Donated to BHS by Dorothy Michelsen 2013 (No Tape)

TAPE 1/SIDE A

CYRIL MICHELSEN

(C) I meant to show you pictures of me, how my mother dressed me to go to school, at a tough school, worse than Collingwood, Fitzroy, could ever be (shows pic) a celluloid collar, a little bow, a Norfolk suit. I was absolutely attacked from the very first day. I said to my mother, but she wouldn't let me be. When it came to persecution I suffered a hell of a lot of persecution, a few black eyes and nose bleeds. They reckoned "Look at him, who does he think he is?" and finally I had the same shirt as the others, that's the truth, that was the start.

(M) Were you the oldest child?

(C) No, no, my sister was 8 years older than me.

(M) But you were the oldest boy?

(C) Yes, there was 3 of us. I'm 6 years older than my sister. My sister who is 8 years older, she was well ahead and gone. Therefore I think mum, being the only boy, made me look like little Burlington Bertie.

(M) Did your mum sew everything by hand?

(C) No, she didn't, she bought the clothes, the little Norfolk suit.
I was six when I went to school, most of them started at about 5½.
I went to this North Bendigo School, it was on the top of the hill.
I had a name for it later I called it the 'University on the Hill'.

They still use the name up at the school they still say "Cyril Michelsen called us the 'University on the Hill'." It was built on very rugged, very rugged country, right on the top of a hill. There was actually no sports facilities.

Some of the students there were the roughest things you've ever seen in your born natural. They didn't want education. The teacher would say, "Come out here MacNamara, I'm going to give you the strap." They would get up and go home, they wouldn't see them for days. The Truant Inspector was never away from the school because half of them never turned up to school. They treated the girls something shocking.

Across the road from where the school was, there was a big quarry, it was like an open theatre and that was the boxing ring. Actually, some of the teachers said that they were so rough the fellows that were going to the school that it wasn't a bad idea .....

I was knocked around a bit something shocking as a matter of fact. My celluloid tie was pulled off and I never got it back. I suffered smashed blood noses and sometimes a bit of a tooth was knocked out and so forth. But you couldn't complain, you'd never cure these fellows. Anyway I learnt to box a bit, and I actually did alright at school.

The teachers were very honest. One teacher, Mr. Harrison, he was very sorry for me, and I think he did a lot of good for me, to push me on to school.

The school was controlled from the central school at the Camp Hill school.

We had a reunion some years later and these wild boys, none of them turned up for the reunion. They didn't believe in it.

I left school when I was 11 or 12 and went to the Bendigo High School.

(M) How big were the classes in primary school?

(C) There were a fair number of pupils at the North Bendigo State School. It was 1267, I can remember its number.

Then I went to the High School. I must have been there for about a year and I thought I'd go into a mining/engineering career. I fastened my idea on science and what have you. Then one day in the classroom, I remember it well, it was in the ..... laboratory there, I was doing my graph book and doing my work nicely, and this chap came up behind me and squirted a fountain pen on the top of my I turned and dropped him on the floor. I hit him straight on the jaw and down he went. It was done on the spur of the moment.

The teacher, she said "I'm going to get the headmaster. She got the headmaster. He wanted me to apologise. I said "I'm not going to apologise because I'm the victim."

I got 3 straps on one hand and 3 on the other hand.

He said "Now will you apologise." I said "No, no, no way, I'm the victim, I'm going to stick to my guns."

Anyway, he kept me there till 6 o'clock at night. It was like a prison. The teachers realised this is ridiculous.

When I got home and told my mother, oh God, my mother, I tell you what! She went to the headmaster, she told him were to get ..... The headmaster said "I was going to expel him." My mother said "You don't have to expel him because I'm taking him away." And I started my career at the School of Mines.

I finished up getting 28 subjects in mining engineering, chemical analysis, assaying, etc. After getting 28 subject I needed 2 more subjects to get my diploma and I got injured. (Doesn't say how you got injured)

I was very depressed. my sporting career had gone, everything was black. I thought, this is terrible, what I'm I going to do.

I was sitting in the back yard and my mother used to say to me "You're in a depressed state" I was in a depressed state, and that's not like me.

To think I had spent 4 years of my life which was going to be wasted.

Finally my father said "You've got to get out of this."

My mother said "You've got to get a girlfriend."

