***A Juniors Life 1957 in service for The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Limited.***

I had been prompted to record my experiences as a junior by reading various articles appearing in the CBC Officers Club newsletter, and how much it jogged my memory. I would hope others who may read this would be similarly stimulated, and to perhaps correct errors and omissions for me.

The decision to join the service was made by my father.

Not doing what he wanted me to do ( at school) will now mean doing what he says.

My application was accepted at Wollongong Branch and a letter of introduction was signed by Mr Dowell. He was a very nice chap, and I believe was the Accountant at the time.

My Mother and I set out on 22 July 1957 in the Vanguard Spacemaster for the three hour trip to Milton. That’s how the road was in those days. We were made welcome by the Manager and Accountant and given address to where arrangements were made for my lodgings at Ma Gumley’s boarding house in Gordon Street.

That was a big shock, and I later learned that my Mother returned home with a heavy heart. But she wasn’t aware of how many blokes were crammed into this decrepit old house. However, we suffered not. The welcome was great and the meals were hearty , and I was made to feel at home.

The Manager was Frank Percy Perfrement Denshire. He was kind and quietly spoken – a gentleman of the day, and I would guess was close to retirement. The Accountant was Mr Richardson (his first name escapes my memory) and the teller was Ted Body. I didn’t get to know them so well as each of them were moved shortly after.

Rob Nee and Peter Shea were the ledger keepers, Alison Miller looked after statements and pass books and I was chief of the postage book and local exchanges - the junior. Doing up vouchers was not a preferred job.

Mr Richardson received notice of his first appointment as a Branch Manager, and there was much excitement and celebrating.

This was a cause for a meeting at the Commercial Hotel with the staff from the Wales and some other business people, including the local Sergeant. This was in the days of six o’clock closing, and further, I was still only 17. The Boss assured me that everything was OK. I was uneasy to say the least, and especially when the barman locked the front door and the ‘meeting’ carried on. I was eventually let out the side door, and I have little recollection as to whether my tea had been kept at Gordon Street.

The replacement teller was Bruce Howard, who hailed from Bathurst and Glen Weiss arrived as Accountant to the Branch. We were a happy bunch and got on well. I learnt a lot – how to shoot blow flies with elastic bands, and to add up – an art I somehow missed at school. And run messages, which involved me being sent to the Bank of New South Wales, the only other bank in the town, to borrow a verbal agreement form. The envelope was opened on my return revealing a piece of toilet paper. It was only then I realised I had been taken in, and an early object lesson learned.

I settled into life in a small country community, and it was busy at that. The chaps in the boarding house were a mixture of age and vocation. There was a regular 500 card game most evenings and I was soon tutored by a chap from the Wales. (His name was Irvine and I believe he was related to the Irvine’s in our service). The regular card nights were interrupted by having to go to the movies on a Wednesday night, or a dance somewhere on a Friday night, or other times when the prawns may be running in the lake at Burrill. This would cause us all to pile into a couple of cars with nets and a kerosene tin which we normally filled rather quickly and returned home. By this time Mrs Gumley had the fuel copper boiling and with some fresh bread, the result left one rather blotted.

The mention of the fuel copper also brings to mind the showers we had. To have a shower, at least once a week, sometimes twice, meant boiling the copper and transferring the water into a bucket with a rose on the bottom and hauling it up on a block and tackle. This happened out the back of course. And if one didn’t have a shower, one learnt what an APC was.

Milton was very much the centre of the area, being dairying and timber, and supporting two complete department stores. Ulladulla was a sleepy holiday village with the Marlin Hotel, the fish co-op and its fleet of trawlers.

At work, part of my routine was to accompany the Boss to the Agency at Ulladulla three afternoons a week. I never ceased to be amazed at his driving. He had a fairly new Austin A55 with column gear change. This was the latest mechanical technology. We would clear the gate and the accelerator pedal would then get a real workout. The motor would just about valve bounce in every one of its four gears until in top. By this time we are doing nearly 50 miles an hour up past the hospital (in a 30 zone) and he would then jam his foot on the brake because he was going too fast. He was a lousy driver.

Access to the residence from the banking chamber was a door at the rear of the boss’s office. Should someone want to see him, and he was missing from the office, he would tell us to yell out down the long hall for him. Mrs Denshire was deaf, and if there was no response, we were instructed to come through the house and find him.

Naturally, as the junior, this was one of my duties. On one such incident I was yelling and progressing down the hall. The first door on the right was the main bedroom. The door was wide open. Mrs Denshire was standing in front of the mirror, completely in her birthday suit. And completely means completely. I didn’t even have time to turn around. I shot down the hall, out the back door into the yard and materialized through the rear door of the bank and slunk to my desk. Everything was a bit of a blur for a while. I was done for, and my probation was coming up.

Sometime later the Boss appeared. He walked up behind me, put his hand on my shoulder and said everything was OK and not to be concerned. It was never mentioned again.

Mrs Denshire was a lovely kind lady, and put on a great spread for us all on balance nights.

In spite of everything the Boss must have put in a good word for me. I passed my probation and was informed by the Accountant that the only way I could be sacked now was if I held up the Bank.

