

THE NSW TAB...IN THE BEGINNING

By John Robertson: the first NSW TAB Chief Executive

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Way back in the late 1940's a young ex-serviceman, Maurie Smythe worked as Secretary of the New Zealand Racing Conference. He was intrigued about the success of an off-course betting medium then operating in France - the 'Tierce' (a Trifecta with variations). Tickets were sold in all sorts of locations, street kiosks, shops and collected by messengers on bikes, motor cycles and other conveyances, and taken to various regional collating centres before race close. Fortunately for the messengers, the Tierce was then held on only one race in the day.

Maurie developed the idea of selling totalizator type bets, win & place, quinella, doubles in off-course agencies, collating the bets race by race, and transmitting by telephone to regional centres, thence to a central control centre and eventually to the racecourse prior to race-start, The idea was sold to the Race Clubs and the Government and the New Zealand Totalizator Agency Board commenced operations on 28th March, 1951.

Maurie Smythe was appointed the first Secretary, with a former leading local government official, Clarry Grange, becoming the first General Manager. Maurie succeeded Clarry on his retirement and was General Manager at the time NSW commenced operations. Both Maurie and Clarry (up to the time of his death) evinced great interest in our success: Maurie and I still exchange Xmas greetings,

New Zealand racing received a shot in the arm from the profit distribution and the comparison between Australia and New Zealand favoured the latter. Mr. Justice Kinsella, in his 1963 Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Off-the-Course Betting in NSW, stated:

"I have visited a number of country racecourses in New Zealand and New South Wales and the contrast in appearance and amenities is startling...Wagga Wagga has one of the best country courses that I visited. The stands and amenities, good by New South Wales standards, would appear primitive and obsolete in New Zealand."

He compared prize-money paid by the Hawke's Bay Jockey Club (serving a district population of little over 50,000) with that paid by Newcastle Jockey Club at one of its biggest meetings held on May Day, 1962. Newcastle paid £2152 for its Newmarket Cup, whilst the Hawke's Bay Cup was £2500. Seven other races at Newcastle ranged between £125 and £150, whilst in Hawke's Bay similar races ranged between £375 and £1000.

The racing industry in Australia began to get the message. That popular device of Governments of delaying or quietening things down, the Royal Commission, was resorted to in several states, each Royal Commissioner painstakingly going over the same ground (including the obligatory trip to New Zealand) as his predecessor, and coming to the obvious solution: off-the-course totalizator betting along lines similar to New Zealand - or with variations - should be introduced. The off-course bookmaker solution was rejected.

Victoria commenced operations on 11th March, 1961, closely followed by Western Australia one week later on 18th March, 1961. Queensland opened on 11th August, 1962, and the A.C.T. had a two month lead over

[TABLET editor's note. This article was written by John Robertson in 1987-88 and published by parts in the newsletter of the TAB Agents Association: *Keeping TABs*, at that time. It is reproduced here in TABLET with the permission of the author and the TAB Agents Association. When the NSW TAB was established John's formal title as chief executive was General Manager. He was the longest serving of the four that held the position.]

New South Wales, opening on 1st September, 1964. South Australia and Tasmania opened later in 1967 and 1975 respectively.

In their early days the modus operandi of Victoria, Queensland and the A.C.T. followed closely that of New Zealand. Victoria had imported a number of NZTAB personnel, Queensland appointed a former NZTAB Chief Accountant as its first General Manager, whilst the first ACT General Manager came from the Victorian TAB. Essentially, hand written tickets were used, with carbon copy collating slips, closing times well in advance of race start to allow total bet transmissions to district centres thence to control centres, and thence on course.

Western Australia had to be different. Although some of the original WA Board wanted to adopt NZ procedures (and even import a NZTAB officer as General Manager), the fact that a legal off-course bookmaking system was being replaced called for a different approach. Two local senior public servants (Jack Maher and Harry Jarman) with extensive Public Service Board and Treasury experience (as well as running for the WA Government a private tractor manufacturing plant successfully retrieved from a 'down the drain' situation.) were appointed. Betting had to be up 'to the Jump'.

Both Jack and Harry were systems men. They came up with the NCR cash register as a validating machine and pre-printed race tickets, numbered as to race and nominated as to type of bet, colour coded for type of racing. The cash register imprinted the same details on the customer's copy and the collating copy - date, units, horse number. By keyboard manipulation, type of bet could be recorded on the audit tape. (If I have left anything out, hundreds of old time agents will correct me - I'm only trying to give the basic outline for the 'newcomers' brought up on computerised systems - get some in you b..s).

Ah, but what about betting to the jump. In fact not all bets were transmitted to the course, and for some time before the start of the race, control centre held the bets and winning bets were paid on the basis of the on-course dividend. Managers were empowered to decline bets in excess of a certain amount during the period bets were held and not transmitted.

At this time Al Smith (at last a name we all know) was Operations Manager and sat in the Control Centre minimising losses and maximising profits. Al knew the racing game backward, both as a punter, and at one stage penciller for a bookmaker (legitimate) where he honed his unparalleled skills in mental arithmetic.

Western Australia also provided broadcasts, seating for the public, form guides, and payout after each race allowing for re-investment, whereas Victoria and Queensland prohibited such activities in their earlier years except that telephone bettors could reinvest against winnings.

