



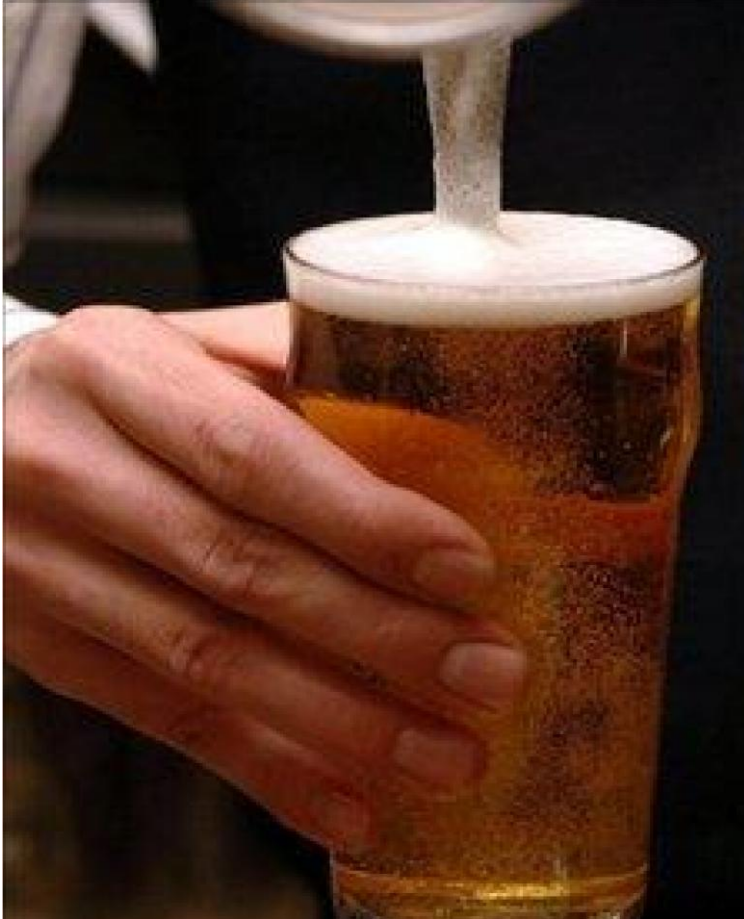
## **.... of a Hotelier**

*The good, the bad and the ugly*

**John David Mead**

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"Ahh, nothing like  
A good draft beer"



***A nostalgic look at the memories of a liquor  
industry licensee for over 30 years, from  
the mid - 1960s to the late 1990s.***

**These memories, and stories, are primarily from my time running 3 hotels in the mid 1970s, late 1980s and early 1990s.:**

**1976-1977**

Royal Hotel, Carcoar	Licensee
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**1987-1990**

Nelson Hotel, Bondi Junction	Manager
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**1990-1995**

Cauliflower Hotel, Waterloo	Licensee
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**I also managed the following licensed premises:**

**1968-1970**

Weinkeller Restaurant, Sydney	Licensee
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**1970-1972**

Weingarten Restaurant, North Sydney	Licensee
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**1978-1984**

Weinkeller Restaurant, Sydney	Licensee
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**1984- 1985**

Traditions Restaurant, Orange NSW	Licensee
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**And then in the late 1990's, we entered the early era of RSA.**

**Yes, Responsible Service of Alcohol.**

*"Could a very irresponsible server of alcohol, as we would call him today, convert to teaching the virtues of responsible service of alcohol?"*

**Indeed YES, I did.**

## Preface

As I reflect back over these pages and many, many stories, I realise I have celebrated 3 birthdays (76, 77 & 78) whilst writing this book.

Sadly too, I realise that I have lost many old friends over the years, either because of their passing away, or they are now in care.

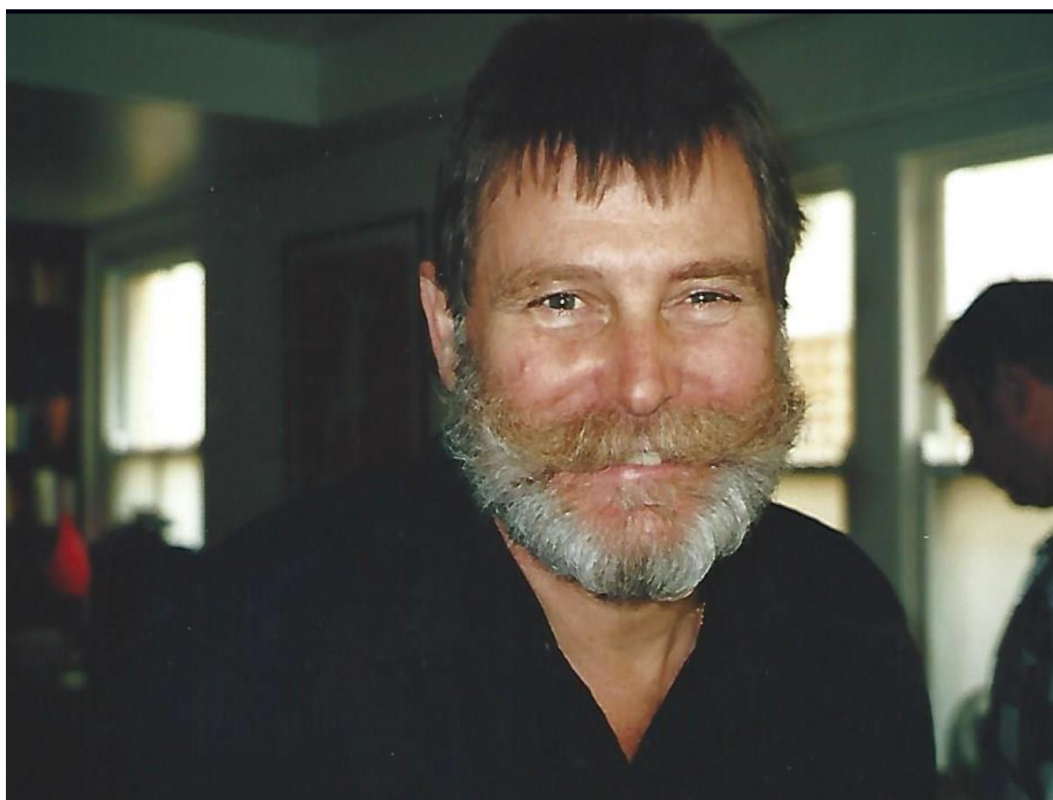
Then in August 2024 I was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer, so I shall ***“pull my finger out”*** and get on and finish this reminiscing, before my memories start fading away, or worse.....

## To quote



(An American black comedy crime drama television series)

***“At the request of the survivors, the names have been changed out of respect for the dead. The rest has been told exactly as it occurred, or as I recall!!”***



**In the late 1990's**

## **Chapters**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1 The Dream</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 But before all that</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 A brief history of Carcoar</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4 The Royal Hotel, Carcoar</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5 Between 1977 and 1987</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6 The Nelson Hotel, Bondi Junction</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>7 The Cauliflower Hotel, Waterloo</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>7 The RSA Era</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>8 The end</b>	<b>52</b>

# 1 The Dream

No doubt many people have a dream of owning a pub. Maybe even a licensed hotel in a country area of Australia.

They might picture the rolling hills filled with sheep or cattle, or both, with sulphur crested cockatoos shrieking on the wing, with their kids in the local primary school, enjoying all that a country area offers. Things like growing their own vegetables, probably a few fruit trees, a couple of dogs, chooks roaming the garden, fresh eggs every day, with horses ready to ride in the back paddock.

I had all that in 1976. My kids did go to the beautiful little primary school, just 100m from the pub front door, and we enjoyed socialising with the local families. This was in the historic little NSW country town of Carcoar; 4 hours' drive west of Sydney over the Blue Mountains and equidistant from Bathurst, Orange & Cowra. I was living the "Dream" as the licensee of the Royal Hotel, Carcoar. And it was fun, but bloody hard work.

***"Can you believe that back then, in 1976, draft beer prices at the Royal Hotel in Carcoar were:"***

<b>Middy</b>	<b>36c</b>
<b>Schooner</b>	<b>48c</b>

In 1976 the local area enjoyed full employment, with jobs on the main roads, local council, the nearby abattoir in Blayney and on the numerous farms in the area. Plus, there were local sheep shearers who worked throughout NSW, and into Victoria. The pub was busy; a few regulars from 10am opening, quite a few more during the lunch couple of hours, then busy from 3pm onwards and through until 10pm closing. Saturday was the busiest trading day when lots of interesting things happening. We were closed on Sundays. But more of that a little later.

## 2 But before all that

Although I did not realise it at the time, the years of learning preceded all that.

I wish I had learnt more. However, I obviously learnt some things, especially from my father, who was an accountant who worked all through the Great Depression of the early 1930s and worked his way up through the corporate ranks to become the Managing Director of a publicly listed company, a major Australian winemaker, and exporter. Then in 1961, my Mum & Dad gave all that up when taking the gamble to start their own business, the Weinkeller Restaurant. Initially established at 37 Pitt Street, and “**over the old tank stream**”, down near Circular Quay, in the basement of Latec House, in the CBD of Sydney. It operated there between 1961 and 1967, before relocating to 72 Pitt Street.

The Weinkeller Restaurant primarily catered to the business world, and the staff of the many businesses in the area. These included banking, insurance, stockbrokers, and the multitude supporting the business world. Ted, my Dad, maintained a strong network of connections, who in turn supported the “new restaurant”, considered quite innovative at the time. And it was a huge success. During this time, I completed school, worked part-time in the restaurant, whilst I worked full time for an insurance broker for the next few years, before commencing full time with my parents in the Weinkeller. Over the next couple of years, I did learn a lot and certainly should have listened to my father a lot more, but as they say, and now as an older man, I totally understand, young people don’t always listen!!! As the saying goes; “**you can’t put an old head on young shoulders**”, sadly.

As a teenager I played hard, met and fell in love with Wendy, we were “**childhood sweethearts**”, and we married in 1966, just before my 20th birthday to avoid the “Vietnam Draft”. We had decided that we were too young to “settle down” so we embarked on a “**fact finding**” mission overseas, and that London needed our attention. So, in August of 1966 we departed on the “Fairstar” for a 6-week party, before arriving in London.

We both worked for 6 months; Wendy worked as an office clerk for the British Museum, and with the girlfriend of a band member of a new rock n roll group, who we often went to watch on weekend playing gigs in various pubs. Rick Wright played keyboards for a group who a couple of years later would be quite famous; **Pink Floyd**. When their various albums were released years later, we recognised many of the tracks in development in the pubs we visited. Wow, thinking back, that was an amazing experience, and almost 60 years later, in 2025, is still very vivid.

I worked several jobs in hospitality, including as a barman in a London pub, then as a waiter in a reasonably upmarket restaurant, and finally as a cashier in a “Gentleman’s Nightclub”. WOW, did that open my eyes to the “wicked” ways of the world!!! Women, not all young, but all very attractive, “drop dead gorgeous” in fact, worked as “Hostesses”, entertaining the members. The “girls” only drank expensive French Champagne, and were charged out to entertain their allocated, or chosen Gentleman, on an hourly rate, whilst in the club. If they came to further forms of entertainment later, that was “OK”. Of course I was eyes wide open at this activity, and of course the girls had absolutely no interest in a young Australian, so I watched with interest during my shift from 9pm to 5am. I can still recall driving home, after 5am, to Willesden Green, in pitch dark, in awe of the money being spent.



