

## **PLOD ESSAY: Hanley's Dairy:**

***“You can whip our cream, but you can't beat our milk.”***

Last summer (January 2023) the Historical Society held a series of “15-Minute Talks,” which usually lasted for half an hour and only ended when the Mine Whistle blew everyone out of their seats and rendered the speaker silent. The talks were well-attended and always interesting. One of the most thorough and meticulously prepared talks that could have kept the audience spell-bound for another hour were it not for the mine whistle, was given by Peter Hanley. It was based on the recollections Peter (the second born of seven children) and his mother had of Hanley's Dairy, which operated on McKenzie Street from 1960 until 1983 and was owned and managed by Peter's parents, Chick and Sadie Hanley. (While Peter and his mother were comparing memories of the family business and the people they worked with, they sometimes had to correct one another and had to admit that others might have different recollections. Nevertheless, the detail is wonderful.)



Their story takes us back to a time when milk was delivered daily to households and businesses by horse and cart. The sound of yesteryear that many of us still remember is the clip-clop of the draft horses pulling milk wagons through quiet streets before dawn accompanied by the jangle of bottles in their crates and the sound of running footsteps made by the milky as he ran past bedrooms of those just waking to drop off his delivery on the back verandas of the kitchens and retrieve empty bottles which

were noisily placed in crates on the wagon while the faithful horse kept going slowly through the streets it knew by heart.

### **DAILY ROUTINE**

Running a business such as Hanley's Dairy in the 60's and 70's before the horse-and-cart days were overtaken by motorized milk trucks, was complex and relied on honest workers dedicated to the smooth running of a stressful daily routine that could easily come undone. It required workers willing to rise at 4:00 am and setting to work without delay loading carts from the cool room with milk (bottled or bulk) and cream (bottled), harnessing horses in their stables, leading them to their milk carts and hitching them up; then commencing home deliveries in the pre-dawn to be completed by 8:00 am when they would return to the dairy and unload and clean the milk carts, all before washing and cleaning and releasing the horses into their turn-out paddocks. On top of all that, various tasks also had to be completed (some of which were the responsibility of the Hanley children before and after school). These included bringing coal from the backyard coal-stack to the kitchen; cleaning the stables, the washroom, and milk carts and trucks; sweeping the landing and loading bay; stabling horses in the late afternoon; delivering late orders; and myriad house-hold jobs. Most importantly, they had to make sure the cool room was ready later in the day for Arthur's Dairy milk truck from Frankston, to deliver the next day's supply of milk and take away the rinsed and stacked crates of empty bottles, which would be sterilised and re-filled at Arthur's.

## **BOOKING IN**

On top of all this, each milkman had to “book-in” which was a complex system of keeping track of who gets what each morning at each house all along the milkman’s route. This entailed the milkman completing an A3 size ledger with the customers’ names, the number of bottles or pints of milk and/or cream delivered, as well as indicating if the milk had been paid for if a cash customer (or not and then they would be invoiced). If they were account customers, then the milkman has to keep track on the ledger of how many bottles of milk or cream were delivered over a two-week period. Not so easy to keep the tally straight on the page in the dark as you are running from cart to house and back to cart again.

## **PASTEURISED MILK**

Every day for twenty-three years Arthur’s Dairy delivered a truckload of pasteurised milk and cream to Hanley’s Dairy. Upwards of 100 crates per day of bottled milk and about five crates of cream, mostly on Fridays and Saturdays, came from Arthurs’ Dairy, which was one of three certified retail suppliers to the South Gippsland Milk District and Hanley’s Dairy was the certified wholesale and retail supplier to the ‘Municipal District – Wonthaggi’ as was stipulated by the Victorian Milk Board Act 1958 Victoria.

## **BULK MILK**



Bulk milk rather than pasteurised milk was the preference of a small number of household customers. Unprocessed milk was the product of a dairy farmer’s daily milking of cows – Jerseys, with high cream content and Friesians, less so, but generous in quantity. Hilda and Clive Dobson’s dairy farm, close by on the corner of Cape Paterson Road and Honey’s Road, was where we collected the bulk milk. Each day, Chick and one of the milkos, arrived at Dobson’s, greeted by Hilda’s and Clive’s magnanimity, and drew from their vat enough to fill, about two or three 20-gallon milk cans. Back at the dairy, 10- and 2-gallon cans – easier to handle on the run during deliveries – were filled from the 20-gallon cans. Subsequently, a pint or half-pint of milk, or multiples thereof, was ladled into a customer’s empty billy, according to their order.

## **THE MILKMEN**

Donald Batten, Bob Main, Graeme Buck, Geoff Hoghton and sons – Geoff, Alan and Greg – at various times, Col Davidson, Gilly Dunstan, Kevin Cooper, Barry Dunstan, Alan Ennoss, Frank (Titch) Loughran, Stan Whitford (jnr), Peter Hill, John Poole, Rob Batten, Lawrence Fox, and Clive Dobson, were among the workers who stayed with Hanley’s the longest.