So, when Mr. Justice Kinsella was appointed in April, 1962 by the NSW Government to act as Royal Commissioner to inquire into Off-the-Course Betting in New South Wales, which way would he jump? Would we have:

- A TAB system and if so, which model?
- A licensing of SP Bookmakers
- A scheme proposed by Registered on-course Bookmakers
- No action at all.

In 1962 Mr, Justice E.P. Kinsella was appointed to conduct a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Off-the-Course Betting in NSW and his Report was published in April 1963. Some interesting conclusions and observations were made by the Royal Commissioner:

- there are about 6,000 illegal bookmakers in NSW... I adopt that figure without any assurance of its accuracy.
- Allowing for a possibly wide margin of error, I assess the annual turnover of off-the-course betting at £273,000.000 per annum. (Remember this was 1963 before inflation!)

- magistrates generally do not regard off-the-course betting as among the more serious of the various types of criminal offence which come before them. (Nothing ever changes).
- a lawful system-of off-the-course betting would give to racing financial assistance which it urgently requires, as otherwise country racing is likely to become extinct and racing generally will almost certainly lose ground to Victoria and Queensland .
- If lawful Off-the-course betting...is to be protected against the unfair competition of illegal bookmakers, it is essential that the penalties be increased... The only effective remedy is to make the game not worth the candle, (It took years for penalties to be increased in NSW contrasted with other States ... a former Premier and Minister then responsible for the TAB told me 'John, it is un-Australian to gaol a SP Bookie', I nearly got the sack when this statement was published after given 'off the record' to a reporter. Moral: Never ever speak to the press 'off the record'.)
- (On a proposal to license off-course bookies) I am satisfied it is not practicable to devise any system of supervision which will effectively check the amount of the off-the-course bookmakers' turnover ... the temptation to evade payment (of turnover tax) would be so great and the opportunities so many that there would be widespread and substantial evasion.
- (On the provision of toilets in agencies) it seems illogical as well as inhospitable to arrange for payout after each race, which is surely an invitation to the optimistic punters to wait, and at the same time deny them toilet facilities. (Fortunately in recommending certain conditions for agencies, the need for toilets was not included. Early Western Australian agencies had toilets - some the premises of former licensed off-course bookies - but under an enlightened TAB administration they were closed. The cleaning and risks posed to security would be horrendous - anyone care to disagree?)

The Royal Commissioner had no hesitation in recommending the introduction of a TAB system modelled on the Victorian pattern, then existing, but modified to allow a 2/6d unit (25cents to the new-comers), after-race payout, and a later race-close. He listed several advantages and some disadvantages of a TAB system but concluded that the advantages decisively outweighed the disadvantages. (I have reproduced the list elsewhere because of length,) [TABLET ed. – the list is attached at the end of this article.]

Some of the conditions for the setting up of the TAB proposed by the Royal Commissioner make interesting reading in the light of 1987 conditions - remember that most of the prohibitions appeared in the Totalizator (Off the Course) Betting Act, 1964. In fairness to the Royal Commissioner he said 'A certain degree of flexibility in the rules and practices may be necessary and it may be advisable to review them after a period of, say, three years.' They were:

- Advertising of the TAB system or any of its agencies be prohibited (except for unostentatious display of name and sign outside each agency).
- No agency to be sited in the vicinity of churches, schools and licensed premises. (Fortunately the Act stated that the Board should 'have regard to the proximity of the proposed office, branch or agency to places of public worship...' etc. So the Board had regard to the proximity - whatever that meant. I remember the Board itself agonizing over the location for Angel Arcade Branch, downstairs from a pub. At another stage I remember a parish priest wanting us to locate a TAB in a parish hall because he was at loggerheads with the local church youth group - probably too much rock and roll). (The Act today omits any reference to premises licensed under the Liquor Act - in the past, in having 'regard' we got some good premises next door or in de-licensed parts,)
- Prohibition of broadcasting except that scratchings, results, dividends and race closings could be made by loud speaker.

- Prohibition inside the agency of transistors and other portable radios or other means of racing information. (Old time agents and managers will remember chasing poor old offending punters out to the footpaths until an enlightened management told them to forget it - the information age and cheap Japanese transistors made a mockery of the prohibition.)
- Prohibition of loitering outside or in the vicinity of an agency and of any seating accommodation, (Remember the opposition of nearly all agents to the very idea of putting in seating - now how much opposition exists?)
- Prohibition of any form of entertainment or refreshment within the agency (All the Act first allowed 'no trade business or calling of any kind, other than the business of the Board shall be authorised'... 'whilst open to the public...'. I suspect that some 'funny business' took place occasionally when the premises were not open to the public. Perhaps readers of 'Keeping Tabs' may care to provide some details - even those which might have caused a 'technical breach of the Act'.)
- Prohibition of the display of any written or pictorial matter other than official notices, and race lists.

In other words, we were to establish antiseptic sterile outlets and to a large extent this was done. Early appointees will recall the policing done by field staff (then called inspectors), the obsessive attention given to cleanliness (next to godliness in some books) by Property Division, whilst our punters blithely played their transistors, throwing papers, cigarettes and some unmentionable items onto the lino floors, and yelling 'Open another window'. Those were the days...