Then early in 1967 Europe beckoned and an old Bedford camper van, a “Dormobile”, was transport and home for the next 5 months. We arrived in Calais with a map of Europe, and a wish to visit Paris. We arrived in Paris a week or so after arriving in France, and spent a week in a wonderful camping ground, with easy access to public transport into Paris. We then slowly travelled, zig zagging through France, then down through Spain to Madrid where we witnessed our first and only Bullfight. I’ll say no more than it was a very gruesome, hugely popular public spectacle. We then travelled across to the coast down through the gorgeous Costa del Sol, staying in a variety of camping grounds, some good and some not so good, and eventually arrived in Portugal, and onto Lisbon, where we stayed in a virtual 5-star camping camp. Clean toilets. Plenty of free hot water. Good cooking facilities.

We also discovered the Lisbon Markets, and would you believe, we bought a cat. Yes, a gorgeous kitten, probably no more than 6 to 8 weeks old, with a definite Siamese look about her, with a very short and bent tail. What were we thinking!!!! We named her Moushka. Why?? I don’t recall, but she travelled with us for the next few months in the Dormobile, and then we sent to Australia by standard Quarantine methods. She survived the trip, then years later the arrival of 2 kids, a Great Dane, a Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, and the Royal Hotel in Carcoar. But more on all that a bit later.

After Lisbon we travelled north and up to San Sebastian, then across to Monaco for the Formula 1 Grand Prix, where Australian Jack Brabham was the current World Formula 1 Champion. The race was won by Brabham’s teammate, New Zealander Denny Hulme, in a Brabham Tauranac, designed by Brabham. The whole 5 days we spent in an amazing camp, just out of Monaco, and I/we hitchhiked into Monaco each day, which in itself was a wonderful experience. Then we drove down through Italy, and eventually did a U-turn, and headed up north via Switzerland, Austria, Germany and back to London. A wonderful 5 months adventure.

We flew home via Tehran and Hong Kong, arriving in July 1967, just before my 21st birthday. Moushka arrived by ship, quarantined for 3 months, before joining us, and ready for more adventures.

The Weinkeller Restaurant had relocated while we were overseas from 37 Pitt Street up town to 72 Pitt Street, just near Hunter Street. The lease at 37 Pitt Street was due to expire, and the owners advised my parents of their wish to do a knock down and rebuild. So, my dad spent many, many months walking the streets of Sydney, working with various Real Estate agents, and checking out possible sites. He eventually decided on relocating to the basements of 2 buildings; 72 & 74 Pitt Street, with the entrance being stairs down from No 72 Pitt Street. Plans and council approvals followed, with major refurbishment works in an attempt to replicate the original Weinkeller. And they did a bloody good job, with excellent advertising and marketing, that ensured they reopened to much fanfare, and their business returned to full swing.

For me, after my return, work in the restaurant continued, with my parents gradually reducing their workload, and travelling more.

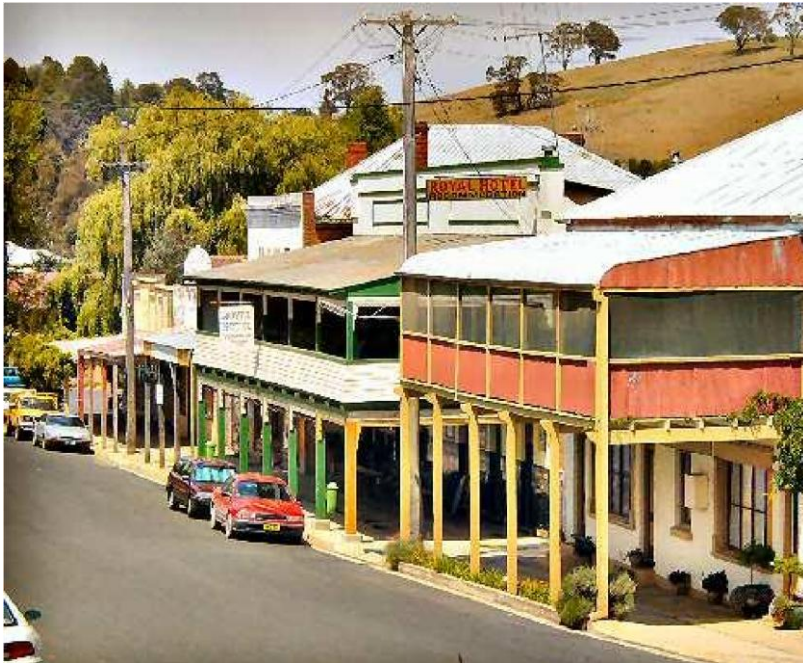
My first two children arrived in 1968 (Christopher) & 1970 (Joanna) before the “Dream” became a reality. We had travelled all over NSW looking at country hotels; including Forbes, Wangi Wangi, Kew, Murrurundi, Gilgandra, and quite a few more I have now forgotten, before we decided on the Royal Hotel in Carcoar.

I completed a number of training courses; cellar operations and bar service at the old East Sydney Technical College, now TAFE East Sydney, and met a great teacher who had been a policeman, then a hotelier, before becoming a teacher. He was wonderful and was very practical in his advice and teaching. That thought obviously stayed with me as after selling my last hotel, the Cauliflower Hotel, I became a teacher at TAFE East Sydney.

To learn more about hotel operations I worked in the old Brooklyn Hotel, in George Street in Sydney for a couple of months to gain some practical experience, which was invaluable. The Brooklyn had been bought by 2 men, a couple of stockbrokers, who I am led to believe, were told to leave the stock market for a while, due to some indiscretions. They felt they could keep in touch with their old colleagues, and clients by running a pub, especially one in the city. The Brooklyn operated until 2010, when it became part of the Morrison Hotel, which was developed on the adjoining site, the former Johnson Overall Building on the corner of Grosvenor & George Street.

### 3 A brief history of Carcoar

Carcoar is in the Blayney Shire of the Central West of NSW.



**Belubula Street, Carcoar's main street**

The village of Carcoar was gazetted in 1839. By the mid 1850s Carcoar had a population of more than 300 and was the largest inland settlement, west of the Blue Mountains, after Bathurst. It was often referred to as the mother town of the Lachlan Valley. The gold rushes of the 1850's caused Carcoar's growth to continue with a variety of industries thriving, living off gold rush fever; a number of hotels, churches, retail shops of every description, several butchers, blacksmiths, a flour mill, saddlers, plus many, many banks, a Court House, a doctor and a hospital. And to add to its history, was the site of Australia's first attempted bank robbery by members of Ben Hall's gang of bushrangers.

Peter Ledger, a well-known Australian artist in the early 1970's, was Wendy's 1<sup>st</sup> cousin. Peter, his wife Angela, and their young family had purchased the Old Rectory, and moved to Carcoar a few years previously. The Old Rectory was once part of St Paul's Anglican Church. The Rectory was in desperate need of renovating, and Peter's Mum & Dad, Ilma & Jack, who were Wendy's Uncle & Aunt, moved soon after Peter & Angela, to live with their son and his family, and to help renovate the huge 3 level home. So, we had relatives in town.

Peter, although rarely coming into the hotel during normal trading hours, often came in our only day off, Sunday, and played pool AND often spent hours on chalk signs, and caricatures of local characters. One beauty was of "Digger" Byrne; it was of a "Stop & slow" sign, with a

huge “diggers” hat. When Digger saw the sign, after work on a Monday he was overwhelmed, and so proud. He flatly refused to allow the sign to be removed for what seemed like months. By the time it was replaced with another, it had deteriorated, losing its colour and clarity. Peter did another one, but there was never one like the first one.

In 1976 Carcoar had a population of 365, but sadly, 40 years later, by 2016, the population had reduced to 200 people, primarily due to the lack of jobs, so the young people moved away. Carcoar is situated just off the Mid-Western Highway 258 km west of Sydney and 52 km south-west of Bathurst and is 720 m above sea level. It is located in a small green valley, with the township and buildings on both banks of the Belubula River. It is the third oldest settlement west of the Blue Mountains. Carcoar is a Gundungurra word meaning either *frog* or *kookaburra*. Nearby towns are Blayney, Millthorpe, Mandurama, Neville, Lyndhurst and Barry.

It was once one of the most important government centres in Western New South Wales. The town has been classified by the National Trust due to the number of intact 19th-century buildings, with a significant amount of cultural materials relating to 19th century Australian life.

St Paul's Anglican Church is one of the oldest churches in the state, with graves dating back to the early 1800s.

## The Royal Hotel Carcoar (1976 & 1977)



This historic hotel is steeped in old world charm and nestled in the quaint main Street, Belubula Street, of Carcoar.

The current building was built in 1941 and is the third hotel by this name to stand on the site. The first was built in 1849, and it's interesting to consider that my last hotel, the Cauliflower Hotel, in Waterloo in Sydney, was actually built earlier, in 1838.

The original Royal Hotel, Carcoar was demolished in the 1920's so the second Royal Hotel could be built, but that was destroyed by fire in 1941, making way for the current building to be built.

## The Reality

When I officially became licensee, after a very brief appearance before a Magistrate at the Courthouse in Bathurst on a Monday morning in March 1976, we had our work cut out. I remember arriving back in Carcoar about 11am with our furniture truck, and 3 men patiently waiting, with the outgoing licensee and his wife ready to drive away, just waiting for a phone call from his lawyer to advise “**all payments received**”. They had already done a stocktake, which we checked and were satisfied, and got the cellar ready, with beer in the lines, which I was very grateful. The pub had not yet opened for the day, and I recall following the lawyers phone call, the outgoing licensee shock hands, wished me good luck, jumped in his car and drove away to much cheering from the dozen or so locals waiting for their first beer of the day.

We had moved from Sydney with our 2 young children, Chris then aged 8 and Joanna 6, Moushka, the Siamese cat we bought in the Lisbon Markets in 1967, Tara, a great Dane dog, and Bob, our Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, plus a household full of furniture. To put it mildly, the locals were amazed.....we were “**City slickers**”.

Being a city boy now in the country, running a pub to 100% locals, certainly required some adjustments.

Firstly, I had to get used to the trading hours; basically Monday to Saturday 10am to 10pm. Closed on Sundays. We had decided prior to taking over that from day 1 we would clean the floors, and wipe all surfaces down thoroughly every night. I also “did the till” every night and locked the takings away in a small safe.

Over the first few months we settled into our routines, and re-employed a young local man, Joe, to work each afternoon when it was busy, and when I went for a meal break. Joe was a young family man and well liked, and trusted, by all locals.

Hard work, and acclimatising to living in the country, and being very customer service focused, it did not take long to win most over to the new publican. Having a young family obviously helped, and for the kids especially, they loved it too. One of their daily chores included collecting eggs in the morning, before the 100m walk to school.

## Profound comment

A comment early in my time in Carcoar still remains with me;

***“Publicans come and go, but the townspeople remain”.***

When you think about that comment, it puts everything into perspective.

Having just bought a business and moved into the accommodation with my family is very important to you. However, from the perspective of the townspeople, you are simply providing a service to them. How good that service is depends on the ability of you, the new licensee. Their support of you, and in turn the business, will effectively make or break you

That comment certainly made me think, and consider carefully the full implications of my new reality. My abilities would determine the success of the business, and our happiness in Carcoar. So I asked myself, what were the Carcoar townspeople wanting? What were the basics?