Chick was a bloke’s bloke, who guaranteed his men work, provided they could cope with the rigours of a typical day. His men were very adaptable considering all they had to do. The first thing Chick did when he hired a man was to explain what was needed and then he would allow them to learn, make mistakes and try again. The strength of his workforce, Peter reckons, was his expectation that once learnt, always remembered. New milkmen were taught skills, not by Chick but by the ‘old-hands.’ It was terrific to watch them understand. Chick placed great emphasis on ‘getting on with it’. Oh, it helped if you could play footy too. But that’s another topic.

The first man on the list of milkmen in Peter’s memory was Donald (Don/Duck) Batten, who worked for Chick for eleven years, starting as a 14-year-old in 1960. As Don told the story, he reckoned he was maybe thirteen-and-a-half when he saw a horse partially harnessed, bolting along Hagelthorn Street being chased by ‘some bloke’. “Well,” Peter remembers, “in Don’s version of the story, he catches the horse, backs it into the shafts, re-attaching the harness, girth strap, shaft chains and reins. Chick is mightily impressed and so begins an eleven-year job, which developed along the way into a very strong family friendship.”

It was Don who stayed on when the great credit squeeze in 1966 created financial hardship for the dairy. He chose to stay on without pay until the squeeze was released. 'I've got nothing else to do.' he said. He and Chick worked unpaid for a couple months and 'saw it out'. Don also remembers, after being informed by a concerned neighbour, seeing Terry, Peter's younger brother who must have been about four years old, leading a horse along the McKenzie St/Strickland St back lane in the early morning. Terry can't remember this; perhaps he was sleep-walking. Nevertheless, Don saved the little fellow and the horse.

### THE HORSES

The horses all had names: Lofty and Dolly (Titch Loughran told Peter they were named after Lofty and Dolly Hill), Nelly, Pandy's Demon, Dandy, Blacky, Ginger and King.

These beautiful beasts were as important to the success of the business as any aspect of the day-to-day operations. Paddy Loughnan, the horse whisperer, was always called upon to quieten a new horse, accompany it on its first few rounds of delivery and advise on corrective harnessing if needed. Titch Loughran's favourite was Lofty, a big bay mare. The horses had to be big and clever. The carts when fully laden were very heavy,



*Terry, Patricia and Marita with Dolly, a big and gentle Clydesdale – circa 1968.*

difficult to stop when descending an incline and hard to haul when ascending. Titch recalls Lofty's preference was to not stop when either walking up or down an incline (think the McBride Avenue intersection with Broome Crescent) but, if he had to stop, she would angle the shafts of the cart across the road creating an automatic brake: horse-sense.

Vic Benetti was the farrier. The forge, fuelled by coal of course, blowing the bellows enhanced by a Chick-adapted oxygen cylinder boggled the senses of onlookers as the glow of horseshoes reached very high temperatures. The clang of hammer on anvil rang as Vic found the desired shape. The smell was awful, when, to get a proper fit, the farrier placed the almost red-hot shoe on the horse's hoof wall, searing it. The forge, I think, came from the State-Coal Mine's stables, was installed, and made workable by Chick. Clever man, Chick.

### ACCOUNTS DAY

It wasn't all men who ran the show at Hanley's Dairy. It was the women who kept the accounts. Maureen Macdermid and Margaret Ennoss were employed at different times during the twenty-three years to 'do the accounts'. Accounts day was each alternate Thursday and involved using the daily book-in ledgers (see Booking-in,) to complete each customer's fortnightly invoice.

Maureen, remembers, "It was always good fun because Chick was happy all the time, Sadie, always kind and Nana O'Halloran was always there." Maureen's elder daughters, Joanne and Angela, as babies often came with her. Paul (Jock), her son looked up to Chick, perhaps because Chick never doubted Jock's ability to be a footballer, even though Jock's self-doubt was brought on because he looked upon his smallish stature as a downer. 'That little b...'ll be alright' says Chick to Maureen, after Paul kicks a goal in an underage game.

Starting mid-morning, after the day's entries in the book-in ledgers were made, Maureen or Margaret sat around the dining-room table, usually with Chick doing the same and Sadie keeping everyone well fed, each working with their allocated customer group. They would tally the fortnight's deliveries, calculate the associated cost sometimes using an electronic adding machine, enter the customer's name, data and amount owing onto a blank Hanley's Dairy invoice docket (approx. 4" X 6"), stamp the date with a self-inking device then finishing the account, writing their signature in a designated area on the docket. Chick always did the retail customers himself. He

would then counter sign every invoice with his flourished signature. He always took great pride in his neat handwriting. By mid-afternoon, after lunch on-the-go, with invoices completed and blank spare invoices, pens, adding machines, cups of tea partially empty, empty sandwich plates, now covering the table, you'd think it was done.

Not quite.

The next and last stage was to arrange the invoices into stacks according to rounds and order of delivery. So, for example Donald Batten's household customers' invoices would be arranged with the last customer's invoice on the bottom of the stack and his first customer on top. This made Don's work easy for him to take his next customer's invoice in his stack and place it next to their milk/cream bottles/billy and so on. The location of deliveries was often convenient for both customer and the milkmen, but not always. Remember, Don's working in the pre-dawn light, it could be raining with some invoices damp, his horse – Lofty his favourite - might be frisky, the battery on his cart may or may not have enough power to the lights on his cart. A challenge, of course.

