



L-R Jim Fisher, Ken Hancock, June Bronhill, Bill Catmul, Graham Foster, Jack Perry, Mary Hardy, Doug McKenzie, Athol Guy, Judith Durham, Bruce Woodley, Keith Potger, Rod Kirkham, John Symons, Panda Listner, Happy Hammond, Alf Potter, Jimmy Edwards, Geoff Owen-Taylor, Doug Elliot, Ian Turpie, Shirleen Clancy, Elaine McKenna, Mike Williamson, Syd Haylen, Bill Collins, Norman Spencer, Olivia Newton-John, Pat Carrol, Dick Jones, Hector Crawford, Johnathon Daly, John Gilby, Rowland Strong, Marlene Dietrich, Raymond Burr, Peter Doyle, Brendan McKenna, Ann Watt, Jean Hanger, Bob Crosby, Alf Spargo, Greame Fetting and Eric Scherer.



Introduction

My name is John Symons. I was born in 1944, in a small country town, Leongatha 130 km south east of Melbourne, Australia.

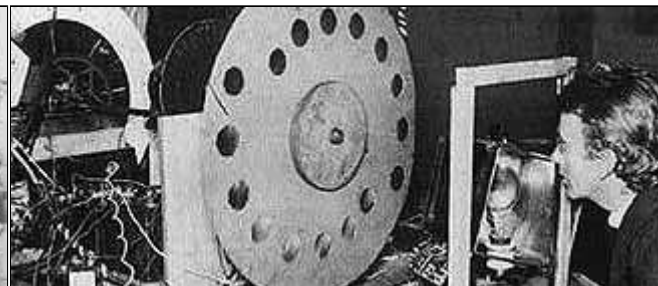


In 1960 at the age of 16, I was lucky enough to get a job at HSV channel 7 in Melbourne. Television in Australia was still in it's infancy, only beginning in Melbourne in late 1956, in time for the Melbourne Olympic Games.

These were very interesting times as all local programming was live-to-air. I worked at the channel for 10 years before starting my own television production company which I ran until I retired in 1997. I now live on the island of Bali in Indonesia.

Old Codgers

In recent years one of the old timers from the era, Mr Donald Smith has formed a group called the OLD CODGERS. Annually he organizes a reunion of people from the era.



Baird's first mechanical television

Now a number of members have put together a CD of photo's of the reunions, plus a collection of historical photos of the early days Ex-channel 7 staff member Harold Aspinall sent a copy of the CD to me. I was so inspired by these old photos, I decided to write a memoir of the period from my perspective. Photos were augmented by others from the internet. We acknowledge these suppliers of photographs. Harold Aspinall, Russell Bourne, Richard Bence, Dick McEwan, Dick Jones, Graham Foster, Don Smith, David Perry, John Walters and Wilma Gray. Also many others who



have sent photos including John Gilby, Graham Fetting and my mother Nancy.

John Logie Baird

John Logie Baird was born on August 13th, 1888, in Helensburgh, Dunbarton, Scotland and died on June 14th, 1946. The television pioneer created the first televised pictures of objects in motion (1924) the first televised human face (1925) and a year later he televised the first moving object image in London. The BBC started broadcasting television on the Baird 30-line system in 1929.



J.L. Baird

In July 1930, the first British Play was transmitted, "The Man with the Flower in his Mouth." The world's first regular transmissions using the electronic Marconi-EMI, 405 line system started in England in 1936.



Early ad for Baird Tv kits

The "Logies"

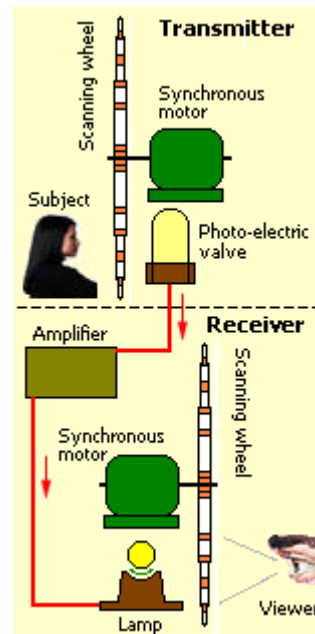
The annual Australian Television awards are called the "Logies" in honour of John Logie

Baird. The name was suggested by the "King" and first star of Australian

Television, Graham Kennedy.



How it worked



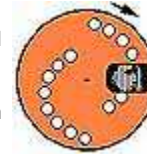
The Baird mechanical Tv

The picture information was picked up by a photo-electric valve, passed through an amplifier

to a lamp, providing the two scanning wheels were in synchronization the viewer would see an image.

As the subject varied from black to white so did the lamp, reproducing a picture. Later the thermionic camera tube was invented.

The scanning wheel, consisted of 2 identical scanning wheels drilled to create a scan of the object.



The first television picture using Baird's scanner

Tv in Australia

The engineering pioneer of Australian Television was James Hurbert Thomas Fisher, born 1911 and died at the age of 81 in 1992.

He commenced studying at the University of Adelaide in 1929 and in 1930 he joined the Postmaster Generals department (PMG) as a cadet engineer.



After qualifying in 1930 he moved to Melbourne to work for the PMG research laboratories. 20 years before the advent of television in Australia he avidly read overseas technical publications on the development of television. In 1937 to raise awareness of Tv, he wrote and presented a paper "Recent developments in Television" He gave a demonstration with a hand built system of his own design. Pre W.W.II Mr Fisher presented many secret reports to the Australian Government on the development

of Tv overseas and it's possible introduction to Australia. W.W.II interrupted Mr Fisher's research, he was redeployed to the secret development of radar. After the war there was pressure to adopt the British 405 line Tv standard. Mr Fisher put forward the radical proposal to introduce the much advanced 625 line system. He was successful and that system is still in use today. Mr Fisher travelled to Europe and the US to study the latest developments in Television, returned to Australia to train many technicians and creative in the new medium. Two of his students were Hector and Dorothy Crawford. Mr Fisher left the PMG in 1954 and joined the Broadcast Control Board where he wrote the first technical standards for the introduction of television to Australia. The following year he was to join HSV7 Melbourne to become Chief engineer. He held the position until his retirement in 1977. In 1986 the Television Society of Australia presented him with the Colin Bednal Award and in 1989 he was awarded the Paul Marlan Award by

the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations.

Building a Tv Station

1955 Mr Fisher was faced with the formidable task of building a television station from ground up. A transmitter had to be built at Mt Dandenong, studios had to be built in South Melbourne, all in time for the Melbourne Olympic Games in late 1956.



The tower under construction

The Studios

Meanwhile an old paper store owned by HSV7 owners, The Herald and Weekly Times was being partly demolished for the construction of the South Melbourne link tower. The South Melbourne tower had an unusual feature which allowed the microwave transmitters to be at

roof level for easy maintenance. The microwave dishes pointed upwards to a "beam-bender" set at 45 degrees, sending the signal on to Mt Dandenong.



The studio tower, clearly showing the "beam-bender"

On top of the tower was a fully motor controlled microwave dish for receiving broadcasts from the Outside Broadcast (OB) van. The location making broadcasts possible from most parts of the city, especially the inner-city VFL football grounds, making 7 the premier football channel.



Demolition at Dorcas St



Tower base and Studio 1

From the master control room the motorized dish could be controlled, horizontally or vertically, the 2 large circular white dials in the

picture below indicating the dish's compass position and azimuth.



Master Control

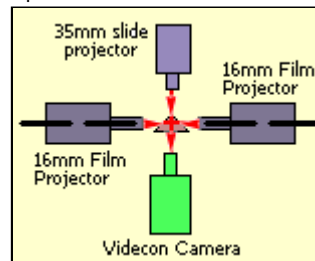
Test Transmissions

Work at the transmitter site was well advanced compared to the Studio site. At the transmitter a telecine machine was installed and 16mm films could be broadcast. The telecine machine was a one



Telecine machine

source, 1 camera unit, but with mechanical controls you could dissolve between a slide and film. Reel changes were done as in a cinema. Commercial were spliced into the film so the station could rely on just one of these machines for continuous program. The first video tape machines was not acquired until 1960.



Simple 1 camera telecine

Simple setup

In 1960 the station only possessed 5 Marconi Mk 3 cameras, 2 telecine's and a vidicon caption camera. A far cry from the present day when stations own hundreds of cameras. The studio cameras were dismantled and taken out to Outside broadcasts (OB's)



Channel-7's OB Van arriving from England at Port Melbourne

On Aug. 28 1944, in a little country town 140km from Melbourne, Nancy Symons gave birth to a son, John in the Stradbroke hospital, Leongatha.



John at 18 months old

When I was about 12 and in Form 1 at the Leongatha High, the first Australian Tv channels had started test transmissions from Mt Dandenong, in the Melbourne outskirts. Neither of the 3 channels had completed their studios. In Leongatha there was only 1 Tv set and that was in the window of Joel's Radio in McCartain St. This was around June 1956. Every night a crowd of people, suitably rugged up and with their camp stools, they used at the local footy each Saturday, assembled on the street outside to watch the few hours of test film programs and slides.



An early Astor 17" B&W Tv

I was there many nights and totally besotted by television.

At the High School, Mrs Daisy Bacon, the librarian, would paste the daily news paper up on the inside of the library windows, so they could be read from outside by the students.

One day whilst reading the library window, I saw the photo in "The Sun" of the, channel 7 OB van being lifted off the ship from England, I looked at it for ages - dreaming about the magic of broadcasting outside events in Melbourne, all the way to our village of Leongatha.