1. Opening when advertised
2. Providing good and friendly service
3. Clean premises
4. Good draught beer
5. Fair prices

Beyond that was the ability to provide additional services, or entertainment, to attract them, or more of them on a regular basis. I knew we had 365 residents in Carcoar, plus another couple of hundred in the surrounding villages and farms. So from that comment I firstly had to get the 5 basics right.

Point No 1 was easy...open the doors at the appropriate times.

Point No 2 was easy too. Coming from a service background, a restaurant, good and friendly service was not an issue.

Point No 3 was a daily challenge, that with diligence was very achievable.

Point No 4 would be a challenge, but with the skills learnt from the courses I undertook, plus the practical lessons learnt at the Brooklyn Hotel, it was achievable. Point No 5 would be a combination of joining the local branch of the Australian Hotels Association (AHA), talking to my competitors at their meetings, and keeping my eye on the wholesale prices.

### **In 1976 Day to day**

With the hotel opening each day at 10am, there was quite a deal of preparation work to achieve that target. I generally allowed an hour. But on delivery days I had to be ready from 7.30am. First up was down into the cellar and get the beer ready for those first drinkers. That included connecting each draught beer, flushing the water through each of the beer lines, turning the temprite on, and "pulling" the first beers through the lines. With that done it was a matter of getting the bar ready for service; heater on in winter, bar stools down from on top of the bar counter, clean bar runners on top of the bar, prepare some garnish (mainly lemons cut up), float checked and into the cash register, lights on, kettle on for my cup of coffee, and unlock the doors.

### **Old style 18 gallon beer kegs**

Yes, back in 1976 we had the old style 18 gallon beer kegs, which required the old style coupler screwed into the keg, and then a "spear" to be quickly inserted to "tap" the keg. I think the Tooheys kegs had the "bung" on the side, photo below to the left, which required the keg to be laid down on its side, and using several wooden chooks to secure them. Whereas the CUB (Carlton & United Brewery) kegs, photos below to the right, stood on the end with the bung on the top. For those who have never "tapped", or "speared" one of the

old style kegs, it was quite a skill, an artform, and needed a great deal of care, and hand strength, to avoid the spear from being launched into the ceiling of the cellar. The skill was in wetting the spear first, then carefully inserting the spear in the coupler, checking for tightness, and doing the old 1, 2, 3 test of lightly tapping the rubber seal inside the keg, before thrusting the spear down through the rubber seal, and into the keg. One trap for the unwary was in being a bit too “gung ho” and thrusting the spear down too fast and hard, and having the rubber seal firmly stuck on the end of the spear. If that happened, you would end up wasting a couple of gallons of beer. Obviously not ideal.

**Old style 18 gallon keg, with a side bung.**



**Modern 50l beer keg**





### **Delivery days**

Early on in my time in Carcoar, all beer, packaged and draft, arrived by train to Blayney. We had a local carter who picked up our order and delivered it out to Carcoar. The trap door was opened, a large timber plank was passed up to the carter, together with a large rope with hooks to secure safe delivery of the kegs down into the cellar.

During my time in Carcoar both major breweries ceased delivery by rail and all stock arrived by truck into the carters premises in Blayney, who he would deliver it to Carcoar. I had to allow up to 1 hour to take delivery, hand up the empty kegs, and place the new stock in the cellar.

### **Cellar**

The cellar was under the public bar. It was accessible via a cupboard under the bar counter, and down a fixed timber ladder. Beer kegs, cartons, etc were lowered from a metal trap in the footpath, and slid down a timber plank, stored in the cellar. It was unlocked from the cellar.

The cellar was a reasonable size, with concrete floor, but the ceiling height was around 1.7m, so working down there was very awkward. There was no sink, or running water, and we used buckets to bring water down, and to lift waste water up. Beer dispensing equipment was handed up to the bar for cleaning.

I planned some improvements to the cellar, as the hygiene was very poor. A thorough clean occurred over the first couple of Sundays; the walls and cellar floor ended in it looking much cleaner.

I then engaged a couple of local tradies; an electrician to install a number of powerpoints, and better lights, and a plumber to install hot and cold water, and 2 sinks, one for keg spears, and we used an old washing machine pump to pump water up to the sinks under the bar.

I gave it all a fresh coat of paint, plus a good floor paint, and after 4-5 weeks I was satisfied that we were compliant.

### **No kitchen upstairs**

One of the ongoing issues we had to deal with when we moved in was that there was no kitchen upstairs. We did however buy a small fridge for the lounge room to store milk for tea or coffee, but decided that we would not keep any food, such as breakfast cereals upstairs, and we would eat all meals downstairs. Fortunately there was a large kitchen downstairs with a huge slow combustion stove, perfect for the cold months, but a bit hot during the warmer months. There was a large table in the middle of the kitchen, perfect for family meals. Access for all of us was via the main stairs, which was private, and secure, during the hours the hotel was closed.

The slow combustion stove was a marvellous device, and in the colder months, basically from early April through till mid September, able to be fully loaded up last thing at night and banked down low, and still warm in the morning.

Moushka, the cat, and Tara, our Great Dane, had their beds in the kitchen, and loved the heat of the stove during winter.

The slow combustion stove did require some cleaning, which was my first job each day. Basically it was a thorough clean out of the debris, soot and ash, then add some newspaper, quite a few pieces of kindling, with heavier sticks to get the fire started, then once it was well and truly burning, to keep feeding enough timber throughout the rest of the day and night.

### **Connie (our housekeeper)**

Quiet early in our time in Carcoar, through Wendy's Aunt Ilma, we were introduced to Connie, a lovely local older lady, who was keen to help with our children, Chris & Jo, with meals, and bedtime, if Wendy was busy in the bar. And Connie was great. She arrived 5 school days each week around 5pm, cooked an evening meal for us all, fed the kids, helped with their homework, got them bathed and ready for bed. She left around 7.30pm, going home to a meal with her husband Harry.

### **Family**

The Royal Hotel in Carcoar was like so many small hospitality businesses, whether a pub, a cafe, or a coffee shop, in that our regular customers became like our family. In effect it was the regular customers lounge room. It was where they socialised, did business, organised social activities, even eat meals and of course enjoyed drinking with their mates. The ones who spent more time in the venue were mostly single, and relied on the venue as their social hub. We were often surprised that many regulars were in fact married, but preferred to spend more time in the pub than at home. I often wondered why that was, and concluded that we provided a friendly and welcoming atmosphere without criticising the person in any way.

### **Cricket**

As a kid I played a lot of cricket. Our backyard in our Pymble home was perfect for "Test matches" with my brother Tony, and with our neighbours children. During my school years I was a fast bowler and opened the bowling for the schools 1st Eleven. I always thought I was an unlucky batsman, and batting down the order probably didn't help.

Some 10 years later in Carcoar, the subject of cricket arose one day and before long a group of young men had committed to resurrect the Carcoar Cricket team. We had a number of practice sessions on the local sports ground, near the railway station, before we put our application into the Orange District Cricket Association. It was during this early season period that I got chatting to one of the officials of the Carcoar Showground in the pub one day. He suggested the cricket team, with the backing of the publican, me, apply to the local Council, Blayney, for a grant to build an all weather cricket pitch on the Carcoar Showground. And would you believe, it was granted very quickly. Obviously there was some unallocated funding which was immediately put to good use to build our cricket pitch in what seemed record time. Some midway through that cricket season we had the pleasure of a "photo opportunity" with the Local Mayor when he officially opened the new cricket pitch. Not only did the team have their photos taken as the Mayor "cut the ribbon", which was in the local papers, but I topped score with 79 runs. Needless to say I rostered myself off the bar that evening as I was very thirsty, and needed to celebrate my top score, and our victory. We were not what could be called a successful team, but we enjoyed the cricket, our comradery, and our drinks after the days cricket.

Years later, when at the Cauliflower Hotel, I once again resurrected my cricket career, joining a group of older men, more for the socialising than for our cricketing abilities.

### **Horses**

Having 2 acres behind the pub that was not used in any way, we decided to make enquiries about buying a couple of horses for trail rides. A couple of locals offered horses for sale and we selected 2 which were duly delivered, and we used regularly over the next year or so. We had to buy saddles, which were supplied by the owners of the horses. They did require some grooming which proved good for all involved. They lived happily in the paddock behind the hotel which had lots of good grass.

### **Goats**

We had around 1/2 an acre immediately behind the pub and rather than buy a mower, or engage a local to regularly mow it, we bought 2 female goats to keep the grass down. They had collars and we tethered them with long chains, attached to steel posts, and they did a great job. Both were pregnant, and some months later Chris & Jo were thrilled when they gave birth to gorgeous little kids.

## **Some of the Characters**

### **“Digger”;**

Every pub has a Digger, although by the time we got there, he was a grey haired old man. But he was a delightful old man, who still worked for the local council on road repairs. He held the **“Stop & Slow”** sign, a **“very important job”** he insisted. Digger was dropped off every working day around 4pm, and enjoyed drinking **“7”**s of beer. Digger reckoned you never got drunk drinking **“7s”**. Well that may well have been right during the week, but on Saturdays Digger proved that theory wrong. Digger was always the first in when I opened at 10am (**“opening time”**) and would try to drink till closing time; 10pm. However, by about 3pm/4pm/maybe even 5pm, Digger was becoming noisy, and annoying most in the bar. So, I would refuse him more beer and send him home. He was always so crestfallen, but wandered home. More often than not, Digger would return a few hours later, freshly showered and shaved, dressed in his **“Sunday best”**, with the biggest smile, and how could I refuse him.

## **The Headmaster**

John Clegg was the local primary school Principal. He was a delightful young family man, who not only was a great schoolteacher, but became quite the social “mover”, innovator and organiser of Carcoar, with plays and movies to his credit.

Whilst researching for this book, I was lucky enough to make contact with John. These are his words about his time in Carcoar:

*“I was delighted to be appointed Principal of Carcoar School in 1976. My wife, Lorelle, and I were seeking a country location and we could not have found a better place. Carcoar is the most beautiful village and the people were generous, friendly and the salt of the earth.*

*As a keen photographer already, I took the opportunity to film the many historic buildings and the charming countryside. I eventually produced a book of my favourite photos and a DVD of the village scenes.*

*I used to go to the pub on a Friday evening and play quoits and darts with the locals. I came to this town as the teacher but I learned much more from the people - there was drought for four of the five years we were there. The Blayney abattoir, which employed many of the townsfolk, would be temporarily closed on occasions putting the people out of work. Yet the people were accepting of their lot and generous to a fault. The children at the school were a credit to their parents and always respectful of their teachers. We enjoyed the village life, the special occasions and the beautiful changes with the seasons.*

*I often think of those days and I am still in touch with some of the parents and children I worked with. I rate my years at Carcoar as some of the most rewarding in my life.”*

**Sound of Music; “the movie”; Directed by The Headmaster, John Clegg; See details in a later section**

## **The SP bookie**

Short price, or SP bookies, have always been illegal.

Especially operating on a licensed premises. However Carcoar, and the Royal Hotel, were lucky in having a very active SP bookie, who operated out of a domestic premises a few doors from the hotel. I became aware of who it was very early on, but it was never discussed with him when he came in for a drink. Saturdays were of course his busiest day of the week. He had several young boys, maybe 8-10 years of age, who were his “runners”. They would “loiter” around the hotel waiting for the punters to give them instructions, and cash to place their bet. And they were busy all afternoon, with rewards for a successful outcome.