Next instalment I will definitely tell you about how we started TAB. I wonder however if I will reach 9th December. 1964. We will call it TAB - the First Six Months. (I always said I wanted to write a book.)

NSW TAB ... THE CONTINUING STORY

Last instalment I wrote about the Kinsella Royal Commission of 1962-63 and its recommendations, most of which were embodied in the Totalizator (Off-Course-Betting) Act, 1964, which was enacted by Parliament following, its introduction by the then Premier and Treasurer, the Hon. J. B. Renshaw. Jack Renshaw, a modest, unassuming man, was a good friend and supporter of TAB. When Labor returned to Government in 1975, he again became our Minister as Treasurer, and was responsible for the appointment of Ron Auswild as our Chairman. He of course appointed our first Chairman, Russ Garbutt, who enjoyed his full confidence.

The First Board

The first Board was appointed on 10th April, 1964. By 30th June of that year it had determined the following:

- A preliminary estimate of the establishment finance required.
- Recruitment of key executive staff
- The location of an area where a large number of telephone exchange lines could be readily made available by the PMG [TABLET ed. note: PMG, the predecessor of Telstra.]
- The acquisition within that area of a head office and control centre building with much open floor space, ready staff access and sufficient car parking space.

- The design and manufacture of telephone equipment not normally supplied by the PMG
- The degree of mechanisation which could be economically attempted initially
- The acquisition of temporary premises (Sussex Street) pending the outfitting of the chosen Head Office - formerly Bushell's Tea and Coffee Warehouse at 495 Harris St., Ultimo.

Who comprised the first Board. I will pen a few remarks about each.

R.E. Garbutt:

The first Chairman and really the driving force in getting things off the ground. With nothing in the bank but a £5000 advance from Treasury, he bought Head Office for £150,000 and placed orders for equipment including 1000 NCR receipt validators for ticket issues. 'Russ', a career State public servant, was then Commissioner for Land Tax, having previously served as Senior Inspector at the Public Service Board and responsible for office mechanization systems.

His office in Phillip Street overlooked parts of Hyde Park and Macquarie Street. When he was about to interview the NCR representatives prior to giving the order which won them NCR Salesmen of the Year awards, one of them remarked 'What a marvellous view you have here'. Russ replied 'Take a good look, Mr. Wilkinson you may not have another opportunity.'

Russ retired from the Board in July 1973 and died earlier this year.

B.H. Crowley:

Later Sir Brian, he was nominated by the AJC, being then its Chairman. He was noted for the eating of fruit cake and the Board Secretary made sure of its availability. Once pulled up for driving along York Street the wrong way the policeman asked him where the hell he was from. Sir Brian replied truthfully Merrywinebone, via Pokataroo near Collarenebri (he also omitted his city address). The cop said 'Piss off back to the bush the city isn't the place for you'.

N.E. Manion

The nominee of the STC, Newman was a gentle soul and former General Manager of Mercantile Mutual Insurance. He wanted the General Manager to sign all cheques personally (thank goodness the Board did not give me that duty). His wife had warned him off cigarettes so on Board Day he chain smoked and then helped himself to a few for the drive home.

F. Sim Bennett

Nominee of Country Racing, 'Sim' was a grazier who owned a spread named Kambah just outside the then city boundaries of Canberra. It is now a suburb. He was also a member of the ACT TAB. Thrice married, he had the reputation of being quite a boy but we found him enjoyable company. One of our executives (nameless) tried to race his then wife off at the opening of the Goulburn Sub-Regional Centre, with out success, and without knowing her identity at the time - very quickly rectified.

S.N. Nivison

The longest serving Board member, Stuart, a nominee of Country Racing, retired from the Board in June 1981. A successful owner, racing administrator (Chairman of the Country Conference for several years) he was a great fighter for country clubs. Often prefaced his remarks 'I may only be a country bloke but...'. Stuart is the sole survivor still alive of the original board members.

J.R. Reeves

'Jim', the nominee of the NSW Trotting Club, was a powerful Board member dedicated to totalizator operations. He was a good supporter of 'the senior staff', maybe because he always enjoyed an ale or two in their company. Both Jim and his wife were excellent hosts at Harold Park for many Tab-ers.

S. H. Banks

'Si' then Chairman of the Greyhound Racing Control Board, was the nominee of that Board. A former railwayman, he had been Campaign manager for a former Premier, J.J. McGirr. No matter how long Board days were in the early stages, he always excused himself in time to catch the '4 pm, Central to Liverpool'.

Hon. J. N. Thom MLC

The Minister's nominee, Norman had had an outstanding career in the Trade Union and Labor movement, having served as State then Federal Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union, Chairman of the NSW Trades and Labor Council, and a member of the ACTU. Another distinction was that he was the father of Bill Thom. He got the shock of his life when I told the Board that a son of a Board member had applied - he did not know! The Board did not think it mattered. Norman was most helpful in the early negotiations concerning union representation for TAB staff. After a lengthy illness, Norman died recently. His memory is respected.