I wasn't keen on girlfriends or anything, I had a scholarship, I was quite happy on doing what I thought was the right thing. Anyway, mother said "You want to get a girlfriend."

This is a real story. I got a girlfriend and it's my wife!

My mother said (this is a funny story too) "Have you seen anybody you like?"

I said "Yes. I saw a girl going down Pall Mall near the Shamrock Hotel, she had a little comb in her hair, a pretty girl."

She said "Do you know where she work?" "I think she works at Cockingtons."

She said " I'll find out."

She said "I will talk to Jean Macpherson." (my wife)

About this time I'd started work at the Bendigo Sun. My father said "You wrote well on your examination papers and are able to write a decent letter, why don't you try journalism? I'll get you a job." I started at the Bendigo-Sun at 30 bob (shillings) a week. I did alright and so forth.

In the meantime, as I say, I picked up with Jean. After a three year courtship we were married. I was very fortunate to get a very fine wife, a magnificent wife and we had 54 years together. She passed away nearly 13 years ago.

(M) Sounds like your mum was a pretty strong person.

(C) Mum was a very strong person, she was very strong. She was a nurse, worked at the Bendigo Hospital in times when they worked 12 and 14 hours a day, a toughie, she was tough. She was pretty hard. My father was so modest, a different man altogether, he nursed me along.

Anyway, I got this job at the Sun. Oh this was funny honestly. There was a team of good journalists, who had lost their jobs because they were alcoholics. How the hell they got the paper out I will never know. The editor was a fellow called Harold Tilley. A fellow called Kelly, a top journalist but a real alcoholic. Half the time he'd get drunk. He'd mutter his stories to me, I used to do his copy sometimes. He established a real friendship with me.

There were other drunks as well. The sub-editors at night time instead .....
.....

How the hell the paper came out I'll never know.

Anyway it only lasted 2 years.

(M) Who owned the Sun?

(C) It was operated by the Guidice's, a local family. Who evidently weren't happy with the Advertiser and so established their own paper. Anyway, the Advertiser bought the Sun. I was very lucky I got a job.

The story of Kelly was funny.

My great friend, he finished up getting the sack because he was chasing the boss round the room with an axe ..... someone came up and said Kelly's got the sack he was going to chop the boss about with an axe.

I said "Oh my godfather!"

Anyway, they gradually got rid of the drunks. Even so the paper was a daily and it went to an evening paper, but it faded away.

I went to the Advertiser and the Advertiser was published where Ashman's are now, where the Independent was. They had amalgamated in 1918/19.

My first job, I was only a cadet, I was only there for two days and I was a court reporter. I was a court reporter for 20/25 years.

(M) With no formal training?

(C) With no formal training. Yet I learnt so much. A court reporter has to be so very careful because that's the place where libel starts and its very awkward.

When I became editor I used to say don't take your ..... don't think your right, always check the book and court records, for what the charges were and what the sentences were, and they had to be absolutely correct.

I was not a hard boss but I had a set of rules which had to be carried out. And in the whole of my career, I was editor for 10 years, I never had a libel action which I put down to the hard and fast rules that I'd learnt as a court reporter.

In court reporting you get very close to the police. You are sort of one of them, they ring you up and tell you, "here's a good story about so-and-so", and your one of them. Actually I also got very friendly with the governor of the jail.

Today, I don't think journalism is the same. People don't get out, they're always sitting in seats, computerisation has in some way killed journalism. I don't think the journalists of today seek news. Unless you are in the community and out mixing with them, you don't get the stories. I don't think papers today are as good as they used to be.

In the old days we had more local news, today they depend on cable, supplied material and syndicated stuff, everything is computerised. We had to work hard in our day, we used to take shorthand, it didn't come like it does today with all the modern conveniences. We used shorthand for everything and we used to take things from dictaphones (tapes). There was a relationship with your public.

I believe when I was chief-of-staff and editor I made sure my reporters did rounds everyday - they went to the railway station, public offices, we went everywhere, we sought the news, the public responded to you and would get in touch with you with stories.

I started the "Down the Mall" column and I wrote it for quite a while. Most of the stories came from the Bendigo Club. I had a rapport with the public, they'd say "I've got a funny story for you Micho" - I never mentioned names of course, just the story.

