

Stories from the Shed: *Goondiwindi – a place of interesting characters and enjoyable times*

Kevin Schneidewin (2020)

- **Story-teller's** cultural background: **Australian**
- **Categories:** Rural/Urban, Life-style
- Kevin paints a great picture of his early working life in rural Goondiwindi. He describes the characters and relationships of the community in a humorous and direct way that also reveals some insights into the way smaller communities function.

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Goondiwindi – a Place of Interesting Characters and Enjoyable Times

Kevin Schneidewin

I was working in Insurance. In October 1966, my fiancé, Glenice, and I were married and lived in the town of Goodiwindi in south-western Queensland by the border with New South Wales. We moved into a new flat which was situated next to the *RSL club*.

Fortunately, the back door of the flat was in line with a window so that you looked into the *RSL club* pool room. This meant I could come home from work, go to the pool room and have a few beers and a game before Glenice, who was cooking dinner, could call out through the window, "*Come home for dinner!*" so I would crawl out of the window and into the flat and '*Bob's-your-uncle*'.

After a few days at Goondiwindi, Glenice was getting a bit bored because she didn't have any job at that stage. I decided to introduce her to country life and took her out to the cattle saleyards on the edge of town. When we approached the fence for the yard there was a guy sitting on top. His name was Bob Hawker and he had an issue he couldn't remember names so he called everyone "*Shagger*" he became known as Bob 'Shagger' Hawker. As we approached he said to me from the top of the fence, "*G'day shagger, you're back in town!*" I responded, "*Yes.*" He then said, "*I suppose this is the new Mrs Shagger is it?*" I again replied, "*Yes, this is Glenice.*" She was horrified, but over the years she got used to him and his sayings and we became good friends.

Bob used to have a property on the edge of town where he had *Black Angus* cattle. He decided to buy three *Brangus* bulls, that's *Brahman Angus Cross*, to add some size to his herd. Subsequently, he decided to go with the *Primaries* manager to Dalby to buy them at sale. I was invited along to insure the bulls. This turned out to be an absolutely amazing trip! These were the two of the funniest guys I've ever met in my life.

When we got to the yards and we looked at the bulls he wanted, the beasts were trying to crawl over the fence like dogs and the fence was eight feet high. These cattle weighed at least a ton each! I was a bit worried about insuring these things. Sure enough, when he got them home and put them out in the house paddock, they promptly disappeared and he rang me to tell me. I thought, "*Jesus! \$10,000 worth of bull claim coming up anytime soon,*" but shortly after he was getting phone calls from all of his neighbours telling him to "*Get these big black mongrel bulls out of my cows or I'll shoot 'em!*", so we got them all back. He had to put them in a special yard, but I assume he got his money's worth in the end.

Shagger also had a flock of sheep, and I had mentioned to him at one stage that I had not seen '*lamb-marking*' in the old style. Lamb-marking is the act of cutting the testicles off young *rams* to make them into *weathers* so they produce better wool. In these modern

times one puts a rubber band around the testicle sack and they just drop off after a while, but in the old times they had a knife and they put the ram into a cradle to restrain them, grabbed hold of the bag, split it open, the testes would pop out, and the handlers grabbed the testes into their mouth and pull them off and then spat them out. Hard to believe, but there were people who specialised in that. I'll never forget the sight of this old guy with knife in hand, blood all over his face and prickles in his lips, doing hundreds of these operations.

Bob 'Shagger' Hawker was a member of my *Lions Club* and one evening he helped me with a problem. Like everyone else in Goondiwindi, I parked my work car with the windows down and keys in the ignition. While I was at a Lions meeting, my wife drove down-town to get some pills from the chemist and saw three lads sitting on my car. She thought they were a bit cheeky. Anyway, it appears that they decided to steal the car and drove off, heading for Brisbane. On the way out of town, the fire engine, police car and ambulance went roaring past, sirens going, because there was a fire at the motel on the edge of town.

At this stage the young lads realised there wasn't much petrol in the car and there was too much happening up the road, so they turned around and dumped my car in town.

Some hours later police pulled them up because they look suspicious and asked, "*Did you pinch a car?*" and they answered, "*Yes.*" I think I got policeman at my front door at three o'clock in the morning saying, "*We found your car.*" I'm sure they did it to get square because of past experiences I had with them.

I then had to, with great trepidation, ring the boss in Toowoomba to tell him that car had been stolen but I had recovered it and there was no damage. When I rang, he wasn't there, thank goodness, so they put me onto an old Rep. who was the second-in-charge and I told him the story. He laughed, "*Don't worry about it, I'll tell the boss.*" I never heard another word. I expected to 'cop-a-blast' but I never heard anything more, so I assume my dear old mate decided it was safer for me for the boss not to know.

Ah, the joys of the old days, where people were characters, called a 'spade-a-spade', made judgements about what was important enough to follow up, looked out for each other, and didn't always look to covering their own butt over anyone else. Perhaps that's a pipedream, but it seemed to work in many instances.

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