G. Wells

'George' Wells, a former Town Clerk of Newcastle, County Clerk of the Northumberland County Council, and at the time of appointment, Secretary of the Newcastle Jockey Club, was the nominee of Newcastle and the Provincial Racing Clubs. Whilst I say 'nominee' informed gossip had it that Newcastle MPs insisted that the Newcastle nominee got the job. I did not mind - my old home town was Newcastle. George always did his homework and was always quoting statistics to support his arguments. He always insisted on being present when Property inspected likely sites in Newcastle. Barney Page took Al Smith along on one such inspection to divert George's attention away. The next moment George joined the negotiating party! Al was found outside dozing on a street seat in the sun - the night before had been a long one. George's favourite tippie 'Dirty Annie' (his words for DA) 'with lemonade'.

Financing the Board

Under the Act, the establishment costs were to be met by the racing clubs, to be recouped (with interest charges) by the Government foregoing an amount equivalent to 1% of off-course turnover from its share of commission. The Minister approved of the raising of £1,000,000 initially and the AJC, STC and the NSW Trotting Club undertook to provide this amount in equal shares. A number of other clubs including greyhound clubs were prepared to contribute but were not asked to do so. The reason was simple. All that happened was that the three major Clubs with the Chairman went to the Bank of NSW (now Westpac) and with a Government guarantee of repayment with interest, the Bank coughed up...good business.

In the end a total of £9,000,000 was provided from this source, with funds to recoup the drawings being earned by March, 1971. Part of the increase in capital drawings was approved by the Minister to finance computerization - one of the conditions imposed was that the Board's computer could be used offline for Government work at cost.

So the Chairman was able to pay for the Head Office and the NCR machines, and to refund the £5000 advance from Treasury. What was more important, he could also pay the executive staff the Board had interviewed and appointed.

Selecting the First Executives

Five positions were advertised: General Manager, Operations Manager, Chief Accountant, Secretary and Property Officer, using W. D. Scott & Co., Management Consultants. The Consultants agreed a list of those to be interviewed (including psychological testing - yes we went through that too) and a final short list went to the Board with detailed reports.

I can only talk of my interview with the Board. In his office at Land Tax, Russ sat behind a huge desk. In a half circle extending from one side of the desk sat eight other Board members, each behind an examination type desk. In the middle of the circle sat the candidate - no desk to hide his trembling knees - whether the chair was fixed or swivel I can't remember - not the squeaking one we used to use in the Board Room for interviewees! And every Board member had his go. Thank goodness they did not ask me what a quinella was - I was simply a babe in the woods as far as betting was concerned. My only experience of racing had been during the War (WWII - not the Boer) when in England I had attended Brighton Greyhounds twice - and in several 6-dog races, I never had a collect, as the animals I backed either fought, fell over, or simply ran last anyway.

Anyway, I had helped to set up a State-wide organisation having been a Deputy Director of Civil Defence when that organisation was set up in 1955 - knew something about, communications, planning, administration and trouble shooting, had administered a State school building programme so that covered property - so I found I was able to answer most curly ones.

When I went out the door with Russ escorting me out - he winked and I thought 'Hell I might even get that job ... what will I do now.'

Well the Board did me proud ... they selected the best Operations Manager in Australia in Al Smith and I was home and hosed. Al was then Operations Manager in Western Australia and I know that the Chairman had been most impressed with their operation and the adaption of the NCR machine.

Jack Nicol came from the Australian Gas Light Company as Chief Accountant, Eric Cole from H.C.Sleigh as Secretary, and Barney Page from the Commonwealth Bank as Property Officer. They proved a tremendous team to work with, especially in the trying early days.

I arranged to meet Jack Nicol and Barney Page for a drink one Saturday morning (Eric and Al weren't available)... we met at Sussex Street and adjourned to a pub in the Haymarket where Jack seemed to be at home. From memory Barney did not seem to be impressed with Sussex Street and said so. He had a small jaunty hat with a feather and it did not impress Jack Nic. Gazing at the hat as Barney departed Jack said 'Cocky bastard isn't he!' I could see we were going to have fun.

Jack loved to tell the story about Barney and Jack going into the urinal. (Both used to make much of their GPS education - Eric Cole and I went to Newcastle B. H. S.) When they came out Barney said to Jack 'Didn't they teach you at Joey's, to wash your hands after urinating?' Jack replied 'That might be all right at Scots - at Joey's they tell you not to pee on your fingers'.

Starting Up

I started at Sussex Street on 10th July, 1964. The Chairman had borrowed a stenographer from the Public Service Board a young attractive girl, Mary Blackman. He had found her to be an excellent secretary and he was happy when I agreed to continue her employment. So Mary (married name Janes) was the Board's No. 1 employee.

Russ had referred a soft-spoken Irishman, Tom O'Leary, to me as a potential driver. I enlisted him immediately and Tom and I carried most of the furniture into Sussex Street. In later times as Tom drove

me around the city and suburbs, I found that I was often assured as I gripped my seat with white knuckles with a soft 'we just made that Misther Robertson'... Tom had a penchant for making an intersection as the amber turned to red - sometimes I missed seeing the amber. Still ... we made it.