I reckon if you are writing comedy the shorter you make it, the better. Today, particularly today, people don't read much, they don't want a long story, they want a short story, get the story quickly.

(M) Did you cover any interesting court cases?

(C) Oh yes I did, many cases I could tell you, many cases. Actually, I was a great believer, even when I was the boss, if there was a tragedy somewhere, I'd be in it. I'd leave the office, I had to go and see what was happening. I think in some ways, my father was a reporter, I was born with it.

One case I did was a murder trial, I - they used to say Cyril will know him - identified the body at the morgue. I'd do that many times.The police used to say Micho will know him. Oh dear, I'd been in the morgue so many times I knew it well.

I was walking home on a Sunday when somebody said to me in the street you've got a murder in your street. I said "Ah, what?" The said "Didn't you know, what's wrong with you? I thought you were a journalist."

It happened to be a woman who taught me music. I didn't carry on with music, I was more a sportsman than a musician and she was my music teacher, her name was Kate Mills. Her brother had shot her at her request.

It's quite an amazing story, it was an euthanasia case that went right round the world. His name was Charlie Mills and he was a magnificent bloke. I went to see him, he made a complete confession of the whole thing.

She was in a shocking state a really bad way, she pleaded with him to shoot her, to get rid of her.

For twelve months he hesitated and finally she was in such a sad state he did it, then he went straight to the police and confessed.

He was a school teacher, a professional in his writing too.

The detective said "We've got a confession, would you like a copy?"

The case went on for a couple of days before the committal and I had a copy of the confession. The Melbourne papers were there, The Age, Sun and Truth.

I had the confession so that was the story for the day, we didn't want any more stories, this was a real love story. We just sat and listened. It was a very hot day, we were just sitting there, not taking any notes because his confession was going to be the full story. I'd sent it to the Herald-Sun.

Come 4 o'clock the Magistrate said we will close the Court - and the confession hadn't been accepted in Court. I said "God, what are we going to do?" another fellow said "We've got no story at all." And this euthanasia story was going to go all over the world. It was published in England.

I said "I can fix it." Anyway, I went up to the Magistrate, he was a great mate of mine, Danny Dugan(?). I said "Danny, what have you done?" He said "What's happened?". I said "You haven't taken the evidence of Constable ....., he's the man copped the confession." He said "What are you worried about that for, I'll convene the court again, but it will cost you a whisky."

I went back and they said "What's going to happen?" I said "They are going to reconvene the Court."

They said "We could never do that in Melbourne."

I said "You've got to know people."

Anyway, Constable ..... got in the box, and was asked "Did you take this confession?" and he said "Yes."

.....

It was a real top line story.

(M) It was euthanasia?

(C) Yes, euthanasia, it was a big issue in those days in certain areas of the world. It became world news.

I used to go and see Charlie, go and talk to him. I admired him I thought he was a marvellous bloke. He got a sentence of 7 years. It was unreal. But I tell you what, they treated him very well because he was a gentleman. The Pentridge library, he took it apart and made it an absolute establishment. He came back but it had broken him.

I saw him, he said he was convinced he had done the right thing. To give him 7 years - I thought that was a tragedy. That was a remarkable story.

I've had people up on charges and so forth, they come and offer you money to keep their names out of the paper. I said don't talk rubbish and so forth.

When I was working on the Sun as a crime reporter this woman was up for stealing, Headley Jones was doing the story for the Advertiser. She came up and offered me £10. He said to her "How dare you? He is only a young reporter, you shouldn't be doing that."
..... come up and see me some time
.....
Headley was upset by the whole thing.

It was quite common.

I did murder trials, I had fellows up for gold stealing, my father was a director of mining companies.

One fellow got 9 months imprisonment, and I was in a hotel (the Metropolitan, near where the Club was) some years later and he was there. He got me round the neck onto the floor..... ..... jumped the bar and grabbed the fellow and threw him out the door.

Anotherfellow, I'd written a case about him, he was going to shoot me. He'd broken a bottle and put it against a fellow's throat.

I sacked a fellow once for bad conduct, he was going to shoot me to. You've got to take these things seriously. My life was threatened several times, but I'm still here.

(M) It must be part of the job when you have to print the truth?

(C) Yes it is. You've got to have a conviction I suppose when you look at the murder stories I did, being an investigative reporter on the spot and getting a story ..... I've been so friendly with the police, I even saw bodies, hands, heads, I've seen all sorts of things.