"Jumbo" when new

Little did I know I would end up sitting for endless hours in "Jumbo" (as the OB van was known) doing audio, broadcasting the football every Saturday and many other outside events,

including "Music for the People", the "Seekers, welcome home concert" and the annual "Miss Australia Ball"



I was very interested in electronics (known as RADIO in those days) Every month I would wait for the new edition of Radio, Television & Hobbies, to arrive at the Leongatha

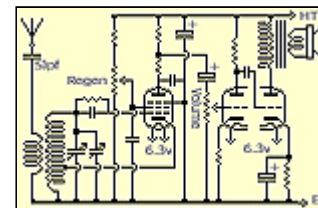


Radio & Hobbies magazine

newsagent. From these magazines I learnt about how radio's and Tv's worked and taught myself to read electronic circuits. For around 2 years my mother took me to Melbourne by train (shown left) to see an Orthodontist which only took an hour. Mum went her way shopping and I would hang around all the Radio parts shops.

I build a Radio

Finally when I was about 14, I built a 3 valve, regenerative short-wave receiver, it didn't work straight away, so I took it to the technician at Joel's radio, who got it working



The regenerative radio

Later I discovered that when the radio regenerated, it transmitted a signal, which could be heard as a whistle on other radios, I became interested in transmitters.



John, school friends and radio

I build a Transmitter

I poured over many amateur transmitter circuits and realized maybe I could modulate the transmitted signal from my radio with sound, by putting a speaker transformer primary in the power supply to the regenerating valve and adding audio to the transformer. It worked, then I persuaded my dad to cut down a gum tree at the farm to make a transmitting antenna. The range of the transmitter was about 500 meters.

ON-THE-AIR

I built a small 3 channel passive audio mixer, which I could feed a carbon microphone, turntable and radio into. At one stage even

connecting the phone line and doing talk-back radio years before the stations were allowed to do it. Programs would consist of waffle from yours truly, 78 records from mum's collection and the news on the hour re-broadcast from 3UZ. I don't think we had any listeners, except mum in the kitchen, but a friend at school who lived nearby claimed he could receive the signal.

Television

I was an avid television viewer, fascinated with how it all worked, technically and production. We didn't have a Tv, every afternoon I would go around to Auntie Vi's to watch Tv. I Love Lucy, the Micky Mouse Club and Rin-Tin-Tin. Auntie Vi's youngest son Graham built a crystal set, I learnt from him and built one too using a rusty razor blade and a safety pin as the diode, feeding into some army surplus headphones from Waltham Trading Store in Elizabeth St. Melbourne. I read everything I could find in the High school library about radio, electricity and chemistry. I made my own gunpowder and built a rocket that

was electrically fired by a Scope soldering iron transformer. My Uncle Charley returned from a trip to England, where he bought me a book on the workings of television broadcasting. It featured the workings of a Tv camera and a studio the transmitter and the receiver. I read it many times.



HSV7 in 1959 (arrow shows Mr Fishers office)

I leave school

Dec. 1959, I left school after just passing Intermediate. I was not a good student, I was too busy with my other study agenda. I had no idea what I would do for a job, but I dreamt of working in a radio station or the wildest dream a Tv station. One day while pouring over the job adds there was an add in the Sun newspaper. HSV Channel 7, Melbourne was advertising for cadets, to train and

work in television. We sent off an application, but after a week or so no reply. So mum rang Mr Fisher, God knows what she said to him, but I was to have an interview next week. The following day we did get a mail reply from HSV 7, to say I was not excepted. But clever Mum had got me an interview.

The Interview

Mum and Dad drove me to Melbourne, to the Channel 7 studios in South Melbourne. After a nervous wait I finally met Mr Fisher. He talked to me for more than ½ an hour, then sent me off to complete an exam. I was not shown around the studios, but I felt at home there, I liked the smell of the excitement. We returned home to Leongatha for the long wait of acceptance or refusal. Finally the call came, I was to start work on Tuesday Feb 2, 1960.

To Melbourne

Finally I moved to Melbourne and stayed with my Godfather Colin Campbell and his wife Nancy in Oakleigh, while I found looked for suitable accommodation.

My starting salary was £5.13.06 (\$11.35) p/w, after tax, hardly enough to find salubrious digs. Mr Fisher suggested the YMCA on the corner of City Rd. and Sturt St., 20 mins walk from the studios. A shared room with public bathroom, cost £3.13.06 p/w, including breakfast. So I had \$4.00 a week

YMCA Melbourne



Arrow shows my room on the 3rd floor. I lived there for 2 years. In the foreground the Trocadero Ball Room and Wirth's permanent circus. Now the site of the Victorian arts centre. The YMCA was demolished a few years ago.

left to pay for my food and other expenses. I was to work in the audio department and train to be an audio operator.

The First Day

Tues. Feb 2, 1960, I arrived at the studios at 9 am. I was introduced to staff chief Graham Foster, who took me to Studio 2 where they were rehearsing "Cooking with Gas" with Jean Ford. Jean was a well know Herald food journalist.



The cooking set in studio 2

I was introduced to audio operator, Lyle Hughes and boom operator, John Brennan. I was told to stay by the boom, not speak, not make any noise and just watch. It was fascinating, I couldn't believe I was actually there



Lyle Hughes

The "Greasy Spoon"

Soon it was lunch time, off over the road from the studios to the RAAF canteen in a shed on the corner of Wells and Coventry St. Later this land was to be purchased by Channel 7, after many years of negotiation by Gerald Carrington. Studio 7 was build on the site. The greasy spoon served pies, and a variety of fried in lard goodies. They were only open on week days for lunch. Crews working week-ends or nights bought their own food to the studios or starved.

Live Commercials

Throughout the day live commercials were slotted in to the film programs.



A live car commercial

In those days, with no networking commitments, commercials often went far longer than scheduled.

Graham Foster



In charge of the technical staff and rostering was Graham Foster, known to the staff as *Foz*. He had the unenviable task of crewing all the shows as well as the other technical areas. He was extremely patient and good to me. His assistant Ron Coster did the staff rosters and did his best to arrange consecutive days off, so I could return home each month. This was not easy, in those days it was common for us to work a 70 hr week. Management preferring to pay overtime rather than hire more permanent staff.



John meets Foz in 2003

This was especially true on the opposition channel 9's In Melbourne Tonight, Hall Todd, made it in the Guinness book of records as having presented the world's longest running Tv commercial. It was over one hour.



Graham and Bert - IMT Live Variety

Almost every night 7 did a live show. On staff was a band and ballet. There was a scenery building workshop and a wardrobe department complete with it's own staff of seamstresses. Plus freelance arrangers and writers. Thursday night was Club 7 with compere Frank Wilson, who went on to be a notable actor.



Club 7 with Lou Topano & band

Friday night was the big night of the week with Sunny Side Up. It was amazing how such a large show, plus audience were crammed into the restricted area of Studio 1. Little did many people realize the cameraman had his back against the rear wall, just to get a wide shot of a production number. There was not even room for the band, they played in the upstairs office area and the sound was fed back to the studio floor via a speaker.



Syd Heylen & Bill Collins in SSU

Starting work on the same day as I was Graham Strahan. We had a lot in common and became good friends. He went on to become a very successful businessman.



Saturday Hell

Saturday's were particularly chaotic, especially during the football season. The Outside Broadcast (OB) football crew started at 8am to dismantle 3 of the 5 studio cameras the station possessed and load them into the van. When packed the van would head off the the ground where the VFL game of the day was being played. Often to Melbourne's famous Melbourne Cricket Ground, venue of the 1956 Olympics.



The MCG in the 60's



OB van "Jumbo" at the Football

I spent "100's" of Saturdays in the OB van, mixing audio for the football broadcast. Often it was freezing cold, pouring with rain, blowing a gale or hailing. I was one of the lucky ones - the cameraman froze outside. Alf Potter directed the football, his wife Isabele always turned up at half-time with the most delicious vegetable and barley soup for the the whole crew.



Alf Potter plots the football



Technician Max Everett lines up a Marconi Mk 4 camera

The camera's were huge by modern standards and only black and white. The camera came in two parts, the camera-head, which needed 4 men to carry and the Camera Control Unit (CCU) which was in the OB van or in the case of the studio in the CCU room.



Russell Bourne at a CCU

Alf Potter became famous for his football broadcasts. They were easy to watch and he never missed



A block & tackle had to be used to get a camera in position

a kick. His cameraman trained almost as hard as the footballers. Alf Always insisted on covering the full warm-up game, so when we went to to air with the Match of the Day the 3 cameramen had already had 2 hours practice. Four hours of camera-work on the freezing cold was no mean feat. My responsibility was to mix the audio. Set-up involved running microphone cables up into the commentators position in the stand.

Harold Reminisces

Ex HSV7 audio engineer, Harold Aspinall sent us this story.



Harold at the 2004 reunion

On this day, April 15th 1964, *(I still have a copy of the running sheet to prove it!)* the HSV-7 Fitzroy Teletheater *(Melbourne, Aus.)* was jumping to the strains of the "Liverpool Sound Show".

For it's day this was a BIG SHOW. Appearing live were Gene Pitney

Gerry & the Pacemakers, Brian Poole & the Tremeloes and the unmatched *(before or since)* Dusty Springfield.



The whole thing was hosted by Johnny O'Keefe and presented in front of an audience of screaming girls at



The Fitzroy Teletheater

the Fitzroy Teletheater. The artists, only one step below the emerging Beatles. They were all under the wing of, one, Harry M. Miller. Harry M. & Johnny O'Keefe were ensconced in the best rooms at the Southern Cross Hotel on Exhibition St. The taping day began at breakfast in O'Keefe's room where your young inexperienced sound-mixer was treated to the sight of J O'K passing around to all the girls a frothy pink highly alcoholic drink which he called a "Leg opener". They loved it. Just the thing at 8 in the morning!