There were other customers that needed invoices besides the households on the north and south sides of the railway line. These were retail customers: the hotels, milk bars, cafes, the Cape Kiosk, Sandy Point, South Dudley stores, and the Stortis at Hunter Street Dairy to name a few. There was no invoice for school milk that was delivered early in the morning and sat in the sun until it was nice and warm. Every kid had to drink it since it was provided by the government for free in small 1/3-pint bottles that left milk moustaches every day on every kid.

Maureen recalls Chick having a 'special thing for people, especially those who owed money but were doing it tough, who were in hard times. For example, he'd say, "forget that one" for a family, whose account was about \$10'. 'Forget that one' was a two-fold instruction; wipe the debt; and don't send the invoice. Honesty prevails. A debt of \$25 was paid by the widow of a hard-working miner years after Hanley's Dairy had finished trading, a small but significant example of the goodness and loyalty of a hard-working mining family.

### **LOYALTY AND UNDERSTANDING OF HARD WORK**

Peter explains how those values were bred into both his parents, Chick and Sadie:

"Noel Horace (Chick) Hanley and Sarah Theresa (Sadie) Hanley were born and bred in the Wonthaggi area.

"Sadie, who will turn 100 on Christmas day 2023 is still living at home in north Wonthaggi. She grew up on a dairy farm in Lance Creek, attended Wonthaggi Tech school and went to work as a receptionist at the GPO in Melbourne for about two years (1947-1948) before returning to the farm at Lance Creek to live with her mother, Mrs Sarah O'Halloran (nee McDonald). Her father, Synan O'Halloran, had died in 1944. She met dad at the Wonthaggi Fire Brigade Saturday night dance, was courted by him and they married on June 11, 1949 in St Joseph's Catholic Church, Wonthaggi.

"Mum and Dad, and Nana O'Halloran moved to Hunter St Wonthaggi in early 1950's.

"Dad was working as a fitter and turner in the workshops at the State Coal Mine after WWII. He had served with the AIF in Darwin as a fitter and turner, but he chose not to disclose much of his time in the AIF, other than that he played in the AIF football team in inter-service games. He later played for Williamstown before returning to Wonthaggi, playing variously with Dalyston, Wonthaggi Rovers and coaching Wonthaggi Blues 2nds.

"I would suggest that mum was a devoted mother and wife, with an innate sense of order and community. Dad's venture into private business, I reckon, was based on providing for his growing family. Dad's father, my grandfather, Horace Earle Hanley (1893-1940) was a carpenter venturing into house removal, transporting on horse and dray miners' cottages from Outtrim to Wonthaggi. (I think he came from Ballarat, but not sure).

"Horace married Ania Wilkinson in 1918, settling in Broome Crescent. He is a descendent of Tapua, a noted Chieftan of the Ngaphi (Maori) tribe whose son, Eruera Maihi Patuone – Patuone

for short – was a signatory to the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand’s founding document. It takes its name from the place in the Bay of Islands where it was first signed, on 6 February 1840.”

### A GRANDDAUGHTER’S TRIBUTE TO HER PA:



When she was in Year 12, Chick’s granddaughter, Jane, wrote a beautiful long essay about her grandfather, which reveals how much she admired and loved the man. Here is a small part of it: “Pa always said of (Sadie) that she was ‘As beautiful as a buttercup and lovely as a rose,’ and then he would look around to whoever was near and wink and smile, “Oh, I know she loves me so much even though I know about all her boyfriends.’

“I have so many images of my Pa,’ writes Jane, “He would catch fish, play golf, go to football, be youngish... Any picture of Pa would not be complete without reference to his shed, his haven, his sanctuary. It is cluttered with useless junk: empty spray cans, broken nails, hopelessly small pieces of rope, chairs with no backs, tables with no legs, tennis racquets with no strings and an endless queue of aging lawn mowers... A large wooden sign hangs from the roof of his shed. It sits next to a stuffed cobra attacking a stuffed mongoose, The sign simply says O. G. G. M. S. T. K. M.

B. B. M. S., which in Pa’s terms stands for, “Oh, God, give me strength to keep my bloody big mouth shut.

“When I was young, I used to sit for what seemed like hours at Pa’s feet and be amazed at his endless well of yarns and jokes overflowing with enthusiasm and hilarity. Of course, each one happened to him or a friend, ‘poor old Clancy’, or ‘I used to know this Irishman,’ or ‘I used to know this Scotsman,’ or ‘there is this mate of mine...’

“He was always thinking of ways to improve things. At golf with my father one Saturday, he was nibbling on fruit during a break between the sixth and seventh holes, and one of his mates jokingly commented on Pa’s mobile junk [golf] buggy, ‘Jeez, Chick, all we need is a barbecue on that and we’d be set.’

“Well, one guess as to where the smell of barbecuing sausages was coming from the next week in the middle of the fairway.”

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Compiled & edited from Peter Hanley’s *15-Minute Talk* and subsequent correspondence by C.R. Landon

Photo of horse & cart from Google