My chief-of-staff used to call me the blood and guts reporter of the Bendigo Advertiser.

One night I was due to go on holidays, and I had to finish a mining report, it was a lot of work and I'm trying to get it finished. I finally finished at 7 o'clock in the morning. "Harry, I've finished, I've done it!" He said okay, and the phone rang - it was a murder/ suicide in Barnard Street, opposite the swimming baths. He said "Mich, I've got no one else to send, and you know what I'm like, I can't even look at a blood nose." He said "You go." I said "God, Harry,

Jean will shoot me." Anyway I get to the gate and the policeman on duty said "Where do you think you're going?" I said "I'm going in there." The detective was still in there and the bodies were still there. He said "..... been looking for you" I said "Who is in there." He said "Arthur and Marty, go in." So I said "Right-oh."

Anyway I went in, I'll never forget it, oh my godfather, a shocking sight.

When you've been a court reporter for so long and you've seen the things I've seen, you took it as part of the job - but oh is was a shocking sight. The woman's throat was cut and the fellow had shot himself. It was a bit of a story, a man and wife sort of thing.

.....glass window and cut himself to pieces.

Harry said "Good on you Cyril, I'm glad you've done it, I'll put the headline on it, so forth and so forth."

Harry.....
.....Harry made a mistake
7 o'clock in the morning I was gone.

I've seen some shocking things, drownings, fire burnt bodies, its not a pretty story, but if you are in the business you've got to do the lot. If I had my life over again I'd go into journalism again, because you feel the pulse of your city, and the pulse of the people. You are right in the middle of everything, you know you are doing something for your city as well.

Instead of doing a 4 year course in chemical engineering, I'd go into the section where I'd educate myself. I could write alright but I wasn't a descriptive journalist, but in some ways I think you can overwrite

a story. I think stories are overwritten today.

I did council meetings, agriculture, sports, every sporting activity that exists, all the English cricket teams. I did the Jardine story.

(M) What type of professional training was there, or did people just become journalists. Was there any courses?

(C) No, there was later. Although there was a diploma of journalism in Melbourne, but not a course in Bendigo. We found that the diploma journalists weren't the news gatherers. I think in some ways you have to be born to it.

I had a chap, he was going with a girl whose mother was a great friend of mine, I wouldn't promote him from cadetship to D-Grade because he never had the ability. His writing was poor. She said "Aren't you going to give him a go." I said "No, he has to be promoted on efficiency and ability." His girlfriend was a smart journalist and still is operating, they got married and he never progressed as a journalist, he went on the Sun. Anyway, my judgement was right.

If a man was on the Advertiser staff and he showed talent and he wanted to go to higher places he got a reference from me quick and lively. If a journalist had talent, and there were a lot of journalists who had talent on the Advertiser staff. They made their way at the Age and the Herald-Sun, some were war correspondents and been overseas. We've turned out good journalists because I found than in provincial journalism you get wider subjects in everything. Whereas in Melbourne they specialise - court reporting, commerce, shipping, it's not the same training. I think the groundwork in provincial daily papers is sound training and a stepping stone to higher careers.

(M) Where there many women journalists when you started?

(C) Yes there was, quite a few.

There were a lot of things women couldn't do. In my days of 'blood and guts' journalism you couldn't let a woman near those sorts of things. There is a lot of talent in the women of today.

I was sometimes the cadet instructor at the Addie. I was disappointed in that. I was well paid but I didn't believe in taking money if the people I was teaching didn't listen to what you said. I told them off. I went into Reg and said "I would sack the lot of them." He said "There are some of them not too good." I said "I know, they don't listen and they couldn't care. I said do you want to learn or don't you, if you are going to make a career in journalism you've got to act properly, you're not even acting properly." I believed if they were interested they should pay attention.

There was a class of 6, but there were only three that were worthwhile, the other 3 they failed.

If you are trying to look after their welfare and put them on the track to journalism, you expect interest don't you?

(M) Of course you do.

(C) I was never hard, I always thought more of my staff, I wanted them to succeed.

(M) How did the process of preparing, getting the paper out, differ from the process they go through today, you said you took sorthand, you took tapes.

(C) We had a lot of time to do it. Today, papers arrive earlier.

