

June 24th., 1946

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The historical opening of the first-ever F.J. Trousers Shops

A lot of interesting events led-up-to and followed our 20th. anniversary of retailing trousers.

Let us start now and continue with a bit a day.

Prior to opening in Collins St., Melbourne, we were making-for-the-trade and selling wholesale only.

We were supplying 123 retail shops with Coverdine trousers in three colours.

Mr. Jones "spent the three best years of his life" battling with these 123 shopkeepers throughout Victoria, N.S.W., S.A., and Tas., trying to teach them how to be "fussy on fit".

Many's the time he would front-up to a man on the street with an "Excuse me, Sir - I'm interested in those pants you are wearing - where did you buy them, please? Did you have a personal fitting?"

"No," would come the answer, "my wife bought them", or "I just asked for size 6!"

Disconsonately Mr. Jones would return home, saying "They are murdering my pants - They promised to try-on every pair."

To this Mrs. Jones would answer, "Mind they don't 'murder' you, Fletcher - you were a happy man until you got into this new trousers business."

..... to be continued.



The Second bit about Melbourne's 20th. Birthday - Friday next.

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Many things led-up to the small "unknown country trader" barging into Melbourne City Retail.

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History was made in 1941 when a big Federal Govt. car full of powerful officials came to Warrnambool.

Said Alan A. Davis, Commonwealth Controller of Clothing  
 "Mr. Jones, the Government needs your tailoring workrooms and your staff."

"The Government can't allow all these tailors to be making ultra ultra clothes for the ultra ultra few" .....

"We have a hall for you in Terang - machines and cloth and extra staff - you must make Army trousers by the thousands."

Answered Mr. Jones, "I couldn't possibly make cheap trousers, but I could make handsome trousers for your Admirals, Generals, Wing Commanders, etc. etc."

"There aren't enough of those blokes", answered Davis, "You are under manpower controls, you know, so you had better come to the Commonwealth Clothing Factory and accept your charter."

"If you make me do that," answered disconsolate Mr. Jones, "I'll have to give up the chairmanship of the Warrnambool Woollen Mills, now helping the war effort with miles of army overcoating."

Continuing, Mr. Jones said, "I'll also have to resign from the chairmanship of the Melbourne Display and Advertising Committee, working for the Dept. of Information."

Was this regarded as bluff?

Did it backfire?

Watch this space for another bit tomorrow.



The third bit leading up to our 20th. Birthday  
Retailing "Trousers only" Friday.

The "bluff stakes" with the Government officials reported  
on yesterday's sheet paid-off!

Alan Davis, Commonwealth Controller of Clothing, 'phones  
Mr. Jones and said :-

"Come to Melbourne immediately - the primary producers are  
sending a deputation to the Dept. of Supply."

"They are hopping-mad having to shell-out 8 clothing coupons  
for a pair of "Dedman" tweed trousers that wear-out in the  
saddle in 2 weeks!"

After this stormy meeting, Mr. Jim Vicars, who was wartime  
Commonwealth Controller of WOOLLENS came to our rescue and  
promised to give us "one loom" making a super worsted for  
riding trousers only.

This looked like a cross between a covert and gaberdine, so  
we called it COVERDINE. This was later registered as our  
own "patent" name in many contries.

Over four years were to pass before 1946 when we opened our  
own retail store in Collins St. Melbourne. Twenty years ago  
on Friday!

The one loom grew to three - then four, then upwards - The  
Government were happy - the primary producers were delighted -  
we were ordered to "distribute to the retail according to  
population".

It was terribly hard work travelling 4 States in a Vee Vauxhall  
- selling "personal fittings" to so many retailers who thought  
the idea far too "idealistic" and crazy, but they wanted the  
trousers, so reluctantly promised "personal fittings only".

These were Oxford bag days - trousers legs 22-24-26 inches  
wide at the cuffs, so unless they were properly fitted they  
looked like crazy.

This caused another crisis - Watch this space Thursday.



