVING WEST OF BIRMINGHAM, 26 MILES FROM WORK, AT THE TIME. ONE DECEMBER NIGHT, I THOUGHT IT WAS COLDER THAN USUAL ON THE RIDE HOME. ALTHOUGH I WAS WEARING A FLYING JACKET, GAUNTLETS AND FLYING BOOTS, I WAS NEARLY FROZEN AFTER A FEW MILES. MY TEETH AND NECK ACHED WITH THE COLD, AND I COULDN'T FEEL MY FINGERS. WHEN I ARRIVED HOME AND STARTED TO THAW OUT, I REMARKED TO MY LANDLADY "IT WAS PRETTY COLD ON THE BIKE TONIGHT".

AND SHE SAID "NO WONDER LAD, THERE'S 17 DEGREES OF FROST".

THE TEMPERATURE WAS DOWN TO 15° FAHRENHEIT - ABOUT MINUS 9° CELSIUS.

TALK ABOUT BRASS MONKEYS! AND THAT WAS NOT COUNTING THE WIND FACTOR.

A FEW WEEKS LATER, I MOVED TO KENILWORTH, ONLY 4 MILES FROM WORK, NOT SO MUCH BECAUSE OF THE COLD, BUT IT WAS NO FUN RIDING ON SNOW AND ICE!

TWO OTHER RIDES ARE WORTH RECALLING:-

ONE OF OUR MATES IN BRUNSWICK, JIM HUME, HAD MARRIED, AND MOVED TO ADELAIDE. SOON AFTER, IN 1950, ALLEN DECIDED TO RIDE OVER ONE LONG WEEKEND, TO VISIT JIM AND HIS WIFE, AND I AGREED TO GO ALONG ON THE PILLION OF HIS 350 CC AJS. I HAD SOME METAL FRAMES MADE AT WORK, TO CARRY 2 CANS OF PETROL. (THERE WERE NO SERVICE STATIONS OPEN AT

NIGHT IN THOSE DAYS, SO YOU HAD TO CARRY YOUR OWN FUEL, TO DO THE TRIP NON-STOP). WE SET OFF AND RODE ALL NIGHT. THE TRIP WAS FAIRLY EASY, BUT AFTER SOME HOURS, MY DRIVER STARTED DOZING OFF NOW AND THEN, AND I HAD TO GIVE HIM A CHOP ON THE EAR OCCASIONALLY TO KEEP US ON THE ROAD!

ON THE WAY HOME, WE RODE THROUGHOUT A HOT DAY. THE PILLION SEATS ON THE BIKES THEN WERE SMALL SPONGE RUBBER AFFAIRS, NOT DESIGNED TO BE SAT UPON FOR 8 OR 9 HOURS AT A STRETCH.

SO, I HAD TO KEEP SHIFTING MY SEAT, AND EVEN STOOD UP AT TIMES TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE. (BY THE WAY, THERE WAS A 50 MILE STRETCH OF GRAVEL NEAR TAILBEND).

I ALWAYS SAID THAT ALLEN HAD A CAST IRON BACKSIDE, AS HE DIDN'T LIKE TO STOP TOO OFTEN ON A LONG TRIP. SO, IMAGINE MY CHAGRIN WHEN, SOMEWHERE ABOUT STAWELL, WITH MORE THAN 200 KM TO HOME, I WAS FEELING THIRSTY, AND SUGGESTED WE STOP FOR A DRINK. BUT ALL ALLEN YELLED BACK WAS "NOT NOW, WE'LL BE HOME SOON", "SOON" WAS MORE THAN 2 HOURS AWAY, AND HE DIDN'T STOP!

I NEVER RODE ON HIS PILLION ON A LONG TRIP AGAIN.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR, TOM ROYDON, (WHO HAD AN EX-ARMY HARLEY-DAVIDSON), AND I, (WITH A 125 CC. BSA BANTAM), DECIDED TO DO THE TRIP TO ADELAIDE. SOUNDS SIMPLE, BUT ON THE NIGHT WE SET OUT, IT WAS RAINING STEADILY, WITH A STRONG WESTERLY WIND. MY LITTLE BANTAM WAS FLAT OUT AT 30 KM/HOUR UP THE HILLS TO BALLARAT, EVEN USING THE HARLEY AS A WINDBREAK! WE DECIDED TO 'PROP' AT STAWELL, AND PUT UP IN THE WAITING ROOM AT THE RAILWAY STATION. (THE STAFF HAD GONE HOME).

WE STOKED UP THE FIRE TO DRY OUT, THEN DOSSED DOWN ON THE BENCHES.

WHEN WE WOKE EARLY NEXT MORNING, THERE WAS A CROWD WAITING FOR THE 'OVERLAND', AND SOME LADIES WERE COMPLAINING ABOUT THE 'TRAMPS', WHO NOT ONLY DOSS DOWN IN THE WAITING ROOM, BUT TAKE UP THE ONLY BENCHES! (LIKE BRER FOX, WE 'LAY LOW').

WE THEN HAD A GOOD RUN TO MURRY BRIDGE, WHERE MY CHAIN BROKE. WE HAD TO DISCONNECT MY REAR BRAKE TO GET THE CHAIN OUT, AND WE AGREED THAT TOM WOULD TOW ME INTO ADELAIDE. BUT I HAD RECKONED WITHOUT THE NARROW WINDING ROAD THROUGH THE ADELAIDE HILLS, AS IT WAS THEN. WHEN WE REACHED ADELAIDE, MY ARMS AND HANDS WERE ACHING, AND THE FRONT BRAKE WAS ALMOST BURNT OUT.

THAT WAS DEFINITELY THE 'HARRIEST' RIDE I EVER HAD!