The Administrative Officer at Legacy rang me ... one of the members had just retired from the Commonwealth Public Service and was making life hell for the Admin. Officer by going in every day to worry him about this or that. Could I give him a job? Frank Graham was 65 (I had to apply Nelson's telescope but I called him a 'temporary') and he came in as a 'chaser up'. Frank would go to the Government Printer's Office, the Government Stores Office or where-ever, have a cup of tea with the right bloke and get anything required in a matter of moments when going through regular channels would get you nowhere In fact we started operations with a lot of borrowed equipment gained through the old boy network - I know some came from my old stamping ground Civil Defence - and the Operations Room was furnished with examination tables from the Education Department. I have some doubts if any paper work was generated. Frank just wore them down.

Many early staff and agents would remember Frank coming into a branch or agency with his 'Fixed and Moveable Assets Register' seeking the whereabouts of Plus Adder No. ...The fact that queues were out the door, two collators hadn't turned up and the panic button was on, never registered with Frank ... he did suffer from deafness ... and he had been told by real experts where to go and what to do with it in his time.

I have been assured that the Assets Register has never reached the heights of accuracy achieved by Frank, but I wonder if anyone cared anyway.

Jack, Barney, Al and Eric eventually turned up. I got a switch board operator from one of the Government Departments I used to cover as a Public Service Board Inspector. She used blue eye shadow as though there was a limitless supply - 'I can't recall her name but she was known as 'Mouldy Eyes'. Anyway the American

Fleet came to town - she shot through - Ron Campion did locate her but she was enjoying herself too much to come back and take calls for us ... not from us I hastily add.

We were overwhelmed with applications for jobs...I advertised for a Personnel Officer and couldn't make up my mind between two of the applicants, Ron Campion and Bob Lidbetter, so employed them both and never regretted it as there were two areas of Personnel work needing attention anyway. With my Public service Board experience and contacts, we devised an application form which in these days of EEO and Anti-Discrimination broke every rule in the book. It was a beauty and before we saw the applicant we knew just about everything, provided honesty had been observed in filling out the form. One bloke finished the first page and then turned over to the next. It came back with no further detail except the inscription across the page 'F.... GESTAPO'

Al Smith had to have an Assistant Operations Manager. One of the best employment resumes came from a Queensland applicant - even had his 'photo' attached - then very uncommon practice. What was more he was then employed as Assistant to the Operations Manager, Queensland TAB. Much handsomer than his picture, Norm Gregory was body-snatched and Operations were on the way.

Both Norm and Al had left their families interstate until such time as they could locate homes. It wasn't easy as most of us would start early in the morning and not get home until midnight. They shared an apartment in Blues Point Towers. Over their breakfast corn flakes... I believe one of them used to put ice cream and pineapple on his cereal ...(Norm would you confirm) they would go through the thousands of applications for employment as Branch staff. Out would go the incomplete form, the spelling error, the culling was ruthless. Norm must have a thousand and one stories.

To be continued.

Starting Up (continued)

In the previous instalment I wrote about some of the early appointments. Last December I attended a re-union of retired administrators from the Education Department - they treat me as an honorary member as I worked as a clerk in the Department from 1936 to 1955. There I met 87 year old Reg Moylan down in the city from Lismore and he reminded me that following his retirement from the Department in 1964 I had recruited him together with another retired colleague Jim Carroll to help Jack Nicol and Eric Cole in the accounting and stores areas. Both Reg and Jim worked for a few months in that hectic early period.

Our first Stores and Purchasing Officer was Sid Baker. Sid came from the Government Stores Department where I had known him to be highly regarded. Sid was meticulous in the performance of his duties. Calling tenders for the supply of toilet paper (all organisations need adequate supplies of bumpf) Sid required sample rolls. Eric Cole reported visiting Sid's office shortly afterwards to find Sid out in the corridor unrolling toilet rolls and counting the number of sheets supplied. I don't know whether he had a test for tensile strength but I wouldn't be surprised if he had. Regrettably Sid suffered a fatal heart attack at work after a relatively short period of service, his replacement being George Faulkner.

Sid Gigg was appointed Head Storeman. A Digger from WWII and stores experience in the Department of Transport, Sid was the epitome of a good quartermaster. Stories about him are legend in the TAB but if put to paper would be regarded as libellous and Sid is still alive to sue. He showed great loyalty - who will ever forget his attempt to warn when I was addressing a Staff and Agents Christmas Party gathering at a church hall in Annandale. Behind my back, gesticulating rudely was a group comprising Tony Hayes, Peter Crawford, Mal Brown and one or two others, and indicating to the assembled multitude what they thought about my speech and what they would do with it. Unknown to Sid, it was a put up job and the more distressed he became the more I ignored his warnings.

Barry Bow was our first Training Officer. He did not stay long with us, moving to a better job with I think the Electricity Commission. I am sure however that some of the longer serving Agents will recall Barry's endeavours to cram into their minds the basic facts about NCR operation, collations, cash control, payout and dividend calculation and the like. 'Hardships you b....s. those of you joining the TAB in the computerised era don't know the meaning of the word!'

Talking of training how many of my gentle readers remember my address to the incoming class of trainees, warning of the temptations posed termed 'Wine, Wild Women and Wagering' or as the Yanks have it 'Booze, Babes and Bang-Tails'. At the end of the course, when questioned about the content of the General Manager's introductory address, most by then very confused trainees couldn't even remember if the General Manager had talked to them. That's why we had so many cash counts.