Fourth bit leading up to Melbourne's 20th Birthday - Tomorrow -

Yes, by 1945 there were 123 retailers all over Aussie selling our Coverdine trousers.

Fair dinkum, there must have been 113 of them grabbing customers' money and giving out trousers by guesswork .. no personal fittings as they promised to.

The trousers looked terrible to behold - like a pair of "glorified bloomers - like a divided skirt draping from the waistband."

Mr. Jones could pick-them "two blocks away" - no kidding!

These were the worrying days when "the maker of heavenly trousers" would barge up to Mr. Baggy-pants on the street and ask him please did he get a personal fitting?"

An old run down cafe - opposite the old Scotts Hotel-was then acquired as a desperation move for the purpose of demonstrating to other retail shops how trousers should be fitted.

This shop was 3 full blocks away from Melbourne's retail shopping area and was never intended to become a normal retail shop.

A "teaser" advertising campaign yelled -

F.J. is coming to town!

Who is this F.J. who is coming to town!

What is F.J. bringing to town?

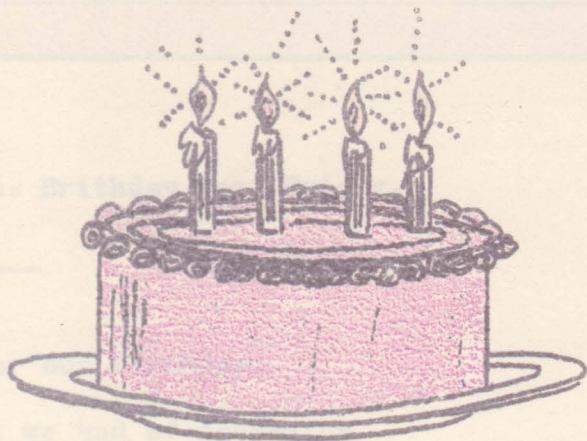
etc. etc. etc.

This caused still another crisis!

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit five in the Series -



COLLINS ST. 20th BIRTHDAY - TODAY !!  
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We had NO idea - didn't have a clue - what was likely to happen on our opening day in mighty Melbourne.

All we knew was just how breezy we were about our seeming inability to cope with "city slickers".

We were frightened that "nobody would climb the hill to come and see us!"

Our only confidence was that, once people saw and felt the superb quality of Coverdine, we would be on a winner.

We were -- she galloped-past-the-post 2 hours before we opened our doors on the morning of June 24th, 1946.

It was an alarming experience to see the mob outside thick-heavy, eager and untamed!

They were lined-up before we, the staff, arrived, and we had to do some fast talking to squeeze through and get-in ourselves without a tidal wave following us through the now famous Collins St. doors.

But with mugs-confidence we backed our eight fitting rooms and 1150 pairs of trousers to ride this crisis.

But there were many traps for young players!!

Sad traps - Funny traps and Quicksand!

Watch this space on Monday!



Bit six - Series Collins St. 20th. Brithday last Friday.

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Brute force and mob rule took over our birthday.

The only previous experience that we had of squeezing through - and elbowing as-we-served in a sardine-tin-filled shop was the first two hours of our "Barrier Day" shirt clearances in the old Man's Shop.

But they were Warrnambool people - we had them tamed - they were well "broke in".

"Give me a pair" - "What a lot of rot trying them on, the best shops here sell off the shelves quick-smart" - "Give them to me" - "here's a quid for yourself", they yelled.

But the old Man's Shop discipline stood by us - people gradually became delighted and later complimented us on being so "fussy on fit".

Rule was "two pairs per customer".

We sold out so quickly that this became one pair per man after the first day.

We cut all advertising, but still they flocked.

After 3 days the cupboard was bare!

Alas, no back-up stock - no fill-in sizes.

From then on it was only "What sizes came, came off the machines, mate." But this was said with a smile.

No clues about stock control then, and no production control.

Further crises followed.