## **The shearer’s**

Although there were a few local shearers, who did follow the “circuit”, once a year the town would be inundated with up to 30 to 40 shearers from out of town. They would all be staying in the “Shearers Sheds” on the properties whose sheep they would be contracted to shear, but they were a “thirsty lot” and bought in great business over the 2-3 weeks they were “locals”. They were mostly a peaceful group of men, but men being men, and being very competitive, there were often disagreements, and a resulting fight or 2. But they policed themselves, or the local shearers would sort out the problems.

### **“Bruiser” (not his real name)**

An incident that occurred only a few weeks after our arrival. It was early on a Saturday evening, after a busy day, and one of our regulars, a daily drinker of half a dozen beers, except on Saturdays, when, I shall call him “Bruiser”, as he had a bad temper, and often got involved in punch up, especially when playing football quite a few years earlier. Anyway Bruiser also liked a bet with the local SP Bookie, and had lost on the “punt” that day, and accused my wife of short changing him....not a wise move! Everyone still in the pub, about 20 regulars, heard the exchange, and waited with bated breath how I would respond. It was obviously something I could not tolerate, having my wife called a cheat, so I headed around the bar to confront Bruiser. Now let me paint the picture; I was 28, quiet fit, 180cm, but certainly not a fighter. Whereas Bruiser was a few years older, a bit taller and much heavier, with a battered face, a few missing teeth, certainly showing the signs of a hard life, and quite intoxicated. As I approached him, now standing and swaying from side to side, and looking like he was going to beat the crap out of me, the crowd moved back to a safer distance, expecting a fight, Bruiser took his jacket off, and went to toss it onto a bar stool, but it missed the stool, and fell onto the floor. This changed the dynamics immediately, as all eyes went the fallen jacket, especially Bruiser’s. I very quickly moved 2 steps, bent down, picked it up, and placed it over Bruiser’s arm, put my arm over his shoulder, and said ***“Come on mate, time to go home”***. He complied and headed out the door, and home. Phew, danger averted.

The next day I drove to his home and after a bit of a chat, I “barred” him for a month. You simply cannot call the publican’s wife a cheat and expect no repercussions. We learnt later that Bruiser “pulled that stunt” from time to time when he ran out of money. Over the next month, Bruiser drank in a pub in the next town, but, although RBT (Random Breath Testing) was not introduced for another 7 or 8 years, he only had a few so as to drive home sober. When he returned a month after the incident, he did apologise to my wife, and was very well behaved for some time.

### **Glen & John Fearnley**

When I visited Carcoar in March 2025 I noticed 2 older gentlemen enjoying a quiet beer. I introduced myself, and we had a good chat. They recalled me as being a good hotelier, and I recalled them as being hard working local lads.

## Peter Ledger

A biography of Peter Ledger (25 Oct. 1945 – 18 Nov. 1994).

Written by **Christy Marx**, and published with Christy Marx's permission.

Published in: "**Comic Arts Awards of Australia**"



Artist, Pilot, Adventurer. These things only begin to sum up the interests, talents and enthusiasms of a complex man who died much too soon. Peter was born in Sydney, Australia. As a young man, he roamed widely. In New Zealand, he hunted deer for the government, collecting a bounty for the ears. In Australia, he worked on government surveying teams and had many fascinating adventures in the outback, seeing places no white man had ever laid eyes on before. His artistic talents found many outlets, from woodworking to leatherwork, but his greatest recognition in Australia came from his pioneering use of the airbrush and his wildly imaginative paintings and illustrations for the advertising world. In 1977, he won the Art Directors Silver Award for his stunning Surfabout poster (if you're a fan of the Silver Surfer, be sure to have a look at this one). Also in 1977, his Golden Breed poster was honored in the Graphis yearbook of award-winning posters from around the world. In 1978, he won the "King of Pop" award for "Best Album Cover Design" for The Angels' album, "Face to Face".

He was also well known for his stunning portrait of John Lennon sponsored by a Sydney radio station a day after Lennon was killed and rushed into print as a special commemorative poster. I believe Peter said he painted the portrait within a 24 hour period.

When he wasn't producing art, Peter had many other activities he pursued with zeal: scuba diving and professional salvage diving, racing motorcycles, flying hot air balloons, hunting, bodybuilding, sailing, and cooking gourmet meals. He had an insatiable passion for good food, garlic, and wine. He was the quintessential gentleman barbarian.

But he had a wanderlust that wouldn't let go. From around 1978-1979, he lived in New York and worked for Marvel Comics. One of his groundbreaking contributions to the comic book field was the first fully-painted and airbrushed work on the series, "Warriors of the Shadow Realm". Peter and I met in Oct. of 1979 at a meeting of the Comic Art Professional Society in Los Angeles. He was on his way back to Australia and stopped off overnight in L.A. to visit friends. Sparks flew the moment our eyes met, but a day later, he was gone. A year and a half passed. Suddenly, Peter was back in L.A. He'd been brought over to work on a project funded by George Lucas and Gary Kurtz. It was a topquality, coffeetable art book of "Uncle Scrooge McDuck:

His Life and Times", as written and drawn by Carl Barks. Peter was a big fan of Barks' wonderful duck art. His contribution was to hand-paint and airbrush all the stories.

We were together from that time on. From Oct.-Dec. 1982, we lived in Australia, shuttling between Sydney and his magnificent old home (a historic rectory, one of the oldest buildings in New South Wales) in the tiny town of Carcoar, where one can still see the bullet hole in the wall of the bank when it was robbed by Ben Hall, a famous bushranger. We returned to the States and were married on Catalina Island in March of 1983. He lived in California the rest of his life.

Peter concentrated on working in the film and television business, mainly doing storyboards and preproduction design. He painted robot suits and designed aliens for the movie THE ICE PIRATES. He created the first BABYLON 5 logo, did the first character illustrations and an initial painting of the B5 station. J. Michael Straczynski used this art while selling the series.

In spite of his remarkable talents, Peter didn't have the temperament for Hollywood and success in this field eluded him. He had a zero b.s. threshold and wasn't a man to compromise with stupidity. He was an open and generous man with no patience for avarice or stinginess. So he turned his energies to another one of his great passions: aviation.

Peter loved planes and he loved flying. He was a natural pilot. His particular deep interest, since he was a boy, were the German planes of WWII, most especially the amazing jet aircraft developed during the war. In 1988, Peter and I travelled to Bonn, Germany to have a limited edition aviation print signed by Adolf Galland. He didn't just paint WWII aircraft, he also flew them, when he got the chance. And, as with so many pilots, he had a weakness for pin-up girls as nose art.

Together, we produced a number of comic book stories, such as Carlos McLlyr, and The Sisterhood of Steel graphic novel. He did many other wonderful pieces of art, such as this duelling spaceships cover for Alien Encounters, and another one for "The Monster of Planet Og".

Toward the end of 1988, Peter and I signed a deal to create computer games for Sierra On-Line. We moved up to the Oakhurst area in the Sierra mountains just outside Yosemite National Park. We produced THE CONQUESTS OF CAMELOT: King Arthur and the Search for The Grail. Though Peter did continue to produce paintings for use in computer games (Ringworld, Blood and Magic), he never much cared for working with computers.

Peter was a sensualist and a hedonist. He wanted the tactile feel of art, as he did with everything in life. He lived for the moment, the day. He must have said to me a hundred times, "I need to do this *now*, because I could be dead tomorrow."

From about 1990 on, Peter concentrated on doing large wall murals and trompe l'oeil paintings. He partnered with a marvelously talented British artist, Susie Wilson.

Together, they created many magnificent works of art in the Fresno, Oakhurst, and Monterey areas. Most are in private homes, unfortunately, but if you're ever in Oakhurst on the way to Yosemite, stop in for a meal at

Castillo's Mexican Restaurant. It's filled with the murals Peter and Susie did: jungle scenes, desert scenes, parrots, even a pteradactyl bursting in through an open (trompe l'oeil) window.

On the evening of Nov. 18th, 1994, Peter was driving home from Monterey. He was on a dark country road, driving fast, probably deep in thought, and he either missed or ignored a stop sign at a blind corner. He was hit broadside by a semi-trailer hauling a full load of cotton.

Both vehicles were totalled. The truck driver survived. Peter died instantly. He's buried in the small, historic cemetery in Oakhurst.

His mother, Ilma Ledger, has since passed on, leaving Peter survived by his two children: Karynne Ledger lives in Sydney where she cooks wholistic catered meals, designs webpages, and does spirit guide readings and portraits. Julian Ledger lives in L.A. and works in the special effects business. He builds, paints, sculpts, puppeteers, does computer graphics, and more. He's also one hell of a cook.

#### **Other Carcoar characters;**

Sadly with the tyranny of time, and a fading memory, there are so many characters in Carcoar whose names elude me. My apologies. If you wish a relative, or indeed yourself and wish to be included in these memories, I would be delighted to hear from you and possibly we can include in a later edition. Please contact me by email; johnmead2430@gmail.com



## Old Rectory, Carcoar

**Old Rectory** is a heritage-listed former rectory and now residence at Belubula Street, Carcoar. It was designed by Edmund Blacket and built in 1849. It was added to the New South Wales Heritage Register on 2 April 1999. (From Wikipedia)



## Some Carcoar Happenings

### **Frustrations;**

One Saturday I had a series of frustrating minor incidents, just prior to opening, and all draught beer related. Silly little things; like several broken washers caused delays, and some wasted beer. Then later in the day 2 kegs ran out around the same time, so more time spent going up and down into the cellar. Then I had a gas pressure problem early in the evening with a faulty gauge, draught beer service became slow, and as I was down in the cellar for some time, complaints became more vocal, almost becoming a game for those present, and for the first time, I was under pressure. After it was all sorted, and everyone was drinking happily again, I spent some time down in the cellar having a serious talk to myself, along the lines of “**what have I got myself into??**” But things settled down, and I got over my moment of anxiety. “**Breath, breath, breath**” slowly is always good advice.

### **Frozen water pipes;**

We were warned, but until it happens it is just another eventuality that only happens during cold winters. And as it turns out, Carcoar, like Bathurst, Orange, Blaney, and many other towns in the Central West of NSW experiences cold winters, with snow falling, icy roads and frozen water pipes. All that can be done is to wait, or as suggested, to leave a tap dripping slowly to keep water moving.

### **Innovations**

**Food:** the pub had a good-sized dining room, with seats for around 30, but a fairly basic kitchen. And I was keen to introduce regular food service in the dining room, but we had no chef, so we decided on a very basic menu, one that any reasonably good home cook could do with their eyes closed. So we had a couple of experimental nights, invited a few locals as “**taste testers**”, and when we were satisfied, we opened on Thursday, Friday & Saturday nights from 5.30pm 8.30pm, with a chalk menu, based on the following;

### **Entree;**

Soup of the day

### **Mains;**

Roast of the day

Fish of the day

Pie of the day

Veal Schnitzel

It proved popular with regularly 20 to 30 diners on each night. It was still operating when we sold.

## Highlights;

### Annual Agricultural Show;

Many country towns in Australia, and NSW hold annual agricultural shows, to highlight their areas unique features and Carcoar was no different. The Carcoar Show held is on the last weekend of October with judged events ranging from flower arranging to stud cattle and heavy horse pulling competitions.