Then there was the tale I was told, that a previous Manager and his Accountant had actually been sacked. An Auditor had dropped in and commenced to count the cash. However the treasury was missing. It had been lodged at the Bank of New South Wales on IBD>

Ron Jones was my roommate at the boarding house and worked for the Postmaster Generals Department. One week he was the postie and telegram boy and the other he worked/slept the night shift operating the manual telephone exchange. Taking over the exchange from Maureen McDonald at 10.00pm sometimes offered some sport. Whilst Ron was either walking her home or teasing the life from her, I became adapt at working the exchange also. This gave me the opportunity to ring some mates in Wollongong, Mittagong and Maitland, all at the same time. Until the Postmaster came down from the residence one night and caught me.

Ron eventually joined the bank and had a long and successful career.

Meanwhile, things were progressing at the Branch. Rob was moved and I was promoted to the ledger desk to accompany Peter Shea. Ian Kendall, a local boy, was the new junior. It was then his turn to be locked in the strong room with Alison – as had I. Hell it was dark.

He was given the task of borrowing the general Ledger from the Wales. His school mate was also the junior there and handed it over. The respective Bosses had a good repour as the book was promptly returned after embarrassing apologetic phone calls.

Getting home for weekends was quite difficult. The bus from Eden to Bomaderry came through Milton approximately 11.30am on a Saturday morning, and that meant having to leave before a balance. I was given some leniency, but my leaving early was not popular. Further, the train from Bomaderry didn’t arrive to Wollongong until 6.30pm - Returning Sunday meant catching train at 7.00pm arriving Milton 1.30am Monday morning.

Somehow, my Mother agreed to me having a motorbike which my Father acquired for me. It was a 1949 model 350cc Single “Red Hunter” Ariel. Wow. Apart from getting me home weekends, it really widened my horizons. I even returned home one Saturday afternoon via Mittagong to show the bike to an old mate from Bowral High school.

Naturally I had to take him for a ride. We were miles from nowhere on a back road and a Copper suddenly showed up on his motorbike and wanted to see my licence. Of course I didn’t have one - only a permit. Poor old Phil had to walk home, and I was going to hear more of this!! Yeah.

Months later, the local sergeant, Sergeant Flowers, was in the Bosses office, which was a regular event. (I think they used to have a drink). From the ledger desk I saw the door open and as they both appeared, the Sergeant caught my eye (I am sure this was set up). He then turned to the Boss and said in a loud voice (so everybody could hear) that he ‘wanted to see Bob Handel in my Office’! After he left the boss came up to me asked If I had heard that Sergeant Flowers wanted to see me. So now the whole world knew.

That afternoon I attended the Sergeant’s Office. He had been advised that I had breached the provisions of a riders permit!

“Yes Sir”

After a very light talk, which emphasised why was it I had not applied for my licence, he wrote it out immediately. I had wished it would always be that easy.

I had been riding the bike for six months or more by this time and he had well and truly observed me in the town.

Meanwhile Bruce Howard got the bug to ride and purchased a BSA motor bike.

We decided late one Saturday morning whilst balancing up, (and it happened to be winter) that we would ride to Bathurst for the weekend to see his folks. We had an uneventful trip and arrived at tea time. Next morning when we awoke it was raining. .

We left after an early lunch. It was the worst experience of riding a motor bike that I had ever encountered. The road was so treacherous I was afraid to use the brake. It actually snowed at Yetholme, and by Lithgow I was a frozen solid blob. We continued on down the Let River into the Hartley Valley and across the old wooden bridge. Hell it was slippery. Half way up the hill, I realized that Bruce was no longer behind me. I stopped. He was nowhere to be seen. A car came by and a chap yelled out the window that ‘he was down at the bridge’. I thought the worst and turned around, imagining that he had gone through the bridge and was in the river. He had merely made a comfort stop.

We made Wollongong that night and continued on to Milton in time for work Monday morning.

I started dating a local girl and she was great company. I got on well with her family, and I fished regularly with her father. But she wouldn’t get on the bike. We played tennis at Burrill and swam at Mollymook.

Peter Shea got a promotion which meant he had to eventually leave home. I was promoted to chief ledger keeper and was joined by an infamous character. Dick Spinner was every ladies man, and I don’t know how I kept out of trouble. His is another story.

I was learning that life in the Bank’s service meant constant change. Nothing stayed the same for too long.

That also included trading in my faithful machine and buying a 1957 model 600cc twin Matchless, and learning what hire purchase was all about.

Bruce was moved and John Turner arrived to become the teller.

John and I started playing golf on the small picturesque nine hole course at Mollymook. He had the most unorthodox swing I have seen, but I couldn’t challenge him – he always beat me. I believe he is still doing it.

Now that I had wheels I would occasionally nick down to Mollymook and play nine holes before work. And if the weather was favourable I would even get a surf in at lunch time.

Life was becoming very full, and I was loving it. Getting home for an occasional weekend was inconvenient.

I had discovered Milton, and I wasn’t a stranger anymore. The rolling green hills nurturing the dairy herds attracted me, over which I often wandered after work with my Browning automatic .22 and kept Mrs Gumley supplied with rabbits for the larder. I was invited and joined families on many occasions.

A trip to Nowra in a brand new Zephyr Super Six to see Col Joye and The Joye Boys was not to be missed. Six on board and no seat belts. And the midnight till dawn BBQ on Mollymook beach to see in the new year was an annual highlight.

Time flew, and in November 1960 correspondence from Head Office arrived to provide me with a letter of introduction to join the staff at Sydney University Branch.

Hence ended the initiation of my service to the Bank. The happy experience of Milton is with me always

RF (Bob) Handel