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit Seven - 20th. Anniversary Series

Like "the pub with no beer", ours was the only shop in the world selling "nothing but Trousers" ... but with no trousers for hours-on-end and customers going crook!

It was no good opening our doors until "yesterday's trousers" arrived from Spencer St. station.

We worked all sorts of stunts to get our parcels early BUT alas! hundreds of customers had to twiddle their thumbs outside (often in the rain) until ten o'clock with the precious parcels lobbed.

Then swoosh, then bingo, all the "good" sizes would be gone before noontide! We would comfort ourselves, thinking "Well, you can only sell 'em once!"

Total factory production was then approximately 90 pairs per day, so just imagine how far these few went with a queue often a whole-block-long and around the other far corner!

When the factory closed because of NO yardage to cut - or because of Christmas holidays, our retail shop closed, too!

We thus coped with all staff holidays in one fell swoop.

But, having to turn so many customers away with NO trousers day after day, didn't give us peace of mind.

This created a new crisis for which we had no answer. But we still pursued our mission.

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit eight - "Still the pub with no beer" -

### 20th. Anniversary Series

Many people consistently stood in the queue day after day in faith that "my size will surely come today Charley".

Daily our fitters would recognise some of the best-riers and give them a card carrying their fitting detail.

These "lucky customers" would then ring up, enquiring day after day. Our telephone lines were lamentably jammed!

The bright switch girls of some big companies would "run a book" of names and sizes and ask for the list, all on one call, and we suspect they were paid a commission on what they landed.

We did our best to prevent people waiting, by proclaiming sold out sizes on a big door sign.

Mr. Jones started the service of running from end to end of the queue announcing "Sorry, NO size 36-32 or size 34-34 today - or NO dark fawn" -

Such an act as this exposed the runner to the grave risk of being mobbed with requests, so the smart thing to do was to keep running.

This, ladies & gentlemen, it only part of the story "How the Vest was won for F.J's."

However, these queues had their funny moments.

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit No. Nine -

20th. Birthday Series

For weeks on end the footpaths were blocked with trousers hunters and neighbouring shopkeepers called the police to clear their doorways.

The cops ultimately drilled customers to stand-in-line across on the curb side.

There was a Chinaman selling bottled beer from his wine cellar up around the far corner - Hoi Lun sometimes sported a queue, too.

Sometimes the trousers queue and the beer queue joined and some of our customers got the ration of two bottles - but missed out on trousers! "Take yer pick, sport, you can't have it both ways!"

Many enterprising blokes would knock on our side door and pitch the tale that they were in Mr. Jones's Battalion during the war.

Our fitters concluded that F.J. must surely have belonged to Australia's biggest Battalion.

Our greatest problem was to get the doors closed at five o'clock - A few extra bodies would push and squeeze in - so there we were - tired and hungry and a shopful of 40 or 50 people inside the shop.

They can sing about "the pub with no beer" but still not know how our fitters smiled through it all.

Happily, our mission went marching-on.

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit 10 - 20th. Anniversary Series

Our new Melbourne shop didn't have ALL the worries.

Creative-imageneering galloped along at Warrnambool, too!

Our manager and his wife walked-out on us.

Horace Verey and Mrs. Chandler took the reins and "kept her galloping!"

Nothing was allowed to hinder the making of more heavenly trousers - "Hey, stop dragging-your-feet - send us more - more-more, "yelled Bruce Stevenson and Jell Down!

Our tailoring workroom was kicked-out and took-over the top floor of the T & G Building - Trousers making then crowded out the whole of the top of the Man's shop.

Mrs. Cocking took her section into an empty shop in Liebig St.

Our entire mechanics workshop ended up perched up-a-top our mens toilet.

Archie Ewing led his cutters down into an Air Force hut that we planted on site of our present Raglan Parade shop - (It is still there - housing our skirt salon).

Everybody got more room (for a little while) excepting Harold Hedley who did all of our parcelling-despatching in a slave hole.