I was fortunate in being the publican for the 1976 show. The "Showground", which was used for football and cricket (more information below), was "freshened up" for the annual show with much painting of buildings and fences, pruning of every tree, shrub and bush, mowing of every blade of grass, and new gravel on all pathways, tracks and internal roads. It looked magnificent on both days of the weekend show. Plus it featured some wonderful examples of locally grown produce, food, even varieties of honey, plus dogs, cats, chooks and cattle. We saw dog trials, pony rides for kids and a small sideshow ally with rides for kids of all ages. And of course the pub was very busy in the week prior, and the week after, with workers quenching their thirst. Both days of the Show were very, very busy in the bar, with the dining room opening for breakfast, lunch and dinner, with bar snacks too. Fortunately a number of friends and family agreed to come up from Sydney and helped us all over the weekend, in the bar, and especially in the kitchen with food service, and housekeeping, although they occupied some of our 15 rooms.

### Ben Hall Festival

While I was in Carcoar the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ben Hall Festival was held on the weekend of November 27 and 28 1976.

The 1<sup>st</sup> festival, held 5 years prior, and was a great success.

Planning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> festival commenced prior to me becoming licensee, and I was welcomed onto the planning committee. They anticipated 10,000 visitors to attend the 2 day festival. My role primarily was to keep the pub open which was not a problem, but I needed extra stock of everything. It was made very clear that it would be very busy from the Thursday prior, and all through Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and even Monday for "**one more drink for the road**". I asked several family members and friends to come up from Sydney for the weekend and help out, so we booked no hotel rooms for strangers, choosing to keep all rooms available for friends.

The festival included a "**Grand Parade**" on the Saturday afternoon which included a variety of hand led animals, folk dancing in traditional English and Irish dress, bands, plus a wagon drawn by bullocks trained by a couple of local lads. There was also a re-enactment of the bank hold up by Gilbert & O'Meally. There were trash and treasure markets, and of course a number of family reunions. It was a sensational weekend, and the pub did a roaring trade from 10am to 10pm, on both Saturday and Sunday.

## Background of Ben Hall:

### *Wikipedia;*

**Ben Hall** (9 May 1837 – 5 May 1865) was an Australian bushranger and leading member of the Gardiner-Hall gang. He and his associates carried out many raids across NSW, from Bathurst to Forbes, south to Gundagai and east to Goulburn. Unlike many bushrangers of the era, Hall was not directly responsible for any deaths, although several of his associates were. He was shot dead by police in May 1865 at Goobang Creek.

On 13 July 1863, Ben Hall, with Johnny Gilbert and John O'Meally, held up the Carcoar Commercial Bank in broad daylight. This marked Australia's first bank robbery. It was thwarted when a bank teller fired a shot into the bank's ceiling, and the gang fled without seizing anything but shooting the manager as he was returning to the bank.

Ben Hall is a prominent figure in Australian folklore, inspiring many bush ballads, books and screen works, including the 1975 television series *Ben Hall* and the 2016 feature film *The Legend of Ben Hall*.

## The Sound of Music; the “Movie”

John Clegg, the Primary School Headmaster, produced 2 “movies” during our time in Carcoar. The first was a “Western” featuring a “shoot out” at the pub, whilst the 2nd, was a much bigger production, **The Sound of Music**. It starred many of the residents, including many children of Carcoar. I was Captain Von Trapp, and Chris, my son, was one of the children.

John used a camera, therefore still photos, which he projected onto a screen using 2 slide projectors with the original soundtrack by Rodgers and Hammerstein. The movie lasted about 40 minutes, and was an outstanding success.



**Captain Von Trapp singing Edelweiss to Maria**



**The Von Trapp family “walking over the mountains” into Switzerland**

**The Royal Hotel in 2010 and 2011** was awarded a coveted "Two Schooner" Good Pub Food Guide ranking which is the pub equivalent of the Australian Good Food Guide "Two Hat" rating for restaurants.

**Time to go;**

My parents advised that my father was not well, and that had decided to sell the Weinkeller Restaurant. The made us an offer we could not refuse to purchase it as soon possible.

So we spoke to our favourite Hotel Broker, John Parsons of Orange who had a buyer within a few weeks.

So we moved very quickly, and had taken the restaurant over at the start of November.

So, all too quickly, and rather sadly, we ended a wonderful sojourn in a wonderful NSW country town.

## Between 1977 and 1987

A lot happened between the Royal Hotel in Carcoar and the Nelson Hotel in Bondi Junction.....a time period of almost 10 years. **And NO pubs!!**

Initially, business at the Weinkeller Restaurant was excellent, however my marriage to Wendy fell on hard times, and we divorced in late 1979.

Then in August 1980 I met Milica, and there was an immediate attraction. We married in September 1982.

Unfortunately, in 1983, then Federal Treasurer, Paul Keating changed the rules and made business lunches no longer tax deductible. The Sydney city restaurant we owned, and established by my parents in 1961, took 2 years to "**bleed to death**". Milica & I had been married just one year and that change saw a successful business for over 20 years lose 40% of its business virtually overnight.

Our world was turned on its head.

And I was unemployed, and broke, and Milica was heavily pregnant. Fortunately, I obtained work quite quickly as Assistant Manager of Centre 67, the restaurant in the Gym at the top of the MLC Centre.

Milica gave birth to Daniel early in September 1984.

Then, through an old school friend, Tim, a lawyer, and a regular customer of the Weinkeller, a lifeline presented itself. Tim knew of our predicament and had a client who had set up a restaurant in Orange, which needed an experienced manager. We were interviewed, and offered a position to live on the premises, operate the restaurant, with a view of selling it as a going concern.

So we did all that over the next 15 months.

Then early in 1986 we moved to the Sunshine Coast. We stayed with friends before taking on a short-term lease of a lovely little house in Sunshine Beach, hoping to obtain work in one of the many restaurants in Noosa. I did get a number of casual jobs, but nothing substantial. In those days there were so many couples like us; fallen on hard times and finding it hard to obtain permanent work. Then I obtained work as Restaurant Manager/Assistant Food & Beverage Manager at Lennons Hotel in Brisbane, and we moved to Brisbane. This proved a very good move. We both had secured good jobs, with Milica becoming the Bookkeeper for a retailer with a number of fashion shops in Brisbane.

Sadly however, in July 1987, my Father was diagnosed with cancer, suffered a stroke shortly after, and passed away 2 weeks later. We decided then it was time to move back to Sydney



## 5 The Nelson Hotel (1987 – 1990)

The Nelson Hotel, 232 Oxford Street, Bondi Junction.



The Nelson's Public Bar



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**“A local with a heart”**

From the Nelson Hotel’s website;

***Step into this 1930s art deco gem of a pub and find yourself enchanted by everything The Nelson Hotel offers.***

***From beers in the iconic public bar, a meal in the bistro or a drink in the saloon to live sport, the rustic beer garden or the freshly reinstated Level One function space, this spacious and gracious old building is all about getting together with friends and family.***

***Nurtured by the Richardson family for over a third of a century, The Nelson Hotel is embedded in the heart of its community. Nestled between Woollahra and Bondi Junction, this local oasis is a place to kick back and relax, celebrate or cheer.***

***With a great selection of craft beers on tap, a wine list offering the best of local and overseas, cocktails to suit any celebration and a bistro menu that offers pub staples through to the unexpected, you’ll find yourself a regular at The Nelson Hotel in no time.***

I managed the Nelson Hotel for Licensee and Freehold owner Karl Richardson from September 1987 until February 1990. We lived upstairs in the manager’s flat, a spacious 3 bedroom apartment with a reasonable kitchen, bathroom and living area on the first floor, at the end of a long hallway, with 10 guest rooms and separate male & female bathrooms for house guests.

Karl was an old family friend. His father had gone to school with my father in Bondi around the early 1920s. They later did accounting together, and remained lifelong friends. Karl and I met as kids and stayed in each other’s houses during school holidays, and I recall so clearly spending a school holiday in a National Fitness camp at Myuna Bay, near Morisset on Lake Macquarie during the 1960 Rome Olympic Games. The highlight for us, and all the other “happy campers”, was listening on the radio to Herb Elliot winning the 1,500m event.

Years later Karl and some mates bought The Oaks Hotel, in the Oaks, approx. 80KM south west of Sydney and 14 KM west of Camden, around the time I bought the pub in Carcoar. Karl later bought the lease of the Palisade Hotel in Millers Point in Sydney, and some years later the freehold of the Nelson Hotel in Bondi Junction.

Karl and I reconnected some years later and he advised me that he needed a Hotel Manager to live on-site, and I was in need of a full time job. Although Milica & I, and now 3 year old Daniel, had a nice rented house in Willoughby, a live-in position was perfect for us. After much discussion, Karl offered me the opportunity to become his manager.

So we moved in quite easily, and we found a good day care centre in nearby Randwick for Daniel, and he loved it.

### **First Saturday Night as Manager**

I well remember my first Saturday night as the “**New Manager**” of the Nelson was bloody hectic. I started my shift at 4pm and it was very busy with lots of regulars drinking, and the TAB in its final stages of day races. There was little betting on any evening races - the dogs or trots.

The big oval bar was “pumping” with lots of laughter, loud voices, cheers if “their horse” had won, and boos if it failed to place, with comments like; “***send the bloody dud to the knackery***”.

Lots of “tradies” were discussing jobs, as were the many “fringe crims” discussing their next “jobs”. The footballers mainly consisted of rugby league players, both current players, playing for the Nelson in the local competition, and preparing for their match the next day, plus retired players, who were all skiting about their skills, and not many failures. The rugby union players were yet to arrive after their afternoon matches, either players or spectators.

But this mostly convivial atmosphere was soon to be over as tension between 2 groups escalated into shouting, lots of abuse, some pushing the inevitable fight broke out between the main protagonists. A few others joined in, and as it was pointed out to me, “***just another Saturday night at the Nelson***”. Fortunately for me the fight was sorted out quite quickly, I did not need to intervene, hands were shaken, and drinking continued.

### **Day by day**

Unlike the Royal Hotel in Carcoar, and the Cauliflower Hotel in Waterloo, I was not responsible for the books or ordering stock at the Nelson. Karl, the freehold owner, engaged an external stocktaker to do monthly stocktakes, and Karl ordered stock as required, and did all the accounts, including creditor payments, and of course the banking.

My “day” was basically the night shift, and started at around 4pm on Tuesdays through to Saturday, having Sundays & Mondays off, except on Thursdays when Karl played golf, and I did the “day shift”.

Karl did the day shift most other days which included getting the beer ready for service; this included flushing the lines with water before connecting the draft beers, and turning the “temprite” on - the instantaneous beer coolers. These were the older style used in pubs and clubs for years before the advent of the “modern” systems, which virtually eliminate wasted beer. I recall the Nelson had the following draft beers; Reschs, Tooheys New & Old, Coopers Pale Ale, VB, and Tooheys Lite.

### **Rose;**

Rose was a long term employee, a bar maid, who started at around 9.30am Monday to Friday, and prepared the Public Bar for 10am opening. She was a wonderful older lady, a widow with 2 adult children, and was perfect as the daytime barmaid, as she knew all the regulars, and especially their drinks.