Old Southern Cross Hotel,

After a production conference we moved onto the teletheater at around 10 for all-day rehearsals, which featured all the usual dramas associated with artists of this calibre. *(Although come to think of it everyone seemed to know what they were doing - so not too many dramas in fact).* I was most impressed with Dusty Springfield who, like me, was 25 at the time. Her voice was fantastic, with a marvellous raw quality, which can be heard on the tapes I still have of the show. It was my first big mixing job and, up to that time, neither I nor the teletheater had been

exposed to sound at that LEVEL! I recall grouping the guitar amps and the drums in a tight semi-circle & covering it with a single Neumann U47 *(microphone suspended over the lot.* The solo & backing voices were miked separately & mixed in. The biggest problem was to minimize the continuous screaming from the audience. The show broadcast a few weeks later on the 7 network. The 'wrap' party, also at the Southern Cross that night, was something to remember. I had a chance to have a brief chat with Dusty Springfield, a charming young lady just starting out on her exciting career. For me a highlight of my 4 years at HSV7. Sadly Dusty Springfield died at the age of 60 of cancer on Mar 2, 1999.

Friday's at Dorcas St

Friday was a big day. The band came in early in the morning to audio record the production numbers for the Sunny Side Up show. The even smaller studio 2 next door was hell, not only presenting live commercials, but



U47

recording on the stations one video-tape machine commercials for re-play over the week-end.



We also recorded Sunday Magazine a Catholic program for Sunday morning replay, featuring the one and only Bob Santamaria.



After we recorded a religious program for the Church of England who were given equal time. The program was hosted by a young Peter Hollingworth

In Studio 1 frantically camera rehearsals for Sunny Side Up, which went to air at 7.30 pm. Later the show moved to the teletheatre. In Studio 2 the midday news. Lunch, more commercials and at the same time live Cartoon Corner Hostings while we set up the Happy Show, what a squeeze, Pianist Shirley Radford, upright piano and drummer under the stairs and a small audience crammed into one

corner. The show starred Happy Hammond along with Panda, who had become a household name appearing with Graham Kennedy on Channel 9 on "In Melbourne Tonight." (IMT) as the "barrel girl".



GK, Panda and the wheel on 9

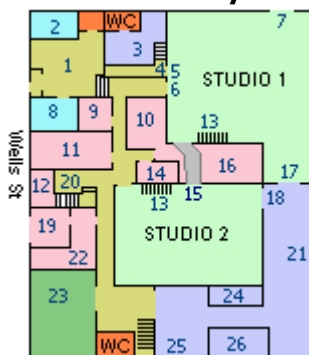
She had also moved from channel 9 to 7 and reinvented herself as Princess Panda. Also on the show were, Vic



"Funnyface" Gordon, "Lovely Anne" (Watt) & "Uncle Roy" (Lyons) At the height of the show's popularity Anne Watt and Cameraman Brendan McKenner married, thousands turned up at the wedding.



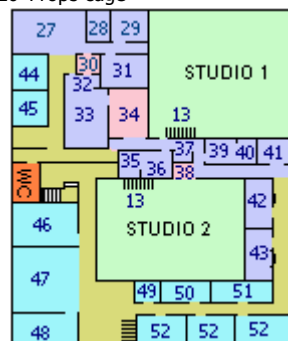
Station Anatomy C1963



Ground floor Dorcas St Studios

- 1 Main Entrance, reception
- 2 Switchboard / PABX
- 3 Make up & Dressing room
- 4 Stairs to "The Dungeon"
- 5 Talent entrance to Studio 1
- 6 Public entrance to Studio 1
- 7 Studio 1 loading door to lane
- 8 Originally managers office
- 9 Camera Control Unit (CCU)
- 10 Electronic Maintenance
- 11 Video Tape
- 12 OB Microwave links
- 13 Stairs from studio to control
- 14 Master Control
- 15 Throughway for cameras

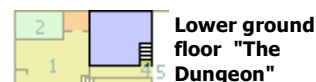
- 16 The Equipment Rack Room
- 17 Studio 1 scenery door
- 18 Studio 2 scenery door
- 19 OB van garage
- 20 Stairs and notice board
- 21 Scenery Bay
- 22 Technical workshop
- 23 Canteen
- 24 Props office
- 25 Goods entrance
- 26 Props cage



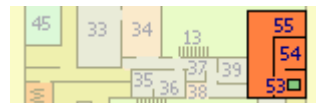
The Second floor

- 27 News Room
- 28 Film camera equipment
- 29 Still Photography Department
- 30 Sound dubbing room
- 31 Theatre
- 32 16 mm projector booth

- 33 Film Department
- 34 Telecine
- 35 Studio 2 audio control
- 36 Studio 2 video control
- 37 Voice over booth
- 38 Microphone storage
- 39 Studio 1 video control
- 40 Studio 1 audio control
- 41 Client viewing room
- 42 Record library
- 43 Production conference room
- 44 Chief engineers office
- 45 Engineering & roster office
- 46 Commercial traffic department
- 47 Sales office
- 48 Managers office
- 49 Mail room
- 50 Production office
- 51 Film librarian
- 52 Production offices



Lower ground floor "The Dungeon"

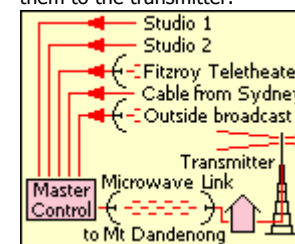


The third floor

- 53 Man hole and Microwave links
- 54 Dark room and Kine machine
- 55 Air-conditioning Plant

Notes

- 4 "The Dungeon" was aptly named, it was a dingy basement below the dressing room. This area was out of bounds for management and a relaxation area for the staff. It was complete with a fridge to keep beer cold.
- 14 Master control co-ordinated all the program sources and sent them to the transmitter.



- 15 If there was an outside broadcast the number of cameras were reduced to 2, it was essential cameras could be dragged from one studio to another quickly.
- 30 The sound dubbing room had 3 turntables and was used to add sound effects and music to the news stories.

Happy Hammond

Happy, real name Harold. During W.W.II worked in a troop entertainment group with old friend Keith Glover. Later he worked in radio at 3GL Geelong



Happy Hammond

before moving to Melbourne's top rating radio station 3UZ in the 50's. He moved to GTV9, when Tv began and appeared in the very successful kids show *The Happy Show*. When Frank Packer bought GTV9 many stars and production personnel defected to HSV. Happy Hammond and the *The Happy Show* amongst them.

Saturdays

Saturday was a big day at the station, not only was there the football broadcast, the studio's were hard at work. At around 11 am a whole gang of talented kids would arrive for the "Brian and the Juniors" show

hosted by a young Brian Naylor, who was actually on 3DB radio station staff and had not yet moved to channel 7. The show was the forerunner to Johnny Young's "Young Talent Time" and ran for many years. When I first started the show went to air live, later it was taped and became national. Many stars owe their start to the show. people like:- Jamie Redfern,



Brian Naylor



Peter Doyle



Rod Kirkham



Jamie Redfern

Anne Watt, Peter Doyle, Rod Kirkham, Phillip Gould, Debra Byrne, Jan Scali, Debra Byrne & Vikki Broughton. The show was produced by Mac Irvine who



Debra Byrne

owned an advertising agency who had the Swallow & Aerial Biscuit company account, who naturally sponsored the show. The earlier live shows were done in Studio 2 at Dorcas street, with the 2 remaining camera from the 3 that had gone to the football. I was audio engineer on the show for a number of years. Meanwhile in camera-less Studio 1 the sets were being set and rehearsals attempted for Peters Fun Fair featuring Zig (*Jack Perry*) and Zag (*Doug Makenzie*)

The show went to air straight after Brian and the Juniors at 5.30 pm. That gave them 2 minutes of commercials to drag the camera's through to Studio 1. The Zig and Zag show was pure slapstick, they made the story up as they went along, only stopping at regular intervals to do their own

commercials for Peters Ice cream. Then straight back into the story, if there was one, no problem, just

John Gilby



With John Gilby age 16

Cameraman and good friend John Gilby went on to run the television centre at Monash University. This photo was taken at the Teletheatre by Panda. 1961



With John Gilby 43 years later at the 2003 reunion

throw some more cream pies at each other nobody could remember the story anyway.



Jack Perry played Zig

Saturday News

Straight after Zig & Zag, it was time for the evening news, back in the now reset studio 2. As before the 2 camera's were dragged back from Studio 1 to Studio 2 during the station break. News in those days relied heavily on film footage, either shot by seven's cameramen, or syndicated film rushed from the airport. Most interstate stories were a day or so late as the cable had not yet been put through to Sydney. International stories could be up to a week old. Stories were often just illustrated by photos send down from the stations owners, The Herald and Weekly Times. These were mounted on a flip-stand and the camera pointed at it. A good flipper could flip the card forward so fast that you would believe you were seeing a cut to another camera.



Flip card man - Ken Fitzgerald

We couldn't even put reporters phone calls on air. These were the days before Talkback Radio and the Postmaster Generals Dept. (PMG) strictly forbade the broadcasting or recording of phone calls. Sometime we did voice interviews on location with a spring wound, battery valve tape recorder, then played overlay film shots of the interviewee, so wide so you could not see their mouth.



Eric Pearce reading the news

The dubbing room was very important for the news as we could play live from disk, sound effects and atmospheric music. I often did this. It involved coming in an hour before the news, getting a copy of the news rundown, then going to the record library and picking out suitable tracks for the stories. We were suppose to preview the film footage first to get a feel for the story. But this never happened as often they were still splicing the film seconds before the news went to air. I always loved working on the news, a better adrenaline rush I have yet to experience.

Pranks

Many pranks were played on news readers. There was no way they could laugh or smile, immediate demotion would result. Especially if the Chairman of the Herald Sir John Williams or station manager Keith Cairns were watching. I remember one time Geoff Raymond was reading the evening news. It was a Melbourne summer heatwave. The heat of the studio lights unbearable. On this occasion Geoff read the news only wearing

shorts and thongs below the desk out of the cameras view. Naturally he had a jacket, shirt and tie above. One of the floor boys crawled under the news desk and proceeded to squirt Geoff's bare legs with a water pistol whilst Geoff read a serious story. Geoff being the professional he was showed now emotion and kept reading. However the expletives that emanated from the studio once we went to the commercial break had to be heard to be believed.

