

## FIFTY YEARS OF TANNING

### REMINISCENCES OF DINNY McQUEEN

I started work in 1916 at a tannery in Ferry St., HILL END. It was owned by L. Uhl & Sons and at one time was combined with a boot factory owned by a Mr. George Rose, who also was the owner of the racehorse "Splendide" which won two Queensland Cups in succession.

The tannery was behind the residence of the late Mr. E. J. Dixon and a Mr. Free was the boss. Bill Hovey, one of the old time handfleshers and myself comprised the staff. We did small pieces for insoles. I remember an amusing part with the visits of a well known master tanner who liked his spirits. Bill Hovey used to "run the cutter" across by ferry to the Regatta Hotel, and each time he went over, about three times a week, he was shouted a "Bennett and Bee". In those days a "Bennett and Bee" cost 2/8d.

The tannery closed down during August 1916. I then spent nine months trying my luck on the gem-fields at Anakie. On my return to Brisbane, I started work at T. C. Dixon & Sons in May 1917. Mr. W. V. Dixon was Manager and Ray Blackburn was foreman. These men were the pioneers of Chrome tanning in Queensland. In those days, T. C. Dixons would be one of the best established tanneries in Australia. Their calf leather was noted for its good quality and their kid leather was in demand and done in big quantities. Kangaroo leather in season would average between 6000 and 7000 per week. Mr. Dixon, who was known to us as W. V. was never afraid to try the latest methods, and with the aid of that rare expert Ray Blackburn, the leather was of very high quality. These were the days of tanning known as the two bath methods. I remember lads had to stay back untill 7.00 p.m. and spread out skins. Fortunately, I was not a member of these teams. The lads used to suffer from chrome sores which would eat into the flesh and were hard to heal.

I remember the coming of the depression and in 1930 along with thousands of toilers I got the sack and spent three years on the unemployed market.

In 1933, I started at A. Pill & Sons at Kedron, when Ray Blackburn took charge of the chrome section. I spent eight years with this firm. I left and once again became associated with Ray Blackburn, this time at Fulchers Tanneries at Red Hill. Fulchers became one of the main suppliers of calf leather in Queensland. I spent 17½ years at this tannery and consider this time would be the happiest days of my life. Things got quiet at Fulchers and I went back to Pills tannery now having been taken over by Johnson and Sons. I spent five years in their Dispatch

Dept. and saw the big improvement in side leathers when corrected grain became popular. There would have been an input of 4500 hides per week at this time.

I left and returned to Fulchers which was nearer my home and I had a happy association with Mr. Doug. Fulcher and Manager Mr. Arthur Burns, untill the tannery closed down last year.

I am now working at P. Maggs and Sons at Kedron, with Mr. Leon Murphy as Manager. So long as my health permits, I hope to stay awhile yet. After fifty years, it is hard to mention all the mates I have had, as they are too numerous to mention. Bill Donaldson and Jack Harris of T. C. Dixons and Roy Harvey of Pills are men for whom I have the greatest respect. Bill and Jack have passed over 'the great divide', but Roy, like myself, is still plugging away.

### SHOESHINERS' PRICE HIKE

From Peter Costigan in New York

Inflation has come right down to earth in New York with a sudden city-wide jump in the price of a shoeshine from 25 cents to 35 cents.

The 40 per cent price hike started about a week ago at some of the smarter shoeshine stands near fancy department stores and in busy Grand Central Station.

By the weekend it was hard to find a shiner anywhere prepared to charge the old rate for polishing shoes.

The higher price is unlikely to boost the circulation of money in poverty stricken Harlem from where the shiners trudge early each morning to set up their stands in the tourist-crowded stretches of Bowway and Times Square.

Most of the stands belong to unnamed businessmen, who pay the city of New York fees for a shoeshine licence, the shiners a minimum wage for the doing the work and themselves the rest of the revenue.

Licenceholders were justifying the price rise on the ground that the State's minimum legal wage has been raised from one dollar 25 cents to one dollar 50 cents an hour.

Not that the men, who do the polishing, get quite that amount. The licensees pay them 35 cents an hour less on the theory that 35 cent is the shoeshiner's average hourly "take" in tips.

Only one class of shoeshiners has failed so far to raise the price. The small negro boys, who shift their stands from doorway to doorway, having no licence, and keep all their shining income for themselves.