

# ANECDOTES OF WHITTEN UNCLES

## HARRY

His build was rotund, his complexion ruddy. He always wore a beard. One time it was rather long. As he passed a little boy the child sidled over and said "Good night Santa Claus".

Harry had his elbow bumped 'It wasn't very hard, but I could've got on well without it."

Looking at Saturn through Ted's telescope "He hopped away, like a big bull frog or a white possum".

[On Ted's snoring]: "like a saw on an old board".

## 1934

The men were working and AGW was rousing away "I say Jim (his nickname) I suppose you'd rouse just as much if you'd skinned your dimble finger as you would for your long one."

Dad [AGW] had a couple of shots at a flying fox and when he came in Harry said "You should have kept at pigeon shooting when you were a boy – you'd have made a great name for yourself. I suppose the old flying fox thought he was on the edge of an earthquake or something."

When I [Harry] go down to the trough to give my horse a drink and I see a fly or a destructive insect in the water, I usually kill it, but if it's a harmless little beetle or something like that, I usually put in a straw or piece of grass to help him out [rheumatic knees and all].

He [Harry] was once in his sulky when a little bird attacked the horse to pull out a hair. Harry waited for a while and then said "well, I can't wait all day for you little chap, I have work to do."

An old lizard ran up the wall in the kitchen. Thinking he might be a death adder, Dad [AGW] handed Harry a pint of boiling water. Uncle Harry was sitting up having his meal. "I suppose he'll go home and Mrs Lizard will ask 'Well how did you get on today?' 'Oh' he'd say 'I met some very insulting folk who threw hot water in my face'."

Talking of lambs dying in the drought Harry said "I used to take it to heart once, but now I look at it this way, If he lives he lives, if he dies, I get the skin off him'.

## 1935

Early one morning two flies were worrying Harry in bed. "They'll go away when it gets a bit lighter" he thought "but then I looked up and they were peeping over the top of the blankets at me trying to make out if I was alive or dead. As though they didn't have a care in the whole world, but must come bothering me.

Dad [AGW] and the boys [LKW and WKW] were down at Spring Park branding steers. For dinner they had quite a number of oranges. Harry said "I don't think orange juice is much good for chaps hanging on to the end of a bull."

"Certain people were cut out to be toffs but then weren't wanted"

I [Phyllis] said my brothers [LKW & WKW] were not bad kids.

Ted said "there are a lot worse than them, if you could find `em"

Sometimes Harry's phone would ring and he'd pick it up "Hello dearie, how are you?" "I'm not too clever myself, dearie". One day Auntie Hilda rang and he didn't recognise his own code "I was a bit phone shy".

Harry was a bachelor.

[He was] Very thoughtful of others, and a great stickler for the truth. He always knelt to say his prayers. [He had] a hearty laugh and a ringing voice. [He] Sent Auntie Jennie spring flowers in a letter.

He told me [Phyllis] me of my younger days. Lucy said my parents were scared of me "You don't mind a person getting wild once in a while, but they needn't pull the house down".

Describing an asbestos mine on Flat Top Mt "It was so steep you'd have to put a britchen on a wallaby" [??]

Before the women arrived, Harry had a shower under the outside bathroom tap and came in with just a towel wrapped around him. Being large around the girth the towel only went half way. He tried for a while to see if he could wangle his curtain to turn the corner but failed so said to Wes "go `way, go `way".

Thinking Beth was in the bathroom one Sunday I [Phyllis] tapped on the door and asked "Can I come in Betho, it's only me". To my horror and mortification I heard Uncle Harry's voice: "Mind the mat then".

To the dogs when mustering: "Sit down you old fool." "Here you son of a gun." "Come here you son of a blue bitch."

When Dad [AGW] shouted at Harry's dogs he said "Here, you don't go insulting them dogs."

When branding, he'd put a loop around the neck of a steer saying "Good morning" in the most affable tones. A victim would be roped with "Woa, poor fellah, didn't you know you were one of my pets?"

Landing a steer, and placing a red-hot brand on the hip he'd say "Oh I beg your pardon". As they branded a very young one "Oh, it's the baby boy."

Inquiring if Uncle Tony had a temper, Harry said "Do you think they're all like me?".

## **TED**

Referring to someone "Oh he's got a rat, and a pretty big one". Fred said "Why? He's got a wallaby."

Ted said he was surprised to find me [Phyllis] so motherly. My face was really softer than the photo he had.

I [Phyllis] replied "I'm a bit hard naturally, but I've imbibed a little of Mae's gentleness"

Ted: "How's poor old Mae getting on?"