April Fool

Another memorable prank was played on the public by the David Johnston. David and a cameraman were in Mildura shooting a news story on a vineyard. David decided to do another story, he draped the vines with cooked spaghetti, then standing in front, David told us of



David Johnstone

the plight of the Mildura spaghetti growers and how their crop had failed. The story included an interview with an Italian Mumma, emotionally explaining how they would be ruined, shots of her children who were soon to starve and her husband telling us how all his hard work since arriving from Italy was in vein. On April 1 the story was put to air, on the news, with no explanation or back announcement as to it being a joke. The whole studio was in fits of laughter as no one had been pre-warned. Then the joke backfired. The Channel 7 switchboard lit up like never before. Hundreds of viewers called and wanted to donate money to the stricken families.

An official apology had to be given on-air and David Johnstone was severely reprimanded. Ian Davey edited the story and says he has dined out on the story often.



**Ian Davey
2004**

John D'arcy

Many tricks were played on John D'arcy who was always a good sport about it. In his later days at Channel 7 John was often the booth announcer and live presenter. I remember one weekend as he was reading a live voice over commercial.



John D'arcy

Brian Naylor lowered a large metal rubbish bin over his head as he did this the sound became very tinny. John kept on reading the commercial regardless. The laughter from the control room could be clearly heard on-air. On another occasion John D'arcy was reading the late news. In those days there was no journalist on duty John would have to go to the news room and find whatever news he could of the teletype machine. This he would edit by sticky taping different articles together and read on-air. In order that the long length of paper could not be seen he draped it over the

front of the desk and read it as if it was printed on a toilet roll. On this particular week-end night a few of the floor boys were still back drinking "Scrumpy" a very cheap apple cider. One of them crawled under the desk while John was on-air and lit the end of the paper roll with a match. John and the viewers could see the smoke rising. John read as fast as he could before the flames got to desk level, announced the studio was on fire and quickly said goodnight. Again much laughter from the control room.

Happy Hammond



One day Happy Hammond was doing an announce booth shift. The audio operator connected Happy's headphones via an audio tape machine which created one

second delay in the audio in his headphones. Halfway through an announcement, the delay was switched in. Happy immediately started to drawl as if he was drunk. The manager was listening in his office and came down to the control room accusing Happy of being drunk. Everyone knew happy was a teetotaler except apparently the manager.

Late Night

Some nights we would get particularly bored during the Late Night Movie. We would amuse ourselves by playing sound effects under the movie soundtrack. Monkey screeches over love scenes. Baby cries, for no reason at all and car and aircraft sounds on wild west movies. We all thought it hilarious. Other nights if we wanted to go home early we would leave the Late Movie running during commercial breaks. No one seemed to notice and we could go home early, especially Friday nights when everyone wanted to get to the Regent Cinema, South Yarra for the midnight Show.



The competition in live variety programs between GTV-9 and HSV-7 was intense. Sir Frank Packer had recently bought GTV-9, which was rating well with its complete radio and Tv "Television City" product, headed by Graham Kennedy and side kick Bert Newton. In Melbourne Tonight rated so highly it was very much envied by the Herald-Sun organization. Graham Kennedy and Bert Newton were at the height of their careers, not only appearing every night on IMT they also did a

3 hr morning program on sister radio station 3AK. HSV-7 were desperate, something had to be done to topple Channel 9's lead.



Graham & Bert at 3AK

The only top rating variety program 7 had was Sunny Side Up, which went to air Friday nights at 7.30. For many Melbourne households Friday night was fish and chip night. With work over for the week, Dad would usually have a few beers with his working mates at the pub. In those days the Melbourne Pubs closed at 6 pm.



The Local Pub

One could order as many beers as you liked before that time, then you had 15 minutes to finish them. After closing time he would head off to the nearby Fish & Chip shop for some, Fish and Chips, all fried in lard (*animal fat*), smothered in salt and vinegar wrapped up in newspaper. He would arrive home just after 7, mum would put the Fish and Chips in the oven, then she and the kids would enjoy some Tarax lemonade dad had bought

home. Dad of course would have a beer. Mum might even have a dash of beer in her lemonade (*a Shandy*). At 7.30 the Fish and Chips would be served in front of the Tv as the whole family sat down to enjoy Sunny Side Up.



Getting ready for the show

The biggest studio Channel 7 had was far smaller than Studio 1 at Channel 9, there was no dedicated audience area, it was just too small for live variety.

Things were not all that happy at Channel 9 after the new management took over. One Norman Spencer, who had become a household name as the director of In Melbourne Tonight and the television father of Graham

Kennedy was not happy with the new regime at 9, so he resigned and moved to channel 7. He was put in charge of bringing 7's ratings up and toppling Kennedy.



Norman Spencer

It was decided that a new studio could be built at minimum cost, styled after the Ed Sullivan theatre in New York, which was basically a converted theatre. In Melbourne due to the impact of Tv many



Ed Sullivan Theatre NYC still going strong with the "Late Show" with David Letterman.

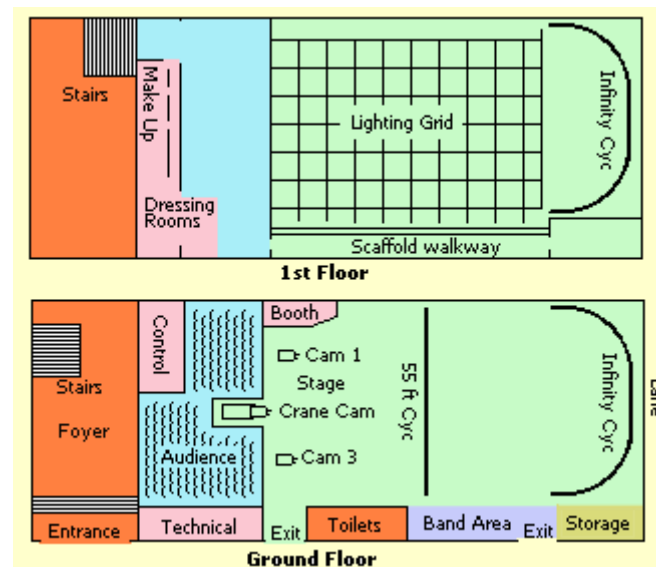
Cinema's had closed and sitting idle. Channel 7 was able to take over the Hoyt's Theatre Fitzroy, a couple of Km from the Melbourne CBD. The whole construction job was done in a few months.

A lighting grid was assembled across what was the upstairs seating area. The floor was fully cemented from the audience area to what was the old stage. Two huge cycloramas (*Cycs*) were installed. The studio floor area was huge. The studio was connected to the Dorcas St. studios by 2 microwave links, one up and one down. The Audio was send and received by high quality telephone lines from the Postmaster Generals Dept, (*PMG*) The studio was equipped with 3 brand new black and white Marconi MkIV cameras.

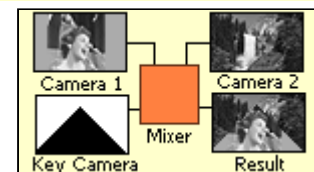


Marconi Mk V

Camera 1 & 3 were either side of the Camera Bay, whilst Camera 2 was mounted on a crane which could elevate to 8 feet. The cameras had 4 lenses, from very wide angle to telescopic. The exposure of each lens, contrast and

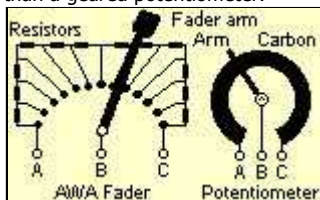


brilliance was controlled remotely from the control room by the Camera Control Unit operator. The cameras were so unstable they had to be completely lined up before every transmission. The vision mixer was supplied by RCA USA and was capable of key effects.



A Key effect

The Teletheater had many technical innovations and also many problems. The audio mixer was built in Australia under contract by AWA. The faders or individual volume controls were made using a stepping resistive system, rather than a geared potentiometer.



The end result was the sound would fade up in steps rather than smoothly like a conventional potentiometer also they were susceptible to dust, often making loud crackling sounds on-air.



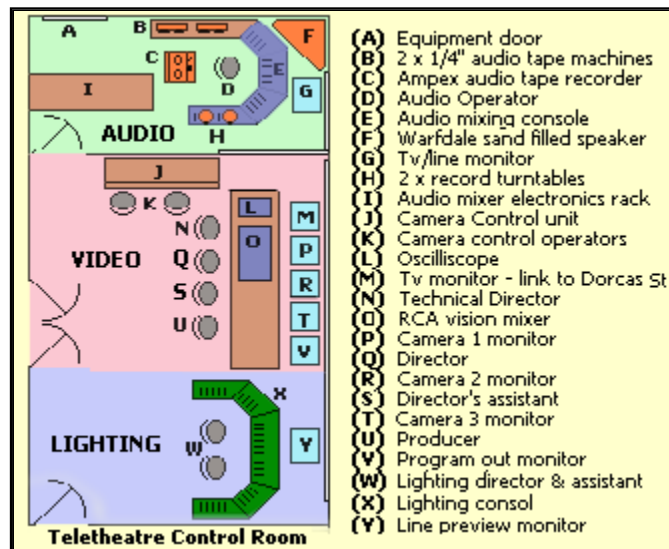
Harold & Teletheater mixer

The Opening Night

The opening of the teletheater was the spectacular to end all spectacles. Norman Spencer had imported from the USA, Bob Crosby, to host the show, Co-starring was British comedian Jimmy Edwards. The show featured many local stars of the time, a brass band and circus elephants.