Of course, all of this initial activity was taking place in our temporary headquarters in Sussex Street, Haymarket, opposite the then Police Club. A few welcome ales late at night in the Club revived us for the journey home and the early start the next morning. Strangely the old headquarters building still survives though the Police Club, long gone into liquidation is now a Chinese Restaurant and Chinatown has expanded to take over most of the neighbouring buildings.

Apropos of Chinatown ... Eric Cole went to the old Tai Yuen in Haymarket in the early days with some friends. To his surprise, he was greeted warmly by the proprietor, taken to the best table in the house (it had tablecloth on it - not the bare laminex), Black Label produced and Eric and his companions dined sumptuously. When Eric went to pay the bill the proprietor said 'That's OK, Mr. Dugan'. Darcy Dugan had just been released from jail a week or so previously and on reflection, we all agreed that there was a faint resemblance. Anyway I don't think Eric ever went back to the old Tai Yuen.

Meanwhile much discussion was going into the design of branches. Where the lay-out of the building permitted it, we preferred the straight in approach, with the selling windows facing the door, making it easier for queuing. Unfortunately, this was not always possible, as those who have served in side-on selling

counters will testify as to queue confusion *in* the early days with everyone in the queues nearest the entrance.

We decided on the side-on bench for the NCR rather than adopting the then Western Australian TAB practice of having a front counter with the NCR machine square on to the customer. Certainly the selling speeds achieved by some of our sellers were phenomenal, especially when the queues reached out the door. I remember observing West Ryde before and after the trains arrived at the nearby station just after the TAB started. With up to ten in the queue facing each window (a light load) the machine noise was a gentle 'g-dung...g-dung...g-dung'. With a train arrival the queues would rapidly build up and the machine noise reached a crescendo 'g-dung/ g-dung/dung, dung, dung, dung-ung-ung'. Those old time agents like Dan Mongan, Bob Ritchie and other accomplished benders of the truth (usually golfers) will no doubt claim improbable high rates of ticket selling but the fact remains that few of the modern computer terminals can match the NCR rate of ticket issue - though with the use of multiple bet transactions, the actual number of individual bets issued within a given time per terminal may be higher.

Talking of West Ryde - will any-one ever forget the first manager, Kennedy by name. He was a pharmacist by profession and excitable by nature. His wife attended the agency and supervised the manager. I understand Brian is still around having undertaken other business ventures since leaving the TAB in early '65.

Barney Page and his property off-siders, Bob Johnstone, Harry Sayers, and Ray Sweetman, were out and about scouring the town for branch sites, as far away as possible from schools and churches, and not too close (but not too far) from pubs and clubs. We had to have regard to the proximity of our proposed sites to these other places as I mentioned in any earlier instalment. Having selected the site, it had to be approved by Council, appropriate rental negotiated, telephones arranged (rather difficult to get in 1964), and fitting out organised. With the descent of bureaucracy and outside interference into the affairs of TAB in recent years, I doubt if the corner-cutting we took in the early days would have any support now but at least we got the places open as soon as we could.

One of our recruits was an old Signals Sergeant who had been recommended to us to organise our telephone communications. Unfortunately fond of a wee drop, he went out to Randwick to organise the on-course representative's telephone. He decided to come the bounce on the Secretary of the AJC, then the late Derek Glasgow, who had been a Lieutenant-Colonel during WWII. Back at Head Office, Al Smith took the call from Derek Glasgow. 'I have ... here from the TAB. Get the so and so out of here before I do something rash'. Ah, you can't win them all. Gus Jeff came on strength, established good relations with all, including many telephone senior technicians and we never had any trouble after that. Gus never had his entertainment claims queried either.

Some of the longer-serving agents will remember Bob Johnstone who purchased a number of properties in the Rozelle-Balmain area and left the TAB to develop his property interests. Bob, a thorough gentleman died a few years ago prematurely. Ray Sweetman left to become Property Manager for the Westpac Bank. Harry Sayers who became the TAB Property Manager, is still hale and hearty in retirement, devoting his time to the needs of Legacy widows, especially in the home maintenance area.

We're getting closer to 9th December, 1964. Garth Cary (son of Cliff and with considerable racing connections) had been selected as the first Race-day Controller but after a few weeks tendered his resignation and was succeeded by Clem Leary who started up operations in the first Control Centre in Sussex Street. Clem had been a Steward with the New South Wales Trotting Club and had originally been chosen to be a TAB Inspector of Branches ... an appropriate choice for a former steward ... so see what some of you ex-branch staff missed.

Recruitment of casual staff proceeded apace. Remember Midge Low. She was being interviewed by Al Smith. Seeing photos of Al's children on his desk, she brightly enquired 'Your grandchildren?'. I think that remark may have delayed her entry on duty. Thereafter Al was known among certain of us as 'Grandfather'. He was also known as 'Thunderball' but the origin of that name cannot be told in print.

We announced the opening date of Wednesday 9th December, 1964. Whereupon one week before the event. both the Sun and Mirror delighted in printing pictures of vacant shops bare of fittings, so as to be able to triumph over us when we failed to open by saying 'We told you so'.