On Thursdays I helped Rose as required on the bar, plus I served in the bottle shop, which was actually very constant throughout the day.

### **Casa;**

Casa was an older guy, who lived in a tiny flat above the garage, and operated the TAB most days, including Saturday. He was known to everyone, and like Rose, was almost an “institution” at the Nelson.

### **Night shifts;**

On my “late”, or night shifts, I started at 4pm, and finished when the pub shut, usually around 10pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, whilst the Public Bar never closed before midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Rose finished her shift at 4pm, just as it was getting busy, and we had a number of casuals, both young male and females who worked the evening shifts. Often by 5pm, we had 3 working hard on the bar, with our regulars steadily rolling in, and generally not departing until around 8pm.

### **The Public Bar;**

Again, from the Nelson Hotel’s website;

***The Nelson Hotel wears its history as a badge of honour. Here history is important; old can be done well. It’s a laidback haven, right in the thick of bustling Bondi Junction.***

***Originally opened in September 1938 by Victor Toohey – one of many interwar hotels built to cater for the notorious ‘six o’clock swill’ – the beating heart of the pub is the public bar with its iconic island bar.***

***Sitting on the corner of Oxford and Nelson Streets, the art deco design by Cyril Ruwald and Rudder & Grout, who studied just up the road at Sydney East Tech, is celebrated – so much so that the original plans are hung on the walls of the pub for all to see.***

***Over the last third of a century, the Richardson family has ensured that the art deco essence of The Nelson Hotel has been maintained and, throughout the original bars, restored to its former glory. In the newer spaces the focus is on creating inviting, enjoyable spaces filled with rustic features, ensuring the pub is full of soul.***

***Its evolution is about honouring the pub’s past while ensuring locals and those further afield feel right at home. Today, The Nelson Hotel is an iconic Australian hotel with all the modern essentials – as many say, a country pub in the middle of the city – full of soul.***

### **The Saloon Bar;**

The Saloon bar opened at 5pm, Monday to Saturday, and we had 1 youngish, attractive female, rostered on for each shift. The Saloon Bar was where Karl met his friends, and was mainly patronised by businessmen, Monday to Friday. Usually the one bar attendant managed with the dozen or so regulars, but I constantly meandered through, to help with service, but also to pick up empty glasses, and wipe tables, etc. The Saloon Bar usually closed by 8pm, with cash balancing and clean up occurring.

### **The cellar**

WOW, what a great set up. It was obviously built with an understanding that most “cellar dwellers” were 6 footers, or 1.8m in height, so no ducking to avoid a low roof. Plus it was the size of the whole Public Bar, end to end and side to side, with a huge cool room in the centre, under the service area of the public bar. The eastern side was all packaged products, wine mainly plus soft drinks, whilst the cool room held all packaged beers and the kegs. The right hand side was the “Office” and where Karl did the accounts. There was a lockable “Shute” from the footpath, locked from the cellar, where all packaged stock was slid down, kegs with rope and metal hooks. It was a very workable with plenty of space for empty kegs, and room to manoeuvre the new stock prior to moving into the cool room or the eastern storage area.

### **The Nelson Sharks**

Nelson sponsored a Rugby League team, the Nelson Sharks, in the local Eastern Suburbs 2nd division competition. They were an enthusiastic bunch and played bloody hard on their Sunday matches, and of course were followed by enthusiastic supporters, and all came back to the pub following matches. So Sundays, late afternoon and through the early evening throughout winter, were very busy.

### **My older son Chris**

Now 19 years old, he had recently moved to Bondi, was a Uni student, and in need of casual work. Karl knew Chris and quite happily agreed to Chris working a shift on Sundays. So Chris became the 3rd generation Mead to work in hospitality. I recall he started his shift at 4pm, and worked through to closing time. He fitted in well, being young and enthusiastic. He continued on that shift even when the football season was over, and in fact even after we had purchased the Cauliflower Hotel.

So, back to my day to day activities; Tuesdays and Wednesdays I started at 4pm, and first job each shift was to familiarise myself with the cellar; what beers were likely to run out, connecting more kegs to the banks already connected, always noting not to mix dates, and preparing new banks, ready to flush water through the line, before connecting the new bank.

Thursday evening we always “did the lines”. Meaning we flushed out all the beer in the lines, and sadly poured it down the sink...waste. We always measured and recorded the waste as it was a legitimate business expense. With good management, after connecting the lines to the water, we were able “sell” quite a few schooners to the regulars before the water came through. But that was a bit of a gamble as water could freeze in the temprites, after the beer had been poured, so we picked out nights for that. Whilst the staff were cleaning up, and after I “did the till”, and locked the takings and float away, I was down to cellar to complete the beer line cleaning. This was a process of measuring the beer line cleaner into a special purpose keg, topped it up with water, gassed it up, connected it to the system, and went upstairs with several empty buckets, and “pulled” the beer line cleaner through to each tap. This then stayed in the lines overnight, to be flushed out in the morning.

## Promotions

When I started at the Nelson, Karl advised me that he wanted an increase in the weekly turnover. He admitted he was not a great marketer, or keen on spending money on promotions, and suggested I put my *“thinking cap on”* to improve turnover. So I did, and by the time I handed in my notice in 1990, some 3+ years later, turnover had tripled. I am happy to recall that it was mostly all done by internal promotion to existing customers. Initially to;

- **The tradies;** we encouraged them to bring in their colleagues to check the Nelson out.
- **The footballers;** seems silly, but I offered to join them on pre-season runs, if they joined us more frequently at the pub for drinks, even just soft drinks. It worked, they enjoyed the increased camaraderie of their teammates, and it improved my fitness to the point that the much younger footballers could not understand how a 40+ year old could beat most of them in a 10KM road run.
- **Other regulars;** all were approached and asked to bring in their mates to check out the beautiful art deco pub.
- **Many other non-cost promotional ideas** were rolled out, which all helped increase the turnover.

## One of the footballers;

Mick Hoban, a tough 2nd rower, approached me early in the training season and asked if we had any work. He was like a blessing from heaven as he not only proved to be a great barman, was known to, and respected by all the footballers, but he became my unofficial bouncer - security. In those days, well before RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol), security was not a mandatory requirement. So it could be said that the Nelson was ahead of the times. But whatever, Mick proved to be great and valuable help on busy nights.

## Fires after the races

One of the main characters at the Nelson was a big man, Peter Martini. He was a gentle giant, a truck driver, and an all-round good guy. He loved a “punt” on the races, but after the last race, and especially on a “losing day”, his habit was to scrunch up his “form guide” and throw it in the tiled trough that circled the large oval bar. He would then use a cigarette lighter to set the paper on fire. After it had taken a good hold, he would pee (yes urinate) on it to put it out. You can well imagine the smell!!! Another one of the weekly events at the Nelson.

## Juke box after the last race

The Nelson had 3 “tradies”; an electrician, a tiler and a brickie who were lifelong mates, and although not daily drinkers, certainly met on Saturday afternoons after their morning work. They drank with a lot of “tradie” mates, all had played football together (rugby league), and were a great bunch of blokes. We got into a wonderful habit each Saturday afternoon. After the last race was broadcast on Sky Channel, the 3 of them would gravitate to the Juke Box, a large commercial unit, under the large TV screen that Sky Channel was played on. They would key up a few selections, and on my signal, I would turn the TV sound down and the Jukebox sound up, very loud. This caused everyone to look towards the sound, and the 3

men, standing arm in arm, would each drop their pants, presenting a perfect “browneye” to those looking. This was followed by a huge round of applause. Another one of the weekly events at the Nelson.

### **Gary T**

In my early days of managing the Nelson, a young couple became regulars, noticed mainly due to their prowess in consuming champagne. Gary & Sue lived locally, having to cross the footbridge over Syd Einfeld Drive to their flat in Woollahra. After some month Gary asked if we had any casual jobs. He said he had a strong history of working in pubs and restaurants; bar and as a waiter, and had a full time job at a large accommodation hotel in the city. His shifts at the hotel would allow him work 3 shifts of 5 hours at the Nelson. I did remark when I checked his resume that I wanted him working full time in the future. In fact he did, and he worked as my assist manager for a couple of years, until early 1990, when he accepted a job running a hotel in Alice Springs. OK, now that’s different, and it proved a very good move for Gary. In fact at the end of 2002, and Gary was still in the Alice, my younger son, having just completed the HSC, and I went on a 10 day holiday in Alice. What an amazing time we had. Then soon after

Gary accepted a position running a hotel in Papua New Guinea. WHERE??? Yep, he did that for a couple of years. We did not visit PNG. Over these years we kept in touch, and he visited us on many occasions. Next, this adventurous young man accepted a multi faceted job in China; part hotel management, part training staff, and he worked his way up to a senior role, staying in China for close to 10 years, before, due to his parents being elderly, and unwell, he returned to Australia.

### **1<sup>st</sup> August; “Horses birthday”**

The same group of 3 tradies had a tradition, built up over many, since they turned 18 I was told, so close on 20 years. Each 1<sup>st</sup> August, commonly known as “The Horses Birthday”, the 3 would arrive at 10am, opening time, dressed in formal attire (dinner suit and top hat), at the start of a daily “Pub crawl”. They would have 3 beers at the Nelson and set off to a series of “watering holes” to celebrate “Horses birthday”. They would eventually arrive back at the Nelson looking a little worse for wear, probably missing some of their formal attire, for their “one more for the road” drink, before wandering off home. They were certainly the “Hereos” of the day. Another one of the many events at the Nelson.

### **Push bike on top of the bar**

One of our regulars, who rode a pushbike to & from the Nelson, had an irregular habit, when the mood struck him, or the quantity of alcohol got him in the “mood”, was to strip off all his clothes, ask the bar staff to close the staff entry flap (into/out of the bar) and ride his pushbike naked around the big oval bar. In the dozens of times I saw him do this he did not fall off once.

AMAZING really.

### **The buck's party**

The Nelson had 2 popular bars; the big Public Bar, with the large oval bar in its centre, mainly frequented by the tradies, etc, and was always staffed by a mixture of young men and young women. Whereas the Saloon Bar, which opened at 5pm attracted the more "upmarket gents", and was Karl's favourite to meet his mates, always had a couple of attractive young women working this bar, for obvious reasons. A number of its regulars were from "money market", stockbrokers etc. A great bunch of blokes. Over a period of some months, a few of the younger "money market" men started to frequent the Saloon Bar, which was good for business.

Some months later one approached me asking if he could hold a "Bucks Party" on a Saturday evening down in the area, just off the saloon Bar, that would later become the bistro, but at that stage was empty. He asked if a couple of strippers who would entertain in a portable "mud bath" was OK. Being a private area, I saw no issues. So we negotiated a few rules; all drinks from the Saloon Bar, no total nudity, they to clean up any mud, etc, etc. So on the selected evening I was on duty and kept a pretty close watch on the activities, and all was going well. The "Mudbath" was like a kids blow up pool, that they added about 2" of water and poured powdered mud into it and stirred. The story was that it all dried out and could be easily swept up and into garbage bags, and the rest vacuumed up. Well, you can imagine the outcome. I got busy in the Public Bar, and for close to an hour I was unable to "supervise" the Bucks Party. By the time I was alerted to a few problems, and made my way down, it was chaos. The girls were naked, half the guests were naked and in the mudbath with the girls. Not a good scenario. The girls were rescued, and one of my female staff members escorted them upstairs to use the showers and clean up. And would you believe half the men followed them upstairs to join them in the showers. The trail of mud was something to behold!!!! NOT!! Then all of a sudden all the guys just disappeared, leaving a mess of mud, and a few items of clothing, including a couple of wallets. The next morning I phoned the organiser with a request for him to honour his commitment to clean up, etc. He initially just laughed at me, until I advised him whose wallets I had, including his, which revealed full details of name, address and actually who they worked for and their titles. His attitude changed immediately, and within the hour we had 10 blokes down to do a full supervised clean up. Needless to say there were no more bucks parties at the Nelson during my time as Manager.