Not Ready

On opening night the Teletheater was far from completion. Most of the new equipment had not turned up and the broadcast was really an OB (*Outside Broadcast*). Equipment was pirated from all over the place. The OB van was parked out the front of the theatre to relay the pictures back to Dorcas St. The lighting console was the only new equipment working. The audio mixer had not turned up from AWA. So various portable 4 channel mixers, sourced from Dorcas St and sister radio station 3DB, were strung together on some card tables and operated by Colin Stevenson, assisted by audio boss Ian McLeod. The previous day it was realized the station didn't



posses enough microphones to cover the spectacular. Ralph Clarkson phoned old mate and Neuman microphone importer Wolf Grey who turned over his entire stock, saving the day. The tension in the teletheater before the show was incredible. Equipment was breaking down due

to the heat of the lights from the non-airconditioned theatre.



Ralph & Colin catch up in 2002

Against all adversity Norman Spencer got the show on air. He was so tense he threw up in the rubbish bin 5 mins before airtime.

Bob Crosby

Star of the show was Bob Crosby, who was famous for his band "The Bob Cats" - he was the brother Bing Crosby.



Bob Crosby with brother Bing

Bob Crosby was born as George Robert Crosby, 25 Aug. 1913, Spokane, Washington, USA. For most of his early career, Crosby was inevitably overshadowed by his older brother, Bing Crosby. success thanks to a pleasant voice

Nevertheless, he achieved success in his own right. He joined the Tommy Dorsey band. In 1935 a new group formed and needed a front man, they approached Bob, the band was later to

become Bob Crosby and the Bobcats. They folded in 1942



but Crosby continued to make films and personal appearances, sometimes as leader of dixieland style bands, sometimes of more contemporary-sounding bands. Crosby died in 1993 at 80.

Jimmy Edwards

Jimmy Edwards was one of British comedy's biggest stars in the post-war era. A former distinguished RAF pilot, he first appeared at Soho's



infamous Windmill Theatre, soon finding stardom, first with his "trombonolgy" act, then onto radio and television. Along with the

Goons, Frank Muir and Denis Norden, the writing partnership, they would reinvigorate British comedy. Appearing on hit radio shows such as Take It From Here as Pa Glum and starring in televisions Whack-O! as the cane-happy headmaster of a minor public school, "Professor" Jim Edwards' popular persona was largely a reflection of the private man. Jimmy was a keen polo player, on one occasion, during one match when the Duke of Edinburgh was playing on the opposite side and after having just been ridden off the ball by the Queen's husband, he is reported to have yelled out: "Stay close to me, Sir, and you'll get your face in the newspapers!" Later he starred in Lionel Bart's hit musical, Oliver. In his later days he lived between Perth Australia and England. Jimmy Edwards died in 1988. He had travelled the world an entertained millions.



Raymond Burr

In the early days of the Teletheater Raymond Burr appeared on a show. He may be best

remembered for his part in "Perry Mason" in the 1950s and 60s. Burr began his career typecast as a motion picture



villain in such films as Alfred Hitchcock's "Rear Window". As intensely private as he was talented, Raymond Burr was an often anonymous philanthropist and foster parent. Born Raymond William Stacey Burr May 21st, 1917 in British Columbia. Burr was with a Toronto based repertory theatre, which teamed during its summer season with players from a British touring company. Among the company's players was a young Scottish actress, Annette Southerland, with whom Burr eloped in England. The couple lived in England and France, Burr became a popular nightclub singer in Paris, in 1942 they had a son Michael Evan Burr. Burr and his

family returned to America ahead of the worst of WW II. Burr eventually scored a hit in the 1943 show "Duke In Darkness". On the eve of Burr's professional triumph personal tragedy struck Annette Sutherland, with other British actors supporting the troops and the war effort, travelled to her native Great Britain on a public relations junket. On June 1st, 1943, the plane carrying Ms. Sutherland, actor Leslie Howard and others from London to Lisbon was shot down by German forces. All on board were killed. In 1952 Burr



**Burr with long time friend
Barbara Hale (Della Street)**

mysteriously trimmed down his appearances in film and stage productions, taking only four roles that year. It was later revealed that Burr's son, Michael, whom he had carefully protected from the press,

had been battling leukaemia. Michael Burr lost his fight before his eleventh birthday. Several years later, Burr lost his third wife, Adrina Morgan, to cancer. Before dying of cancer in 1993 Burr gave away most of his fortune to his foster children, friends & charities.

I bump into Mr Burr

While Raymond Burr was in Melbourne he appeared at the Teletheater, my job was a go for or do anything the head audio person needed. At the Teletheater there was a very rickety scaffold leading from the upstairs dressing room to the back stage area, so stars could appear from behind the curtains and not have to walk through the audience before their appearance. We were on-air when I was sent down to back stage to fix a



The position of the walkway

microphone. Being a keen young lad of 17 I ran up the stairs and out along the rickety scaffold walkway. As I ran I kept my head down to navigate the gaps in the planks. Suddenly, thump, I hit my head and bounced back laying flat on my back, I couldn't believe my eyes, I had run head first into Mr Burr's not inconsiderable stomach. He said "are you ok son" and helped me back on my feet.

I bump into the Queen *Well almost!*

The 1963 Royal Tour was Queen Elizabeth's second tour of Australia after her Coronation. She arrived in Melbourne on the Royal yacht Britannia. The next day she visited the Royal Children's Hospital. We did a live broadcast of the the event. A camera was set up in one of the wards to show the Queen visiting the child patients. Now 18, I was again working as an audio assistant runner. The security was heavy, even for those times, we were all issued with very important looking "P" passes. Just before the broadcast I was in the OB van, the Queen had already arrived and



The Queen and Duke 1963

was attending a reception in some other part of the hospital. Suddenly a microphone failed in the ward and I was sent up to fix it. I ran up the fire stairs and out into the passage. There 5 meters in front of me was the Queen and entourage. I screeched to a halt and stood to attention with my back to the wall, terrified, as Her Majesty walked by. I was told later that if I had not stopped when I did, I could have been shot by her body guards.





Starting in 1961, Channel 7's first regular drama program was "Consider Your Verdict" originally a successful radio drama on 3DB, produced by the independent Crawford Productions.



Only 3 hours was allocated for the production, the drama was produced at Studio 1 at Dorcas St, then later at the Teletheater, which had an iron roof and was not

sound proof, on one occasion production stopped due to rain, as the time was limited, taping had to continue. Quick thinking Dorothy Crawford had the Judge say to a witness "Can you speak up, I can't hear you for the rain", production continued with the rain pouring in the background. Crawford

Productions was established in 1945 by Hector Crawford and his sister Dorothy. They produced radio programs as well as the "Music for the People" at the Myer Music Bowl. Broadcast on radio 3DB & HSV7.



The first episode (*not the pilot*), 'The Stunt', went to air on HSV-7 at 7:30 October 20, 1964, with Ian Turpie playing the first victim.



Ian Turpie & director Ian Jones
Homicide was a milestone in Australian Tv, Hector Crawford believed Australians wanted to watch Australian drama's, although many were sceptical. The show was an immediate success regularly rating in the 60's. A rating of 20 is considered excellent these days.

I get involved

Late in the 60's I was to become the recording and post-production sound engineer on the second series of Homicide. The drama involved 2½ days of my week.



My audio console - Studio 1

Tues. afternoon we set up all the microphones after the set was constructed for the studio shoot which started at 7am on Wed's, we were scheduled to finish at 7pm, but often 9 or 10, one time 1am.

Mondays was integration day, where we completed the final master of program, integrating the outdoor 16mm film segments with the taped studio footage.



Stars of the series, Jack Fegan, Terry McDermott & Leonard Teal.

The film sequences were all shot by Crawford Productions. The location sound was mixed in their sound studios and copied to 1/4 inch audio tape for replay. On integration day we would attempt to play the synchronous audio with the silent location film. To roll the tape in *sync* a system was devised where 4 holes were punched in the 16mm film, 4 frames apart. The audio tape had 4 corresponding tone bips. The Rola audio machine was cued up on the 4th bip. When the holes in the film were viewed "1-2-3-4" I would press the play button on viewing the 4th hole. "Sudden death" no time for re-takes. Sometimes the

sound would be out of sync if I did not press the play button in perfect time. Not that noticeable, until a detective slammed a car door, or someone was punched in a fight, you could see the action before or after you heard the sound.



Holes punched every 4 frames by a paper folder punch.



Many scenes featured car door slamming - a very important piece of dramatic action for the actors in Homicide, lead to many jokes about the show on opposing stations and in the press..



The Rola Tape Machine



The Rola 77 audio tape machine was designed by Max Beyer who ran the Beyer factory just a few doors up from Channel 7 at 8 Dorcas Street. First he made the Model 66 and 77 Mk1 model, before the company was taken over by Rola, the speaker manufacturer. The recorder featured 3 motors and 3 heads, erase, record and playback. As the machine had instant playback, the machine was often used as a make-do echo device, by feeding the replay back to the audio mixing panel. The company ceased producing the machine when the Menzies government lowered the trade tariffs and they could no longer compete with imported machines.

Recording television

The first method of recording television programs was with the use of a kinescope machine, which was basically a 16mm film camera pointed at a television screen. The picture quality was quite poor, but at the time, better than nothing.



A Kinescope Recorder



Kinerecording Camera

The sound was recorded on a separate 16mm audio recording machine which was electro-mechanically locked to the recording camera.

Video Tape Arrives

The first video tape recorder was made by the BBC in the UK. they used a very high tape speed to record the 4 Mhz signal. It was not really practical as only 15 mins could be recorded on a roll of tape.



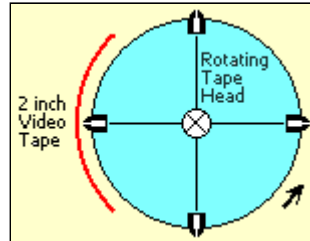
In the USA the first practical video recorder was developed in the 50's by Ampex & RCA engineers at the request of Bing Crosby, who wanted his national show time delayed across America. In 1960 channel 7 received their first video tape recorder from RCA America. The high speed tape problem was solved by using a 15,000 rpm rotating head wheel with 4 heads

passing 2 inch tape, with a writing speed of 1500 inch/second. This 2" system was called quadplex recording and became the industry standard for well over 25 years.