We had a Press Conference attended by Board Members and the Press Corps. It was notable for a number of things - the amount of alcohol consumed by journalists (and some others), the number of full bottles of liquor which went missing, and the remark of the late Pat Farrell in reply to the question of whether he would respect 'off-the-record' briefings. 'Not if it would spoil a good story' said the redoubtable Pat.

The Victorian TAB contingent arrived led by Bart Godwin with Reg Sampson, Jim Soulsby and several others. The then Operations Manager (Vic), Ivor Zohs and Assistant Operations Manager, Jack Rutter made welcome appearances. That team was to give valuable guidance in the branches and control centre on opening day and the ensuing week or so.

They were accommodated at a new motel in the Woolloomooloo area. For convenience, costs of stay were charged to Bart Godwin's room no. 403. There was a licensed restaurant with floorshow. After a hard day's work relaxation was essential. I never enquired about the total of the charges met against Room No. 403 - all I can say is that the NSW TAB owed a great debt of gratitude to the team from Victoria, who shared our opening.

On 9th December 1964, six Branches opened for business:

1. Manly (Bill Anderson as Manager)
2. Auburn (Cliff Nash)
3. Parramatta {Jim Graham}
4. West Ryde (Brian Kennedy)
8. Charlestown (Col Duff)
10. Maroubra Junction (Peter Crawford)

Agents Cliff Nash and Peter Crawford are still serving as 'survivors'.

The meeting covered was Canterbury – I can't recall the statistics except that the turnover of the six branches would be taken in one day by a reasonably sized agency - but we must allow for inflation - a pound in 1964 would buy a lot more than two dollars in 1988.

We had organised for Ticket No. 1 on Machine No. 1 at Branch No. 1. Manly to be sold to the Chairman of the Board, Russell Garbutt. Bill Anderson, a former seafarer amongst other things, with muscular arms and a roaring voice was to see to it. Al Smith escorted the Chairman to the Branch. An immense crowd blocked the windows. Al approached the head of the queue and explained the purpose. The beefy bloke at the head of the queue said 'Youse can go and get' Whilst Ticket No.1, Machine No. 1 issued at No. 1 Branch, Manly on Day No. 1 resides in a display case at Head Office, I can assure you, gentle reader that it is a fake, dummied up by Al Smith in the quiet of the evening. Somewhere out there, no doubt in an old punter's wallet is the genuine article. Should we offer a reward for its recovery?

Times were tough in that opening week. Branches were overstaffed with trainee managers, assistant managers and female supervisors falling over one another. I can remember that we even had a person allocated as a transmitter, public announcer and recall meeting Dianne perched on a stool at Maroubra Junction, coolly swinging her legs and calling 'Two minutes to race close'. (Dianne later married 'Nifty' Neville Knight - now Tweed Heads). Branches took days to balance – cash shortages were the order of the day.

Mal Brown's job was the clearing out of the drunks littering the floor at Parramatta at close of day - or was it night at 11 p.m. Bob Peoples got tired of missing the last ferry from Manly to go home to the Eastern

Suburbs so turned up at the Branch with five clean shirts ready to sleep on the premises or that is what I was told.

Memories and names are difficult to recall after almost quarter of a century ... I am sure there are a 1001 stories about the opening period and I would like to hear them. So start those letters rolling in to the Editor.

To be continued ... (Next time we get a wet week)

[TABLET ed. note: Unfortunately the 'wet week' never arrived and this marks the end of John's article. The reference page from the report of the Royal Commission follows. Also following is the message to all staff and agents from John Robertson on his retirement in 1981. It will be noted that in the message John foreshadowed the writing of the above article.]

SYSTEM BEST SUITED TO NEW SOUTH WALES

After having heard evidence and argument about the systems of off-the-course totalisator betting in Victoria and Western Australia, and in the light of my observations and discussions in Victoria, Western Australia and New Zealand, I have come to the opinion that of the several totalisator systems, the one most suited to conditions in this State is the Victorian, but with modifications to provide that the minimum betting unit shall be 2s. 6d., that betting continues until (as nearly as practicable) twenty minutes before the start in metropolitan agencies, and thirty minutes in country areas, that winning bets be paid after each race and that a pool be established to enable betting to be conducted on metropolitan races in Victoria and Queensland. It is on this basis that I shall make my assessment of its advantages and disadvantages.

ADVANTAGES

- (1) There is no personal profit motive in the totalisator system. It operates impersonally and impartially. It holds out no persuasion to persons to bet.
- (2) It provides a reasonably adequate method of off-the-course betting.
- (3) It permits but does not encourage people to bet.
- (4) It is less conducive to increasing gambling in the community than any other method of off-the-course betting.
- (5) It is less conducive to excessive betting than any other method of off-the-course betting.
- (6) It makes reasonable provision for the small bettor.
- (7) Its return to the average bettor for each £1 invested is generally better than the return from starting-price bookmakers.
- (8) It minimises the undesirable aspects of betting shops.
- (9) All bets are by cash. Credit betting, the most dangerous form of gambling, is impossible.
- (10) Its operation is simple to control and supervise.
- (11) It would minimise corruption by big bettors or others of persons engaged in the racing industry and would minimise the possible inducements for interference with horses in the running of a race.