Perspiring Harold was first so happy with his kitchen-sized despatch room! Then, some machines were pushed into it and Harold hadn't any floor space left, so finished by keeping his paper and rope under the table and doing his parcelling standing up on the table!!

"I can't take it - I must have more room," cried Harold - so he gave it away to become a professional fisherman at Pt. Fairy.

Twelve months after our 1st. anniversary, we got an option on the large area where the telephone exchange now stands in Koroit St. and Mr. Jones was an "innocent-abroad" trying to learn "what a real clothing factory on the Continent looked like". But that didn't help much!

Watch this space Monday.



Bit 11 - 20th. Anniversary SERIAL !

(Yes, this series has now become a "serial")

By now we had pioneered a name for nothing but previously unheard-of top quality worsteds.

We had now jumped into the second-leg of our mission, "No man is hard to fit" !

"Scientific sizes" were then almost as desperately needed as were top qualities.

When Mr. Jones was racing around 4 States in the little Vauxhall he had a suitcase holding 17 pairs of outside brands of trousers ALL SIZE FIVE !

Before he would show samples of our trousers he would open the magic case;

Behold, out would pop 17 pairs Size 5!--then came the act of kidding the shopkeeper to "please measure the waists and legs, Sir".

Hold it, dear reader, the pop-eyed counterjumper would then find :-

$5\frac{1}{2}$	INCHES	difference	between	the	smallest	&	largest	WAIST.
$4\frac{1}{2}$	"	"	"	"	shortest	and	longest	LEG.

But they were all size 5 - EACH TICKET SAID SO!

THE NEED ALARMED US -

The clothing trade had NO standards!

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit 12 -- Collins St. Birthday.

The 2nd. World War ended with Mr. Jones worrying like mad what to do with the little army of young "Man's Shop"

They were all young-uns in 1939.

They were coming home full-length men.

There was Bruce Stevenson, Jell Down, Bill Earle, Paddy Down, Arthur Saywell, Ray O'Malley, Jim Finnigan, Jack Langdon, Jack Grayson, Ian McCullough, Merv Tait, Bobby Edwards - The last three gave us away.

All the rest are still with us, going like bombs.

For the first hectic month, Collins St. Staff consisted of :-

Bruce Stevenson	-	General Manager, Melbourne
Jell Down		Merchandising Manager, Melb.
Bill Earle		Regional Mgr. Northern Stores
Arthur Saywell		Manager, Canberra
Norm McCullough		Regional Mgr. Southern Stores
Jim Herlihy		Quality Director, Pleasant Hill
Muriel Rayson		Secretary, Melbourne
Ray O'Malley		Manager, Ballarat
Jack Langdon		Cutting Room
Allan Hayes		D.C. Stock & Fitting
Betty Rust		now Mrs. Arthur Browne
Mavis Fisher		now Mrs. Paddy Down

Some of our present staff joined us shortly afterwards, but alas! the opening list has had to stop somewhere. "Bless 'em all!"

Watch this space tomorrow -  
"Monkey Business"



Bit 13 in Melbourne's 20th. Anniversary Series

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As quantity of stock grew - so did our sizes!

But hanging space in the little shop didn't!! So what?

A mezzanine floor was built - then another - and no ask permission.

The "famous" spiral staircase was installed.

Five weird platforms were rigged five decks high.  
Yes, you read FIVE DECKS HIGH.

Fitters had to climb around the skyhook-racks like monkeys with pant-in-their-teeth as they took the curves.

"Tons" of trousers were hung "way-upper-thar".

The contraptions didn't fall down, and functioned-fine, thank you.

The pub, or our landlords, didn't know they existed.

But still, there wasn't enough room!!!

Bob Currer jumped into the breach and scrounged some space in the old Western Market boiler room down the hill.

Bob and his assistant would lug pants from this beaut storeroom up the flamin' hill to the shop.

They would then work up on the 4th. & 5th. decks passing down the trousers as fitters yelled for the sizes, etc.