### **The "Shoppies"**

As with most pubs, they attract all kinds of regular drinkers from opening time, right through to the evening trade. The Nelson was no different. Not only did it attract the footballers from 3 codes (Rugby League, Rugby Union and Soccer), tradies from many trades, a number of reps from a variety of industries, businessmen from many professions, even a number of professionals from accounting, finance and the legal professions. One of our regular group of drinkers were the "**Shoppies**". Fringe crims they might be described, and indeed they were. "Our" group of shoppies consisted of several attractive older women, and a couple of men, one in particular who had a physical disability, which at times was quite pronounced, causing a massive limp, and frequent falls. That was "Limpy". Their "modus operandi" was for the women to "**case a joint**", usually a high class women's clothing outlet, in one week, and plan what they wished to grab. The following week the group would arrive separately, and while the women created some attention in seeking the help of staff in selections, trying clothing on, etc, etc, the other pair/couple would, as discreetly as possible, grab a heap of clothes

and run from the shop. They had a car, or a small van, nearby to hide their spoils. Often “Limpy” would have a massive fall, and scream in pain, and the women too would scream to gain maximum attention, while the others would grab the selected clothes, and “do a runner”. After their exploits they would meet at the Nelson to discuss their spoils. They would do a “job” most days, no doubt in different parts of the city. They knew better and never bought any of their stolen goods into the pub.

### “Evil”

I had been Manager for some months when a few of the “Shoppies” were excitedly talking about “Evil” would be moving up from Melbourne very soon. I thought what is Evil, or more to the point, who was Evil. Well, Evil did arrive, and what a dapper little bloke he was. Polite, with a neatly trimmed goatee beard, and very well dressed, even wore a tie, with a long overcoat almost down to the floor. He arrived one Saturday and immediately established himself as a mad TAB gambler. Evil’s story, I was told, was that he had just been released from Pentridge Jail (in Melbourne), where he had spent more time on inside than on the outside, or he would be targeted. So he moved to Sydney. I was told that he was not dangerous, just another “shoppie”, and our “shoppies” were thrilled to welcome him. Over the next year or so, he certainly proved to be a great customer, both from the drinker point of view, and also as a TAB punter. He even became a “house guest”, occupying one of our rooms. I warned him that no stolen goods were to be kept in his room, and he readily agreed. He kept his room neat and tidy, and caused no problems. However some months later, Evil heard I was looking for some sports shoes, and suggested I have a look at a few he had in his room – *“they are only there temporarily”*. So, I knocked on his door and was gobsmacked to discover shoes in boxes lining the walls of his room. OMG, *“Evil, they have to go NOW”*. Needless to say I did not buy any shoes, and he arranged for some of his gang to help him remove the shoes within an hour or so.

**So life at the Nelson** continued throughout 1987, 1988, 1989 and into 1990. We lived upstairs quite happily,

Daniel went to the delightful nearby Woollahra Primary School, we had a few holidays, including Brisbane’s Expo of 1988. But by then, and in talking to some old friends, who were keen to invest in a hotel, in other words become “silent partners”, I had decided that I liked that concept, and that should discuss it with Karl. He made it quite clear that any type of partnership with him was not going to happen, either at the Nelson, or in another venture, and although he would miss my management style, he would not stop my ambition. So, our quest for a leasehold hotel was forged, and we began the process of checking the market out.

As Daniel had now commenced at school, we decided that for any future pub purchase, we had to stay reasonably close to Woollahra Public School. So that opened up areas in the South Sydney area.

I contacted several hotel brokers, and quite quickly one come up the Cauliflower Hotel in Waterloo.



6

**The Cauliflower Hotel**  
**(1990-1995)**  
123 Botany Road, Waterloo



## History;

### **Pub with Dark Past Celebrates 170th Birthday (in 2008)**

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**Iconic Sydney venue the Cauliflower Hotel is to celebrate its 170th birthday on December 1, 2008, with the hotel's licence dating back to 1838 writes Annette Shailer on [theshout.com.au](http://theshout.com.au).**

*Owner and fifth generation publican, William Ryan, said the venue's unusual name derives from the market gardens of Waterloo that used to surround the original site.*

*The 'Cauli', as it is known, witnessed the transformation of Sydney's market gardens into bustling inner-city suburbs, with the venue becoming a haunt for the 1970s underworld before getting a facelift in recent times. "The only place you couldn't get whacked was the Cauliflower because all the heavies drank there," Ryan said.*

*The hotel's location on the cusp of Waterloo, Alexandria and Redfern means it attracts people from all walks of life.*

*"South Sydney may have changed," Ryan said. "But the Cauli has been the stable influence in the area. It's been here for 170 years and I hope it will stand for 170 more."* **FROM**

**AUSTRALIAN PUB MARKET**, by Mike Roberts

*Market gardener, George Rolfe opened the Cauliflower Hotel on what is today the south-east corner of Botany Road and Wellington Street, Waterloo (Sydney NSW) in 1838. He was 39 when he opened the pub, and for many years prior had successfully worked as a market gardener in the area. Rolfe, who arrived from England to Sydney as a 16-year-old boy with his family, would acquire large tracts of land on the Waterloo Estate, and was said to have made enough money to build his pub from the sale of a bumper crop of cauliflowers. George and his wife Mary Rolfe's two storey pub is the same building trading today, which makes it one of southern Sydney's oldest watering holes.*



### Why the Cauli? A number of reasons;

#### History;

- 1 The Cauliflower Hotel was a very old and historic building, built in 1838,
- 2 We were told it was built on an old cauliflower farm, on the main road to Botany Bay (shipping or port) which of course became Botany Road, and the successful farmer started a "**Refreshment Room**" for the travellers, which later became a licensed hotel,
- 3 For many, many years it was the de facto home of the South Sydney "**Rabbitohs**", the local, and famous Rugby League Football team, and many of the retired players still met their mates on a regular basis.

#### Personal;

- 1 Daniel, our son, could continue at Woollahra Primary School, which did require a car trip, but as Milica was driving to work in North Sydney, that was doable,
- 2 The "managers" accommodation was

upstairs, and although access was via the public bar area, our private area was adequate. It had several bedrooms, a reasonable kitchen, just adequate bathroom, a reasonable living area, and “a play room” for Dan.

### **Business point of view;**

Although it had a strong business history, in 1990 it was in need of some strong management, and a return of the “regulars” who had drifted to any number of nearby “watering holes”, due to a number of reasons;

- 1 It was being operated in a deceased estate situation,
- 2 The manager, nice guy as he was, was employed by the estate of the leasehold owner, so his hands were tied to any promotions, improvements, and his sole purpose was to keep it open, and help to find a leasehold buyer,
- 3 The regulars, the heart and sole of small hotels, were not happy with almost everything,
- 4 I was known, and respected, as being manager of the Nelson Hotel, in Bondi Junction.

### **In 1990, when I became licensee.**

We entered into a business partnership with old friends (Graham & Robyn became our “silent partners”), worked out our finances, negotiated a sale price with an old hotel broker friend, and purchased the balance of the 20 year lease, some 12 years. The freehold owners, we understood, were a Canberra investment group, owning approx. 12 other freehold hotels around NSW, all others being in country NSW.

One of the downsides was that the percentage of rent to revenue was very poor – way too high, due to the business being so run down. However, our lawyer advised that we had a “**review of rent to market in 2 years**”, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lease, and in the interim we were challenged to increase the revenue.

So the sale proceeded, I gave notice to Karl at the Nelson, who had my 2IC, big Rick Van Kampen lined up to become manager, and we moved in February 1990.

My initial tasks on taking over were to settle my family in upstairs, and to make it our home. That occurred quite quickly. Even Max the cat settled in after the Nelson, where he had roamed the roofs and awnings of the block in Bondi Junction. Max got into the habit of venturing down into the bar, and sitting right in front of the cash register, where every customer would give him a quick stroke, or rub. Only one. Any more and he would react with a “that’s enough’ swipe of a paw.

From the business point of view, I knew my work load would be 7 days a week for the seeable future. Initial jobs were to “**clean the place up**”; this included all the floors, replacing some of the lino, or carpets, a thorough wash down of all walls, both inside and outside, and the toilets, which were in dire need of a thorough clean.

The coolroom/cellar too was in dire need of a thorough clean up. On the first Sunday I advised no draft beer, as I was giving the coolroom/cellar a thorough clean up, so the only beer available was packaged. That went down very well actually, and I had a few willing

helpers from opening time of 7am, to remove all stock – kegs and packaged beers, soft drinks into the public bar area – to allow an unfettered clean up of floors, walls, even the ceiling. I also gave the beer lines a very thorough cleaning, replacing many of the beer line fittings, which had all seen better days, and new cleaning equipment. So around 2pm all was complete, and the stock was moved back, now in a much more orderly system, and the coolroom turned back on, beer lines tested, and by 5pm, all was working well, much to appreciation of those present.

Other necessary jobs included some minor renovations, like painting damaged walls, plus new signs, both inside and outside, repairing many of the chairs, tables and stools. Fortunately, I had some very willing “locals” keen to help restore their “local”; a painter, a retired “chippy”, an electrician, a plumber, even a signwriter, and they all worked on a combination of cash, and free drinks.

**The Cauli was an early opener**, not 5am like many, which was possible, but we opened at 7am. One very fortunate aspect were the “**Garbos**”, the South Sydney Garbage collectors, who frequented the Cauli on a daily basis. One of the reasons was a number of them lived locally, a number of them were retired, and one in particular was Bill Lennon, or “Canhead”, who opened the pub on a daily basis, and had done so for years. Bill was a really likeable old bloke, who sadly had suffered cancer to his jaw, and following major surgery was quite visibly disfigured...“*I wasn’t always this ugly*” he would quip if someone stared at him. But that did not stop him, and his good mate Reggie Hearne, who cooked breakfast every day for the garbos who dropped in after their shifts had finished. I funded the breakfasts, which were mostly cooked at home by Reggie, and his wife, who would bring in enough to feed often up to 20 hungry men. It was not bacon and eggs, but mostly included egg and bacon based casseroles, with lots of potatoes, vegetables and meat. Delicious, and topped up with lots of bread and butter. It was a real family atmosphere. In the first weeks or so I ventured down every day at 7am, opening time, but it became evident Bill was doing a good job, so I delayed by start time till 8am.

The Cauli even opened on Sundays at 7am, and as my elder son Chris, who had been working on Sunday evenings at the Nelson, was keen to work at the Cauli, he agreed to do the 7am to 2pm shift on Sundays. Bill would set up the draft beer and handed over to Chris to open the bar at 7am. That continued over the almost 6 years we ran the Cauli. Chris rode a motor bike in those days, and we relaxed every Sunday when we heard his bike arrive around 7am. Being a Uni student, and quite social, he often was a bit 2<sup>nd</sup> hand during his shift, which the locals loved. He was one of them, and so he enjoyed a cooked breakfast, courtesy of Reggie.