(12) Its contribution to revenue and to the racing industry is much greater in relation to turnover than any bookmaking system.

(13) It alone of all betting systems cannot defraud the Treasury or avoid its proper contributions to the racing industry. Payment in full of taxation and of contributions to the racing industry is assured.

(14) For the foregoing reasons it would give more satisfaction to the community generally.

DISADVANTAGES

(1) It would make less immediate impact on illegal betting than a lawful system of off-the-course bookmakers.

(2) It would take longer to establish than a bookmakers system.

(3) It would be less acceptable to a number of bettors who have been accustomed to betting with illegal bookmakers and would take longer to attract their custom.

(4) The facilities for doubles betting would be restricted to one or two for each race meeting; contingency betting and all-up betting would not be possible.

(5) It would be less effective in suppressing off-the-course telephone betting than a system of licensed telephone bookmakers which I have already discussed and rejected.

This last disadvantage calls for some discussion, in the light of experience elsewhere. Punters who at present bet by telephone with off-the-course bookmakers, particularly the big bettors, would eschew the totalisator and would almost certainly continue their present illegal practices. The evidence of Sergeant Miller indicates that telephone betting in Victoria has been reduced in the sense that telephone bookmakers no longer freely give out their telephone number, but restrict it to particular selected

MESSAGE TO ALL STAFF AND AGENTS FROM THE RETIRING GENERAL MANAGER

My last day of service with the Board will be Friday, 13th November, when I will have completed 17 years and 4 months in the position of General Manager. I was the second employee to enter on service with the Board, the first being Miss Mary Blackman (now Mrs. Janes) who entered on duty to assist Mr. Russell Garbutt, the Chairman of the Board. Mary became my Secretary, but subsequently resigned a few years later following her marriage.

Amongst my first duties at the first Headquarters in Sussex Street was the carrying in of the office furniture, assisted by the late Frank Graham, a 65 year old "retread". After two days I promptly went home to bed with a bad dose of 'flu, and a lot of the initial correspondence (which was most substantial) was dictated from my bed of pain. I am still not clear as to how the rest of the office furniture was located in the office at that time.

Shortly afterwards I was joined by Barney Page, Jack Nicol, the late Al Smith, and Eric Cole, all of whom had been selected by the Board prior to my appointment. We set about the recruitment of the key teams who were to acquire premises and outfit them, recruit other staff and train them, obtain supplies and set up a Control Centre so that we could start operations on 9th December 1964.

I am sure that everyone will be interested in the attached copy of a report from the Sydney Morning Herald of 5th February 1964 headed "Tote Plan in N.S.W. Would Not Work, Say S.P. Men". We have shown that the T.A.B. system can work and has worked to the very great benefit of the racing industry in New South Wales and also of Government revenues.

Since the Board commenced operations in 1964 up to 30th June 1981 the following results have been achieved by the Board:

Total Betting Sales	\$7,698,490,598
Net Payments to Consolidated Revenue	535,754,708
Additional Commission Paid to Racecourse Development Committee	12,650,246
Soccer Pools Sales	31,529,957
Duty Paid to Revenue and to Sport and Recreation Fund	9,458,987

The Board has distributed:

\$129,130,281 to Galloping Clubs
29,628,992 to Trotting Clubs and the Trotting Authority
34,463,783 to Greyhound Clubs and the Greyhound Racing
Control Board
29,780,142 allocated to the Racecourse Development Fund
\$223,003,198 going to the Racing Industry in total

Surely the above is a wonderful tribute to the T.A.B. system - a system which last year returned to the racing industry in New South Wales more money than the off-course betting system in the United Kingdom contributed to racing in that country. I can only trust that future events will not jeopardise the remarkable success that has been T.A.B. N.S.W.

I am not claiming any credit for the totality of the above achievements. Such could only happen because all of us, Head Office staff, Branch staff, Agents, our wonderful casual staff, and all the long-time contractors who have worked for the Board, have contributed and co-operated to gain this result. I have personally received much loyalty and friendship and I thank all concerned for this wonderful experience over the past 17 years.

We have been fortunate in that the Board itself has been a most responsible body and has given the necessary guidance and support to the staff. Whilst the Members are basically drawn from nominations made by major racing clubs or groups of clubs or controlling authorities, the Board's actions have always been taken in the interests of the racing industry and of the development of T.A.B. I am proud to have been the Chief Executive Officer of the Board and treasure my relationship with each of the fine people who have occupied the position of either Chairman or Board Member.

I wish everyone well in their future career with the T.A.B. no matter in what position. I have seen many persons who have given loyal and valuable service to the T.A.B. move on to higher things and I have always been proud of their success. I know that my successor, Mr. Len Corkill, and his team of executives will continue the policy of endeavouring to get the best out of all attached to this organisation.

Finally I hope I will not lose contact with the organisation. I would like to devote some time to writing about the development of the N.S.W. T.A.B. - whether or not it will stand up to publication is another matter.

If anyone reading this considers that they have some contribution to make in the form of T.A.B. anecdotes or comment about the operations, I would be very happy to receive that information, which of course would be acknowledged.

Thank you all for your wonderful support.

(signed) John Robertson

General Manager.

10th November 1981.