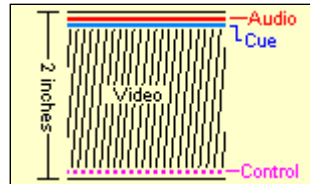


Early RCA Quad machine

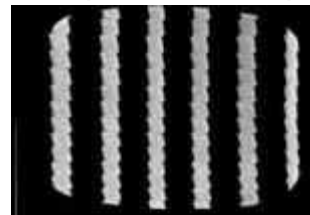
The early machines were huge and entirely valve, transistors were not used until later models. They consumed a huge amount of power and even had an inbuilt aircompressor to supply the airbearing for the spinning head and a vacuum pump for the tape head pressure of a massive 1,000lbs/sq inch. Each head recorded 16 lines of the 625 line television picture.



The quadplex tape head



Track pattern on the 2" tape



Machine head adjustment was critical, if the tape tension was incorrect the picture would be horizontally distorted.

Unreliable

The first tape machines were very unreliable and subject to mechanical and electronic break down. Often when a program went to air in primetime a kine-recording was run in Telecine as a back-up. So if the videotape machine broke down, the presentation director could switch to the duplicate program running from telecine.

Primitive Editing

Initially it was impossible to edit video tape. Programs had to be recorded from one commercial break to another. If a mistake was made, the whole section would have to be re-recorded. Eventually the Smith tape splicing system was devised, where the tape was physically cut and spliced.



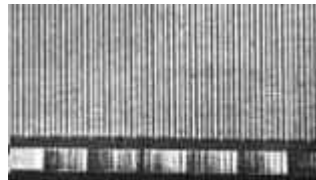
The Smith splicer

The problem was to splice the tape at the end of a single frame otherwise the splice was obvious to the viewer.



An incorrect splice

To correct this, the Smith splicer came with a iron particle solution that was brushed on to the tape. With the aid of the microscope, the operator could identify the frame pulses and attempt to cut the tape exactly on the frame.



Visible frame pulses

Later Channel 7 installed Ampex Videotape machines that came with *Editek* which gave the ability to electronically edit the tape.



Ampex AVR1 Video recorder

Pre-Recording

Videotape recording dramatically changed television. No longer did programs have to go to air live, they could be recorded ahead of time and be distributed nationally. Many old timers lamented this, because they felt the "live" went out of television and recorded programs lacked spontaneity. They often referred the television studio's as the *Sausage Factory*, where we churned out hundreds of



Roly Lau in the video-tape room in the 60's with the new Ampex machine and old RCA machines in the background.

Quiz and Game shows. The accounts department loved videotape. Weekend programs



Demise of "Open Reel" 2003.

could be recorded weekdays saving penalties and overtime.

Secret Communication

One of my early jobs was to play the "Test Music" in the mornings from 9am until we opened transmission at 11.30 am. The cost of phone calls to Mum in Leongatha was prohibitive. I devised a system to let Mum know if I would be home for the week-end on the train. If I was, I would play a track from the musical "My Fair Lady", as the last track, before the 11.30am news. Mum would be tuned in to channel 7. If she heard one of the tracks from the album, she knew I would be home.



John playing Test Music

Prime Minister Harold Holt's disappearance

On the 17th December 1967, I was doing audio at the Christmas Music for the People concert, when we were told, (4½ hours before the news was released to the public) that Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt had disappeared at Cheviot beach, Portsea.



Myer Music Bowl

A group of management and executive technicians arrived and took one of our 3 camera's off in the stations second makeshift OB van, a modified VW combi van to get live pictures from Portsea for the evening news, when the D-notice on Holt was lifted.



PM Holt

Mr Holt and four others stopped at Cheviot Beach for a swim. A keen swimmer and snorkeller, Mr Holt remarked "I know this beach like the back of my hand" shortly before he entered the water. One of the men swam in the shallows while Mr Holt swam out to sea. But, aged 59, with a bad shoulder and fatigued from a possible leadership challenge, he was not as strong in the water as he thought. He disappeared in a savage undertow, never to be seen again. There were many wild rumours that Holt had been taken by a Russian or Chinese submarine.



Geoff's Blooper

My favourite TV story was admitted by the culprit himself, none other than news reader Geoff Raymond. Reflecting on his long career, he said the worst moment was a live report from Cheviot Beach, reporting the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt. The broadcast went on for ages.

Concluding his report, he said: "So at this stage the search has come to a dead halt." Oops!

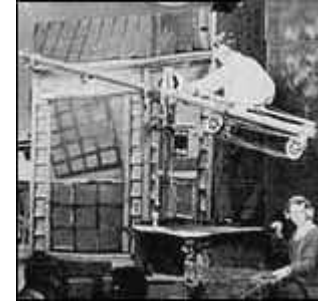


Anne Wennrick, film librarian with Jean Hanger. Sunny Side Up

Channel 7's, longest running variety show was Sunny Side Up, produced by Alf Spargo. Starting as the Happy Gang on radio 3DB it made a successful transition to Tv.



Directed by Dick Jones the show was soon to become a national success.



John swings the boom on SSU

I worked on the show for many years, first as an audio assistant, then a boom pusher, microphone boom operator and finally playing tapes on the show.



Syd Heylan & Bill Collins



The cast and crew on the 200th edition of Sunny Side Up. Foreground Director Dick Jones, Director's assistant Barbera Pearson, Producer Alfred Spargo. Myself circled.

Make a wish

Make a Wish, with Wally Peterson the compere, sponsor and owner of Web's Radio. Wally with his side kick Jim Cruise would offer 3 unfortunate down and out housewives to "Make a Wish" if they were successful they would win a prize. The show was a vehicle to promote Web's Radio who sold new television sets and offered generous trade-ins on your old set which he told us he needed for fringe area sets. But they actually became rented *coin in the slot* Tv's for people that couldn't afford to buy a tv set. Mr Peterson was the fringe area!. Although the real reason seemed to be that the show was to promote Mr Peterson himself to stardom. He bought a luxury boat originally owned by the late radio quiz star Jack Davey. The boat was called the Webray and was constantly being used in promotional gimmicks. The shows were dreadful, Mr Peterson had



Coin Tv

little or no talent, but surrounded himself with yes men who kept telling him he was the greatest star of all. He also had a morning radio program - he was everywhere, well for only a few months until his entire empire collapsed with huge debts. He died the following year.

Tell the Truth

Compered first by George Foster then by Michael Williamson, Tell The Truth, produced by Rosalie Stephenson, was a Celebrity panel game show based on a US original in which the panel team had to guess which one of a trio of contestants was actually telling the truth about a given statement. Concluding by the real person to *please stand up*. The show ran from 1959-1965.



Kevin Dennis

The show was later sponsored by Kevin Dennis Motors and often featured Dennis Gowing alias Kevin Dennis on the show. Mr Gowing's chain of used car yards was

probably the largest sponsor of television Melbourne has ever seen. Dennis Gowing went on the become a successful restaurateur. In 1985 he was part owner of racehorse, "*What a Nuisance*" that won the Melbourne Cup. Ridden by Pat Hyland, the horse won with the odds of 15/1. That year was the first time the Melbourne Cup boasted a first prize of one million Australian dollars.



Tribute

I am indebted to Dennis Gowing, he was one of the first people who gave me work making Tv commercials, that helped me establish my Tv production company *Gable Summertime*, which I ran for 27 years before retiring to Bali.

The Galloping Gourmet

Graham Kerr taped the first series of national television cooking programs "The Galloping Gourmet" in the Melbourne studios of HSV channel 7.



Mr Kerr was just starting out and it was painfully obvious that he was working on a very tight budget. The series of 13 shows were taped in rapid succession. "Keep rolling" he would call as the operators barely had time to change tapes.



Kerr in action

The actual cooking took second place over his comedy antics. He often put far too much spice or wine in a dish, anything for a laugh. It is well known Tv crews will eat just about anything - especially if it is free. Often Mr Kerr's creations were left untouched by the crew.



Each year throughout the early 60's HSV 7 would broadcast the Miss Australian Ball. At the time I was still a Junior Audio Engineer and each year Alf Potter, the director of the outside broadcast would request me to do the sound. I could never understand why I was selected when there were so many other senior engineers to me. I was later told that my sound from the band was atmospheric



Alf Potter



Junior John

and that made the viewer feel like they were actually there. Others would make it sound like a studio recording. I felt quite chuffed at the praise and that Alf would specially request me. The real reason for my sound was that the outside broadcast van's audio mixer only had a few channels, so after subtracting the microphones needed for the compere and commentators there was only one mic channels left. All I could do was string a mic way over the top of the band area where it picked up the band, along with clinking of glasses, chatter and the overall atmosphere.



The channel 7 OB Van

Planning started weeks before with many meetings in Alf's office to organizing the logistics.

The lighting was a nightmare and a military like operation. The Palais de Dance was a huge area and had to be lit so the insensitive black and white Tv cameras could see something. The only way to light it was to get the light level to at least half level and then use a powerful arc spotlight to focus on the comperes, judges and models.

Ken Hancock who had worked on films in England was the lighting director. he hired dozens of 5,000 watt lamps to light the Palais de Dance.



Ken Hancock

HSV's largest studio lights were only 2,000 watts. One could imagine the huge amount of electrical power needed. George Morrison the station electrician would order a mini sub-station from the State Electricity Comm. So much power was being pulled that the huge circuit breakers would pop out. During the broadcast George and one of his assistants sat with their shoes up on the circuit

breakers, holding them closed. Their shoes were so hot you could smell leather burning.