Over the next few weeks many of the “locals” ventured back, liked what they saw, stayed, and influenced their mates to return too. So in the space of a few months, business grew rapidly, we settled in well upstairs, Daniel went to school, and we started to enjoy life.

### **The girls**

Soon after taking over the Cauli, a group of “girls” started to meet, and played darts a few evenings each week.

They were gay women, and were looking for a safe venue to enjoy their darts. After some months, and much practice, I was approached to sponsor them as a team representing the

Cauliflower Hotel in the local South Sydney area. And so I did. Not only as their sponsor, but there were many weeks when, due to illness, they needed an additional player, and so I filled in. The hoteliers at the host venue always welcomed me and we had some great nights. They were a nice bunch of women, often totally misunderstood, but who were grateful that I “adopted” them, and they welcomed me as part of their team.

### **Steve & Margaret**

A couple of weeks after taking over, I became aware of an older Aboriginal couple enjoying their beers over a couple of hours. Steve & Margaret were locals, and introduced themselves saying they wanted a change from their regular hotel. Great. Welcome. We got talking some time later and they said they were enjoying the Cauli, and made me an offer;

“We will look after you if you look after us” is how they put it to me.

I asked what exactly did they have in mind, and they explained that would keep certain “**undesirable locals**” out of the Cauli, if I extended them some credit. Maybe a 6 pack of beer, maybe \$10 for a packet of cigarettes, which they would repay on “**pay day**”, from their pension payment. I thanked them for their suggestion, and said I would have a think about it. I discussed with a few other locals, who all said that Steve & Margaret were good for it. They approached me a week later and I said OK, let’s see how we go. I added a few rules, like all amounts to be written into a credit book, and one had to sign it, and repayments had to be made on pension “pay day”.

Over the next 5-6 years Steve & Margaret were good to their word, keeping “undesirables” out of the Cauli, and repaying their debts each fortnight.

But it was an ongoing business battle to achieve the “right” costs as a percentage of total revenue. We were stuck with excessive rent for at least 2 years, plus all the normal business overheads; wages were low, as I was working 6 days a week, doing most of the shifts, but water rates, Council rates, electricity, etc, etc. all needed to be paid, plus the ongoing cost of beer, food, etc. It was always very tight.

**Over the next 18 months** business did improve remarkably, but our rent was still way too high, and so we attempted to open our negotiation with our landlords. Our initial approaches were totally ignored, despite our references to our lease. We were not yet at the stage of engaging lawyers to assist us, but that was an option. Plus, we were becoming increasingly alarmed with the number of reported bad tactics employed by our landlords with other hotels they owned, such as tenants being physically “thrown out” due to some alleged indiscretion. We were approached by several ex-tenants, who described the “methods” used to evict them, which were verging on the criminal. This all came to a dreadful confrontation one week day, after I had been in to the Water Board to make an arranged progress payment. Fortunately I had receipts, and confirmation letters, and when I arrived at the Cauli, I noticed the doors were all closed...most unusual. So I parked the car around the corner, and entered the Cauli via the garden, or rear entrance. All my regulars were sitting out in the garden, drinking cans or stubbies, but with the news that the “Canberra Mafia” had taken over, and were kicking me out. Bloody hell.

So I entered the hotel to find 2 big men dressed in suits, one very Greek looking and the other an Australian, waiting for me. One immediately advised that I was in breach of the lease, due to non payment of water rates, and they were evicting me. He presented me with a letter which I refused to take, or acknowledge, and insisted I was not in breach, offering

them letters and a receipt from the Water Board. The Australian man then pushed me up against a wall and put his hand on my throat in a very threatening way, and said “***You should pack up your personal belongings and get out before you get seriously hurt***”. It was at that moment I noticed movement in the background, being one of my regulars entering the male toilet. We acknowledged each other, a quick nod, and fortunately he later acted as a witness to the assault. After some heated discussion I managed to break free of the throat hold, and grabbed the phone and called my lawyer, who advised “***not to leave the premises***” while he immediately set in motion an urgent hearing in the Federal Court. Hearing that discussion, and with the evidence from the Water Board, the 2 men left the premises, and I reopened the hotel, and invited my regulars back in. All in all a terrible experience, but one which I survived to fight another day. My business experience, plus the advice of our lawyer, helped save the day.

Some days later, after further discussion with our lawyer, we devised a plan moving forward. He advised that I phoned the then President of the AHA (Australian Hotels Association), John Thorpe, for advice. John recommended I contact a leading lawyer for advice. I made an appointment a few days later, and met with the new lawyer, who read the lease, reviewed the Water Board letters and receipts, and agreed that, based on my evidence, and the witness evidence, an assault had occurred, plus most importantly, the lease called for a “***review to market***”. He immediately wrote to our landlords, and in 3 simple paragraphs outlined our demands;

- 1       An assault had occurred, which would be actioned by Police if they re-entered the premises,
- 2       Our lease was confirmed, which included a further 10 year tenure,
- 3       We would engage several valuers for a  
“Review of rent to market”

The result was that we had paid excessive rent for the 2 years of our lease, and that no rent would be payable for the next 3 years.

### **Perfect time to sell; perfect time to buy**

Indeed, what a gift to an incoming hotelier.

So I contacted a few Hotel Brokers, who interestingly all knew of our successful “***fight with Canberra Mafia***”, and were very keen to help.

**Result;** we sold the lease in September 1995, and flew to Fiji for a 3 week holiday, hosted by our old mate Gary, and recuperated.

## Today; 2025; Justin and Pippi Drew

*At 123 Botany Road, in the iconic suburb of Waterloo, stands **The Cauliflower Hotel**.*

*The 1838 built Cauliflower Hotel underwent a loving restoration, by husband-and-wife team Justin and Pippi Drew, for over a year before launching their specialist rum bar and kitchen in 2015-2016.*

*The Cauliflower Hotel is a rock-inspired bar where patrons enjoy food and drink while listening to live music every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon, or can simply enjoy beer with friends while watching live sports on one of eighteen screens.*

*Drawing inspiration from Mediterranean and Mexican mezze style foods, The Forgotten Cask food menu offers a familiar vibe with a modern twist as well as solid dose of good, old-fashioned Aussie pub classics. We offer a get-away space that caters to functions and events or just small get-togethers with good friends and coworkers.*

*Upstairs at The Cauliflower Hotel is The Forgotten Cask; a specialised rum and cocktail rooftop bar and kitchen. The Forgotten Cask bar boasts a laid-back, St Lucian – style, rum focused cocktail bar with a Caribbean theme. From the palms and grass on the roof to the vintage rum posters on the walls, this bar will have patrons relaxing with a signature cocktail (all named after pirates!) and dreaming themselves to St Lucia.*

*This specialist rum bar offers rums unavailable anywhere outside the Caribbean such as Forgotten Cask, Admiral Rodney and Justin and The Forgotten Cask's exclusive Chairman's Reserve range. There is a selection of over ninety rums and spirits from around the world, some exotic cocktails, all accompanied by a food menu which takes inspiration from Pacific Rim countries from Mexico to Peru.*

*The cocktail bar extends to The Lounge Deck and further out to the tropical inspired Rooftop Terrace. Owners, Justin and Pippi Drew, also operate Big Island Operations, and hold the exclusive rights to import St Lucian Distillers rums, famously creating Chairman's Reserve.*

*With a space to suit just about any occasion and any kind of weather scenario, The Cauliflower Hotel and The Forgotten cask Rooftop Bar should be on everyone's radar.*



## 1997 to 2016

I recalled, and had fond memories, of one of my teachers at TAFE Eastern Sydney, later to become TAFE East Sydney, prior to taking over the Royal Hotel in Carcoar in 1976. He was the most practical man with so much advice to assist me in the early days, weeks and months of my time in Carcoar. It was certainly him who planted the seed for to become a Vocational Trainer after I sold the Cauliflower Hotel almost 30 years later.

**So, what is RSA?**

Well from my perspective as a “**very irresponsible server of alcohol**” for close to 30 years, and of course hundreds of fellow liquor industry licensees, RSA was either an opportunity or a curse. Having served alcohol for years to “intoxicated” customers, how would we be able stop? Many saw it as impossible. And for years it was. But there was no doubt that society was changing, and particularly the legal profession was changing too, with an increase in actions against licensed premises for injury to our customers.

And was it any wonder when you consider the things that many in the industry did? For instance; a regular got drunk (a daily occurrence), he fell over and hurt himself. He would be picked up, moved onto the footpath, an ambulance called, and he was taken to hospital. No problem for the licensed premises as he “**fell over on the footpath**”, a place of public access.

After selling the Cauli we had a lovely 3 week holiday in Fiji, being thoroughly spoilt by our old friend Gary, who was assistant manager of a beautiful resort on the Coral Coast. It enabled us to recharge, and to especially get my head together for the next challenges.

I had just turned 50, and early in 1997 I applied for a teaching role at the Eastern Suburbs TAFE; a vocational “teacher”. The initial issue I had was not having any formal teaching qualifications, so I committed to some formal courses, which immediately opened the doors to teaching. And I was successful, in gaining 2 days teaching the last 2 days of a 5 days course titled the “**New Licensees Course**”. This was right up my alley. It was perfect, as it was the pre-cursor of the soon to be mandatory 1 day Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) course. Day 1 of the 2 day course was in effect RSA, and the 2nd day, the last day, was cellar skills, and the test.

I worked all through 1997 with TAFE, and during that time the then LAB (Liquor Administration Board) with the approval of the NSW State Government, introduced RSA to the liquor industry. Initially it was not compulsory, just a recommendation to licensees.

Before the year was over, I was invited to a meeting with old colleagues, fellow member of the AHA, NSW who advised they were planning on setting up a training division for AHA members, and was I interested in joining them. Absolutely. So early in 1998 I entered into an agreement, with great incentives, to run a business under the umbrella of the AHA, initially conducting skills training, and then RSA courses. The AHA were in the process of setting themselves up as a Government Accredited RTO (Registered Training Organisation). But first we had to write an RSA course, and have it approved by the LAB. Being on good terms with

members of the LAB, and with the knowledge of having conducted a pre-cursor RSA at TAFE, we achieved our objective within a few months. Then the marketing to members commenced, and the training courses started. For the next couple of years I conducted courses all over NSW, and business was good, running under Mead Hospitality Services Pty Ltd, which I operated until 2016.

However around 2002 I got the urge to set up my own RTO (Registered Training Organisation)., which took some time, but eventually THINQ Training was launched, I left the AHA, and it operated until selling my interest in 2009, post my first cancer encounter.

All in all, I conducted RSA courses for over 10 years, to countless people keen to enter the licensed premises industry.

## 8 The end



### Enjoying a quiet Whisky in retirement

This concludes my reminiscing, and memories, of my years running pubs.

Although each pub was fundamentally different, they could each be considered a big **“family”** of loyal patrons. That is what makes them so unique.

The profound comment early in my time in Carcoar remained with me throughout my time in pubs;

***“Publicans come and go, but the townspeople remain”.***

When you think about that comment, it puts everything into perspective.

I thank you for your interest in my memories. I do hope you have had as much fun reading these stories as I have had in **“putting pen to paper”**.

Cheers,

*John Mead*