Me [Phyllis] "You'll try to get Mae wild and all she'll do is grin at you with those big shark's teeth of hers."

[When Ted was] Holding forth about girls being made bolder by having their hair cut, Beth said "Uncle Ted, you must have been bitten by the same insect as Dad [AGW]."

In a letter to Edith, Olwen wrote "We are having quite a jolly time with the fruit, the animals, and the uncles." Ted was warning Wes not to be too susceptible to flattery. "You'll take a city, and then you'll be captured by a young clowness with a head as big as a rounder ball, with about as much in it."

## **Jan 1935**

Talking of the different scientists, Pasteur, Newton, Darwin etc. Ted mentioned the wonder of creation "If you'd seen two balls of fire spinning round each other in the air and I'd said that one would grown human beings, lilies and violets and roses, what would you think? You'd think I was a rat."

He [Ted] thought that the red cactus flower which grew in the schoolhouse garden was the most beautiful thing he ever saw.

Ted to Wes looking at Dad's [AGW's] pencil sketch of a stag

"Do you see anything wrong with that picture?"

"No" said Wes.

"Look again! Are you quite sure?"

"Yes" said Wes.

Ted: "Well you'll never make an artist.

Did you ever in your life see a female reindeer with a buck's head?"

"Yes, once" said Wes.

"Where?" asked Ted.

"Up there" said Wes.

### **1934**

A young chestnut horse had been out to grass for some time and as a result was somewhat flighty. Uncle Ted said he wouldn't let Wes ride him until there was a coroner on the spot. But nothing would stop Dad [AGW] when he wanted to ride. "Which horse is he going on" asked Ted. "Oh, the coroner" said Wes.

When Wes arrived first, Ted wanted to know if he had used tongs on his hair which at that time was frizzy and curly. For a week Wes kidded him that he had and Uncle Ted was disgusted.

### **LOWESTOFT – Shearing**

A chap at the shearing was stung in the eye by a wasp. Next morning when asked how he was he replied "I have an eye on me like a half-opened oyster'.

During shearing one year, the girlfriend of one of the shearers visited and asked Uncle Ted to show her where the lavatory was. He misheard and thought she said "lemon tree". He took her to the orchard and showed her the lemon tree, the mandarin, orange, quince, apricot etc. trees until in desperation she had to ask again, He was covered with confusion, as he was very shy.

### **HENRY** (son of Henry Whitten, 91 in 1969)

In a letter from Glad (July 1969) "Henry is blind from glaucoma but very bright.

Marvellous memory. His wife Maud says she has never heard him swear or say a nasty thing about anyone in his life – a most placid man.

Everything has to him seemed beautiful in his life. He never grumbles about his blindness. A hernia gives him a bit of trouble and he sleeps sitting up in the daytime. He doesn't seem to have the Whitten arthritis, or impatience of temper from nerves.

Glad's letter (20 October 1983) [writing about Maud, wife of Henry II, 97 in 1983].

Attended Gowrie Church 50th anniversary. 150 people there, mainly to see her. She [Maud] made a speech over the microphone – "thrilled to the tonsils". Wonderful brain and memory – amazes people. Cheerful disposition. Wonderful at Scrabble. Lived alone in a big house.

Died 27 April 1985#. Five children – Audrey, Edna, Mervyn, Stella, Lexie (Alexa)

### **FRED**

While staying at Lowestoft mother [EAW] asked someone to keep the flies away from the big meatsafe while she opened the door to take some meat out. Uncle Fred sprang to his feet and started waving a tea towel and every little while giving Mother's rear a slash of it.

"There's one old chap here, is terrible troublesome".

Uncle Ted suggested a rabbit drive to get rid of rabbits. "Drive them into a corner and then put dogs onto them and shoot them down."

Fred said: "And when you'd finished, you'd have enough rabbit to make a stew for a sick gin."

**TONY**

– Always spoke with a poker face and a drawl.

His butcher failed him "The cows! I could run that shop better in my head, than those three cows".

*AGW = Alfred Giles Whitten*

*EAW = Ethel Annie Whitten (nee Cock)*

*LKW = Lloyd Kevern Whitten*

*WKW = Wesley Kingston Whitten*

# Whitten's in Australia ancestry website gives death date of 25 April 1985

*Draft of handwritten anecdotes of Whitten uncles originally prepared by Phyllis Adele Whitten-Hohnen (date unknown) transcribed by Penelope Whitten 11 March 2019*