The Miss Australia Ball broadcast was the glamour broadcast of the year. Everybody who was anybody was there, the Governor General, the State Governor, the Prime Minister and all the usual Toorak socialites and hangers on.

HSV staff were required to wear station supplied dinner suites. The crew were provided with a table out of sight behind the band. Before the broadcast we were given the same 3 course meal as the guests, drink flowed freely, but we were forbidden to drink before the broadcast. After the broadcast we returned to enjoy all the free drinks we wished. I remember one year whilst John Gorton was Prime Minister of Australia, he came and sat at our table. Always the larrikin, he said he preferred to sit with us workers, rather than the "boring fart" official party.



John Gorton

Miss Australia Quest

For many years, the Miss Australia Ball was televised to an audience of millions, becoming one of Australia's most popular and productive fund-raising events. They also offered young women an opportunity to directly contribute to a worthwhile cause, build self-confidence, and hone new skills. Many title-holders went on to successful careers in business and the media because of the experience and public profile they achieved through the awards.

Miss Australia: A Retrospective 1908-2000 is a stunning record in words and pictures of a unique annual event that lasted almost 100 years.

Author Katherine Beard, Miss ACT 1998, interviewed hundreds of people and collected personal stories from almost every Miss Australia since 1946. She shared the fabulous memories of all of those talented and caring women,



from the beginnings, to the thrilling heyday of the quest when winners like Tania Verstak and Rosemary Fenton, to name but two, were front-page, banner-headline news, to the grand finale in 2000.

Penelope Plummer another Miss Australia winner. She went on to become Miss World in 1968.



Beryl Mills became the first Miss Australia in June 1926. The 19-year-old was born and grew up on a sheep station near Geraldton.



First Miss Australia 1926



The Palais de Dance - burnt down in 1968



Tania Verstak, Sydney 1962

The original Palais de Dance was the now, still standing, Palais Theatre, built in 1913 by the Phillips Brothers. It was later renamed the Palais Theatre, for

the new silent films that were all the rage. To replace it a new Palais de Dance was built next door. The Palais de Dance was a showplace for different bands, including those of Jim Davidson, Ern Pettifer, Sammy Lee and Bobby Gibson. The Palais de Dance was very pleasant on a balmy evening, when the doors were opened to the sea and stars beyond. It was considered the best dance hall in the Southern Hemisphere. Each year the Palais de Dance hosted the Gala Miss Australia Ball and Beauty Quest. The Palais de Dance was sadly destroyed by fire in 1968.

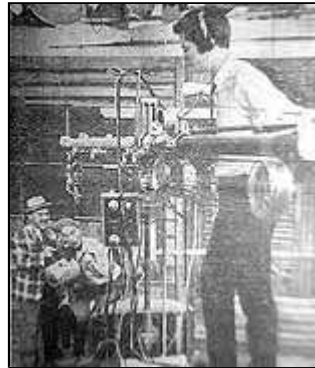


Vic Gordon, Princess Panda, Happy Hammond, Lovely Anne and Uncle Roy.

One of HSV7's most successful shows was "The Happy Show" The show originally ran on GTV9 before moving to HSV7.



A very young Ross Campbell with Happy Hammond and Denzyl Howsen.



John age 17 on the boom

My Minute of Fame

Tue Nov 2, 1962 this story was published in the Sun News Pictorial in the daily "Young Sun" section. The story was written by Jim Foley, a Herald staff reporter and the photo taken by Harry Wonacot. HSV 7's publicity photographer.



ONE of the hottest jobs in television is that of a boom microphone operator.

The boom operator is the person who controls the large mobile microphone which travels around the studio floor.

The microphone is at the end of a long arm which is mounted on a trolley.

The operator stands on the trolley, on a platform about 5 ft. high.

One of HSV7's boom operators, John Symons, 17, says his head is just below the studio floodlights when he stands on the platform.

point out there's more to it than meets the eye.

One of the tricky parts of the job is keeping the microphone out of camera range.

"Usually you can tell by looking at the cameras whether there's any danger of the mike getting on the screen," John said.

60's Memories



Ron Casey

World of Sport was the brainchild of Doug Elliot, who bought 2 hours of time on channel 7, starting Sunday at noon, at the rumoured price of 60 pounds per hour, in what was before a non existing time slot. Elliot joined with Ron Casey of 3DB who hosted and produced the show. Elliot found the sponsors and presented the live advertisements himself. Most ads were scheduled for 30 seconds however often ran 3 minutes. Uncle Doug gave them value for money.

Doug always like to be paid in cash often collecting from the sponsor straight after the ad went to air.



Ad man - Doug Elliot

From humble beginnings the show was soon a huge success, collecting more money than prestige shows in evening night slots. Ron Casey had the knack of surrounding himself with excellent people.



Racing Panel with Bill Collins

The show was first directed by John Dixon who gave the show a relaxing Sunday casual air.

Show Success

Later the channel management, who obviously all slept in Sunday morning, realized what a gold mine the show was and took the show over from Mr Elliot, who after only received commission for the ads. Dick Jones, director of *Sunny Side Up* became the director.



WOS Director Dick Jones

HSV-7 was THE Football Channel and managed to get all the personalities into the studio. Opposition GTV-9 tried to copy the show, but they could never get the personalities. What was 7's secret?

The Infamous Dungeon

"Were off to Church" was what most of the sporting personalities of the day would tell their wives, as they left home for the Channel 7 studios on a Sunday morning. On arrival they headed for the basement under the Studio One make-up room called *"The Dungeon"*. We must remember it was during the time of 6 o'clock closing in Melbourne and also alcohol could not be sold on Sundays. In the Dungeon the beer flowed freely, the only place in Melbourne where you could get a beer on Sunday. An exclusive club, just for the top sportsmen.



The World of Sport football panel

The Four and twenty meat pie company supplied an industrial pie warmer and free pies. A great time was had by all. In the Dungeon were the Who's Who's of the Melbourne's sporting world.

Show's Secret

The show's floor manager only had to go to the Dungeon to find anyone they needed for an interview. Channel 9 couldn't match that. Of course the Seven management *knew nothing* at all about the illegal grog shop in the "The Dungeon" *or did they?*



Ron Casey - oblivious

Ron Casey knew nothing of the party below the studio, he never seemed to hear the endless laughter emanating from the Dungeon into the studio, the floor manager often having to quieten the crowd down. Barrels of beer were delivered as "show props".

After all Carlton and United Breweries were one of the major sponsors. All went well for a long time. However it had got out of hand. Apart from the sports stars, word had got around Melbourne that if you needed a dozen cans of Beer on a Sunday morning "*Drop down to Seven*". Engine idling cars were queued outside the studio as the drivers would run out of the main 7 entrance with a dozen cans up their jumpers.



The HSV -7 "Sly Grog" Shop

Police Raid

One Sunday morning the Victorian Police raided the studios while the show was on-air. The props person in charge of the *beer props* was

seen on-air running behind Ron Casey, on camera, followed by 2 policemen. It was reality Tv Keystone Cops. The management "*knew nothing*" (*par for the course even when it came to Television*). A couple of staff were charged but got off lightly. Magically the story was kept out of the press, Ah "*the power of the press*". After all the tv station was owned by a major newspaper.

Back to Normal

Only a few weeks passed before the beer was flowing again. However now with a security guard on the front door, making sure that only bona fide show guests entered the building. The show went on for 28 years and for some time was the longest running Tv show anywhere in the world. I often worked on World of Sport, first on disks, playing theme music, sound effects and sound commercials from the dubbing room, a small room designed for laying soundtracks on film programs. The Dubbing Room was quite remote from the studio, all I had was the voice of the director

screaming through a distorted speaker to follow. Bakelite discs flew everywhere, occasionally breaking, in the scramble to find the theme music for a segment that was not planned just now. Sometimes after the 3 studio cameras were criss crossed around the studio, their cables would become entwined to the point that they had to be unplugged and untangled. I would play some interlude music during the process.



Boom Op Graham Fetting

Later I was often the audio engineer for the show. The show was chaotic, although there was a production meeting before the show, and a rundown of events nothing ever went to plan.

More Shows

With the introduction of Videotape, many afternoon variety, quiz and game shows were produced. *Video Village*, *Make Mine Music*, *Time for Terry* and many others.

Time for Terry

The 1 hour afternoon variety show, *Time for Terry*, starred English comedian Terry O'Neil, it

ran for a few years against Tommy Hanlon's very successful show *It could be You*. on opposition channel GTV-9,



Tommy Hanlon



Time for Terry - Joe Hudson, Ian Turpie, Olivia Newton-John, Terry O'Neil, Vi Greenhalf, Brian Naylor and Ivan Hutchinson.

Time for Terry also featured Olivia Newton-John before she went overseas and on to International stardom.

Channel 7 spent a lot of money on the show, to try and break Tommy Hanlon's grip on the time slot.

Market Research

The station management decided they would find out what was wrong with the show using the new market research techniques being used in England and America. At huge expense Dr Belsen, a professor of marketing psychology was bought from England to research *Time for Terry* and see if he could come up with a way of improving the show. The research sessions were held at the



Chevron Hotel Melbourne

Chevron Hotel Melbourne, a group of people were invited to attend and were shown a kine-film of *It Could be You* and *Time for Terry*. After they were interviewed. I was often rostered to the Chevron to help with the technical side. Dr Belsen interviewed hundreds of people. The study went on for weeks finally Dr Belsen presented his report. Station gossip said that

Dr Belsen told the HSV manager that he has learned from his months of research that *Time for Terry* fails because Terry O'Neil has



O'Neil

dirty cigarette stained teeth, this revolts housewives. We suggest you tell him to get his teeth cleaned. The horrified HSV manager retorted "I can't tell him that! - he's a big star", end of meeting. Dr Belsen flew back to England and was never heard of again. *Time for Terry* folded and Terry O'Neil and his teeth were also never seen again.

