

Son of the Depression

Extracts

There was great rivalry between the two general stores and on one occasion the other store, Musgraves, which was built after Buckleys and was more modern, ran a big promotion for a new soap. Mr Herb Musgrave put a cat in the shop window surrounded by vast packets of the new soap. The advertising slogan read,

I wash my pussy with this wonderful new soap.

A week later, Mr Buckley put a rooster in our shop window, alongside a number of different brands of soap. The advertising slogan read,

I wash my cock with any old soap.



But things were to get worse. The next day Mr Buckley sent me to collect money from our most cantankerous customer. She lived in town and I decided to walk to her place. I got to within 30 yards of her home when she opened the door. She just stood there with her feet spread apart and a shot gun under her arm. I didn't get a chance to open my mouth. She greeted me with,

'I know what you ***** want. You listen carefully. I haven't got any ***** cash and if you and your ***** boss ever show your faces here again you'll get a charge of number 2 up your arse. Go back and tell that to that dirty ***** boss of yours.'

I knew that 'number 2' meant the size of the shot in the gun cartridges and I didn't fancy being shot up my arse, or anywhere else ...



From my early teens, on non-cricketing Sundays, I assisted Tambo in castrating both horses and cattle. They didn't like it, sometimes demonstrably so. I would lasso and tether them, and then Tambo would bring them to the ground and quickly tie their feet so that they couldn't kick. Sometimes he wasn't quick enough and one or other of us would get a hoof in the shin or worse. On one occasion at Frank Cobb's property on the back road to Gallymont, I was successful with the lassoing but not the tethering, and the horse took off with me still attached to the end of the rope. Thoughts of self-preservation prevailing, I quickly let go and ended up with my face in the dirt as he took off at such speed and momentum that he was able to clear the normally insurmountable paddock fence. Tambo yelled out to me,

'After him Cass, pretend you're the man from Snowy River.'

I scrambled to my feet ...



When I arrived at the fire there were at least 50 people trying to extinguish it. It was in the state forest, so the fire had plenty of fuel. Mr Horniman, a Mandurama bank manager, was captain of the local brigade and he and his men were already there. He put me into a team comprised of Ike and Whaler Bloomfield and two others. After a couple of hours we thought we were gaining on the fire when Whaler suddenly shouted,

'What's going on behind us?'

Another crew had lit a fire break behind us. We were completely cut off. We were surrounded by flames 40 feet high.

Whaler took over and told us to get into our vehicles and to follow him. We were in three cars. We drove through a wall of flames on a dirt track leading to where the fire had already burnt. We escaped the immediate danger but were still circled by fire. Sparks were still falling and it was incredibly hot. We were trapped ...



In 1939, the Mandurama Light Horse went to a major three-week camp at Ingleburn on the outskirts of Sydney. During the last week of the camp Tommy, Collie and I were selected to ride with the 6th Light Horse at the Sydney Easter Show. It brought back wonderful memories of my first Carcoar Show. We had the weekend off during this camp and I stayed with my sister Billie at her Mosman home. While walking from the ferry to Billie's place, I stopped to watch a group of young women playing tennis at Balmoral. I thought that one of the young ladies was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. When I arrived back at Billie's place, I told my brother-in-law, Clarrie, that I had just seen the woman I was going to marry ...