She didn't come easy, mate!

So much of this battle went "unseen and unsung". But the memories go marching-on doing honour to the founding fathers - Bless 'em all!

Vale Later, the shop building fell "bloody but unbowed" with some mysterious secrets.

Watch this space tomorrow.



Bit No.14 -

On. - George Doreian & Allan Hayes

Believe it or not, George Doreian was a bit of a character at Collins St.

George came to us from "the biggest thing in Melbourne - by far"! George was taught to sell trousers on-the-run.

But with us, he wasn't allowed to sell trousers for at least two weeks. He had to stand and stare. George reacted "violently".

"This firm doesn't want to sell trousers ... Blimey! (said George), if I couldn't sell three pairs to every one these geysers are selling, I would buy me a farm."

Very soon, George took a tumble to the why, why, why, we were fussy on fit etc. and fell in love with our policies.

\* \* \* \* \*

Allan Hayes recalls the day when Bruce Stevenson suggested that he hose down the dirty outside of our shop. Allan enjoyed holding the nozzle of the big hose for an hour or so, but he quite forgot the steel grilles in the footpath.

Underneath our shop was a famous wine cellar, managed by stormy, volcanic Mr. Bowen-Pain.

When Monday morning came he stormed up to Bruce to "ring the fire brigade". His office was flooded. This was the commencement of a long series of unhappy upsets with poor Mr. Bowen-Pain.

The Melbourne Story wouldn't be complete without mentioning this stormy petrel.

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Watch this space Monday -  
"Unlawful transport"



Bit No.15Melbourne's Birthday

Twenty years ago, every Wednesday evening after the factory closed, Mr. Jones would set off for Melbourne with a car full of trousers.

The old Buick MDO33 was a wonderful means of unlawful transport. They forbade carrying one parcel of pants by road then.

In those days we were building our own factory. It was terribly hard to buy building materials.

It was then that Muriel Rayson earned the reputation for the best scrounger - best procurer - of scarce materials.

Muriel even got around the Transport Board to allow us to carry such urgent building materials for this essential industry!

Arthur Saywell really loved cars. Arthur had a particular spot in his heart for the old Buick.

It would break Arthur's heart to see the Buick setting off for Warrnambool full of bricks and cement and things.

A big long canteen sink, tied to the side of the Buick jutting our four feet ahead of the radiator "took the bun".

This sink caused a whopper blind spot across the entire left side of the driver.

Arthur was always upset also, to see the buick choc-full of dry cleaning with springs "flattened to the tyres",

Watch this space tomorrow -  
Whelan the "recker destroyed the evidence!"



Bit 16 -

This had better be our LAST "BIT" in the series  
- "The 20th Birthday of our first retail Trousers Shop".

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It is commonly accepted that :-

One third of the people make things happen.  
One third " " " watch things happen.  
One third " " " don't know what's happening, anyhow.

The landlords of our Collins St. shop belonged to the third group!  
They were stubborn coots, too - they wouldn't let us do a thing  
to brighten up the outside of our "famous" shop -

So we weren't game to ask them to allow us to get extra elbow -  
room inside, so we just had to "go-it" without asking and quietly  
push out walls, with silencers on our hammers & saws.

Did ever such a small shop serve such a big mob?

Did ever such a small shop bulge itself so quickly into a BIG shop?

From the outside it stayed looking small and innocent!

"Sly" secret arrangements were made with our neighbours to  
"move-over" and give us a bit more room inside (behind their own  
shops).

Concealed fase walls were stealthily built.

Clandestine-pinchng of precious space never ceased.

Instead of punishing us, they kindly destroyed all the evidence  
by asking "Whelan-the-Wrecker to pull down our shop and the  
whole of the old Western Market!

THUS ENDETH THE SKETCHY TALE OF THE DEAR "LITTLE" SHOP FROM  
WHENCE CAME our first managers, systems, goodwill and (need we  
mention it) working capital!

Let's keep the light shining!