Norm Spencer Specials

In the 60's Norman Spencer produced a number of Tv specials in which he produced on 16mm film as well as with studio segments.

One of the first specials *The June Bronhill Special* featured the Australian Light Opera star, on her triumphant return from London.



Gordon Bennett, Norm Spencer, June Bronhill & Eric Scherer

Another Special was, the Pat and Olivia Special, starring Pat Carroll and Olivia Newton-John, filmed on 16mm film at various locations around Melbourne.

Pat & Olivia Special



Pat and Olivia on Location



Another shot from the show

Later Olivia won a free trip to England on the Johnny O'Keef show, partner Pat Carrol followed.

Technical Nightmare

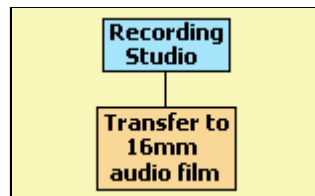
In those days synchronous pre-recorded sound with the performer miming was a technical nightmare especially if 240 volt mains power was not available.



Olivia & Pat off to England

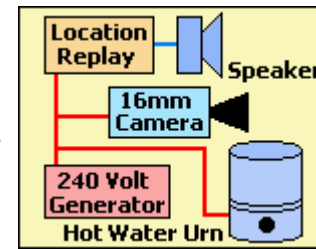
On location a 16mm magnetic replay machine was connected through an amplifier to a speaker for the performer to hear the replay and mime the song.

First the song to be performed was audio recorded in the sound



studio, then taken to the film department and transferred to 16mm magnetic recording film. The 16mm player had synchronous motors, which means they run at a constant speed to the 50 Htz mains frequency. The 16mm film camera was also fitted with a synchronous 50Htz motor. When connected to the mains power the system worked perfectly, both machines running together, resulting in the sound being in sync.

In those days generators were not very stable and could run up to 20% fast or slow resulting in the replay sound being very fast or slow, making it very difficult for the performer to mime. The only answer the HSV technical department could come up with was a Hot Water Urn, full of water, attached to the generator. The generator speed could be adjusted by changing the heat settings on the urn. Off for full speed, low, medium or high to slow the sound down. The performers worked under great difficulty, with the sound speed changing and trying to hear the replay over the sound of the noisy generator.



Later on things improved with the purchase of a Nagra Mk III ¼" film recorder. The Nagra was far more



Nagra Mark III

portable than the original set up and ran on dry batteries. The machine recorded a Pilot Tone from the camera motor which allowed for perfect frame synchronization with the film when dubbed to 16mm magnetic tape.

Another Special produced by Norm Spencer, directed by Michael Brayshay was *The Seekers Down Under* aimed at the Australian and UK markets. The show showed the seekers travelling all over Australia and doing their hit numbers.



The Seekers Downunder



The Seekers - Coping well with primitive location shooting

The Magic of Marlene

In 1967 HSV7 produced "Magic of Marlene" in association with Aztec Services.

The station was buzzing with excitement. The show was to be taped at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne where Miss Dietrich was performing in a season from Oct. 7 - 23. The stage show was produced and directed by Miss Dietrich, with arrangements: Burt Bacharach, lighting: Joe Davis, costumes: Jean Louis.



Princess Theatre Melbourne

The contract for the taping of the show allowed for a camera rehearsal of one performance then the taping of the next performance. The day for the rehearsal came, the OB van was set up outside the Princess Theatre, cameras were

installed in positions to not detract from the live performance for the paying customers. Bruce Adderley was in charge of the sound, he and his assistants ran many cables to junction boxes for a split of the house microphones, From the OB van pictures were beamed by microwave link back to the Dorcas Street, studios for taping.



Princess Theatre 1887

Audience gathered in the Princess theatre and the show began.

Marlene sang *I Can't give You Anything But Love; You're The Creme In My Coffee; My Blue Heaven; See What The Boy's In The Backroom*



Will Have; The Laziest Gal In Town; When The World Was Young; Johnny; Go Away From My Window; White Grass; Boomerang Baby; La Vie En Rose; Lola; Frag Nicht Warum Ich Gehe; Lili Marlene; Where Have All The Flowers Gone; Falling In Love Again - All to a standing ovation.

Back to the Studio

After the show Miss Dietrich was invited back to the 7 studios to watch the replay of the rehearsal which channel 7 had taped. The idea being that suggestions could be made for improvement of the show before the final taping.

Marlene up close

Marlene arrives at the Channel 7 studios, I was standing in the passage way as she passed by on her way to the theatrette for the viewing of the show. I had seen her on stage many times, I could not believe my eyes, she was so small and looked like a little old grandmother



and she spoke with an American accent, not the German one she used when appearing on stage.



**Arriving Sydney Airport
Ballistic Marlene**

Next thing we knew Marlene and her entourage hurriedly left the studio - something was wrong. The story I heard was that Miss Dietrich was livid about the camera direction of the show. She was quoted as screaming "Who the hell directed this" a voice said "I did, Miss Dietrich", she screamed "who the hell did you to get this job.

Cancellation

Next morning Miss Dietrich's lawyers contacted the seven management announcing "Miss Dietrich has fulfilled her contract, which stated that the channel had the rights to tape one performance

and one only." As they had already done this, all the equipment, cameras etc. must be removed from the Princess Theatre before tonight's performance. Fortunately the rehearsal had few mistakes and the rehearsal version after lots of editing went on-air as the show.



Princess Theatre interior



Marlene in her heyday

Miss Dietrich returned to Melbourne 10 years later where she performed at Her Majesties from Sep 1st - 13, 1975. She went on to a Sydney season, when on Oct 4, 1975 she fell off the stage and broke her hip and never performed again. She died in Paris on May 6, 1992 and was buried in Berlin.



Maria Magdalene Dietrich was born on December 27, 1901, the second child of Lieutenant Louis Erich Otto Dietrich and Wilhelmina Elisabeth Josephine Felsing. In 1935, Adolf Hitler demanded that the famous German actress return to the Fatherland. Dietrich, an ardent anti-Nazi, refused, resulting in all her films being banned from Germany. Dietrich became a

United States citizen and devoted most of her energy during World War II to entertaining Allied troops with the USO. There is no doubt that she made a major contribution to the morale of the troops. During the Africa and Italian campaigns, she withstood much privation in order to stay with the troops at the front, where she not only entertained but helped co-ordinate hospital and mess details. In the French and German campaigns, she often rode with Patton at the front. Her vehement denouncement of the Nazi regime, and her participation in Radio broadcasts aimed at Germany got the desired result - she got under the skin of the Nazis. For her work, the U.S. and French governments awarded her medals.





Coles £3000 Question began on HSV-7 in 1960 with Malcom Searle as quiz master assisted by Janet Mead. Back then £3,000 was a lot of money. My junior 16yo salary at HSV-7 for a 40 hour week was at the time £5.15.06 (A\$11.50). The show was HSV-7's first all state nationally broadcast show and became known as Coles Quiz, even though on the program it was always referred to as Coles £3,000 Question. No facilities were available for direct broadcast in those days so the show was kine recorded on 16mm film and distributed nationally.

The national Coles department store sponsored the show. On the occasion of a contestant winning the £3000, Coles founder Mr G J Coles would present the cheque. Mid 1960 the show was video taped with the arrival of channel 7's new RCA video recorder from the USA.



One step from the £3000 prize



Malcom Searl with a contestant



Counting the money
Malcolm Searl & the hostesses

Queenslander Malcom Searle compered Coles £3000 question from 1960-1963, becoming one of the first Australian national Television personalities.



Malcom Searl

Major Coles Crisis

One day in 1963 Malcom Searle failed to turn up for the taping of the show. There was great panic in the studio. We were told he had had a nervous breakdown.

The show's producer Roland Strong stepped in at the last minute to fill in as compere until a new one was found.



Roland Strong

It was decided to hold Auditions. I was at the teletheater for the auditions. it was chaos every would-be actor, television personality and amateur thespian turned up. To our surprise even one of our audio staff, Andy Bickford turned up to audition.

Auditions

The auditions went on for hours, with the directors floor speaker squawking out "NEXT, THANK YOU - we'll let you know" The atmosphere was gloomy everyone could see there was no one who could match the suave Mr Searl. Most were absolutely hopeless. Between the Audition and the next taping we were all kept in suspense as to who would be the new compere. The newspapers and Tv weeklies all buzzed about it. Finally it was decided, as Roland Strong was doing a good job, he would become resident compere. He was assisted by hostess Beverley Robbins and the announcer was Max Rowley. Roland strong still produced the show, but was assisted by Greame Bent.



Hostess Beverley Robbins

Decimal Currency



On Monday the 14th of February, 1966 the Australian currency changed from the old British system of Pounds, Shillings and Pence to Dollars and Cents. One Pound equalled 2 Dollars. Initially the government wanted to call the unit of currency the Austral, Merino or Royal. There was such an outcry, the government settled on the A\$.



A portrait of QEII, engraved from a photograph by London photographer Douglas Glass, appeared on the front of the first dollar note.

Coles \$6,000 Question

On the first Wednesday after the decimal change over Coles £3000 became Coles \$6,000 Question. Later on the prize money was increased to \$7,000.



Roland Strong and contestant



Stewart (Stewy) Kitchen reads the clapper board

However this was no match for opposition Channel 9 show Money Makers compered by Phillip Brady which offered a \$25,000 prize. The show eventually folded in 1971 when the Coles company withdrew their sponsorship.



Rowlan's familiar farewell "Goodnight Australia - Goodnight"

I often worked on Coles Quiz, playing intro/outro music and themes. The music was specially recorded by the Channel 7 orchestra. The dozen or so tracks were pressed on a LP recording by W&G Records Melbourne to make cueing up of the many different tracks simpler. With 2 turntables and 2 one-sided disks any track could be played almost immediately.