During wartime we put a paper out to send to the country, then a second edition.

My God we worked hard. Overtime was never thought off, we never got paid, I worked to 5 in the morning to get a story.....
.....

You loved your job and you worked hard, a lot of our fellows were taken away during the war, we did get short in numbers.

There was a "Back to Kerang" story I had to do so I travelled in the guardsvan on the 5 o'clock train. I did five or six columns of awards. I tried to write the stories before I got home, I typed them on the train on the way back. I got back to Bendigo at 11 o'clock at night

When I got back to the office there was a fire in the town in Hargreaves Street. Three or Four shops destroyed. The boss said to me "You're pretty good - will you go up and do the fire?" I said "I've been on duty since 5 o'clock this morning.

I get up there, there was some horses burnt and a hotel burnt. I came back, wrote up the story, finished about 1-1.30am and he said "What time are you supposed to be on?" I said "9 o'clock, he said "Don't come in until 12 o'clock tomorrow!"

I had been working for 22 hours - and he said come in at 12.

Jean said "You're bloody mad."

Actually, you loved your job.

(M) After you typed your story, how did they get it ready for print? That's changed a lot.

(C) Today, the story goes from the screen straight out
In my day, 2 sub-editors would put headlines on the story and would go out to linotype. It would come back, be read and then it would go back out again. There weren't many mistakes. You see more mistakes in papers today than you see in youe born natural.

(M) What about when you were a mining reporter?

(C) Oh my godfather, there is a lot of stories about mining. Actually in someways, looking at my life backwards, I should have been dead about 3 times.

Many people who live 50, 60 or 70 years have had no thrills in their lives.

When I was at the School of Mines, or TAFE as it is now, the Spanish Flu hit the school pretty badly and two of my class mates died. One died on Friday and the other on Saturday. I went to Sunday School (St. Pauls) I wasn't very old, the teacher said to me "You're not very well." I said "No." He said "You'd better go home. Will you be alright?" I started to go home and was found unconscious by the hospital fence, they got in touch with my family and I got home. They got in touch with the doctor who said his got Spanish Flu. He said he wont live

the night. I was in a really bad way- semi conscious. About 2 o'clock in the morning I started to bleed and she got in touch with the doctor, got him our of bed. She said "He's bleeding, if we don't stitch the bleeding he'll die, because he's bleeding profusely. I'm doing my very best."

he said "..... he 'll live."

It took me three months to get over that. I found out after that if you you do bleed with Spanish Flu it saves you. It took me a hell of a long time to get that blood back.

(M) A lot of people died of that didn't they? Was it thru the country or just local?

(C) It was everywheer, it was frightful, shocking. There were a lot of deaths locally. I was very lucky.

In mining experiences - I was lucky there too.

I was in the Central Blue Mine, there had been a big explosion and there was a big court case over the whole thing. What had happened was that one Mine had encroached on land of another Mine. They just put explosives in and blew the whole thing up.

Dad and I got the idea, we found out about this - that there was a gold discovery 4440ft. down - we really wanted to look at what happened down below.

Only two at a time could go down so Dad and the Mine Manager went, there was a lot of loose stone and it could have been troublesome. Dad came back and I went with the Shift boss. God I'll never forget it.
I was climbing up the ridge when all of a sudden it split. He said

"Run for your life." I cam down on my backside. We went behind a buttress of stone and stayed there. I looked behind and saw all the stuff behind us. We were there for about 2 hours. They dug us out.

Another case. I went with the photographer to the Red/White and Blue Mine, about 1,500ft. down. He used to go the color of purple when he went down, I used to carry his gear, tripod etc. He went down and I was on top, he said what are you doing up there. I said I'm trying to fix the gear.

Went over the bar and it gave way. Luckily I hit a water pipe otherwise I would have gone down a hundred feet.

ADDITIONS TO TAPE 1/SIDE A ??

MUM AND DAD'S NAMES

DATE OF BIRTH

SISTERS' NAMES

HOW DID INJURY OCCUR.

YEAR OF MARRIAGE.

DATE STARTED AT THE SUN.

DATE OF EUTHANSIA STORY.

DATE OF MURDER/SUICIDE STORY

TIME OF SPANISH FLU

TIME PERIOD OF MIN STORIES - EXPLOSION AT CENTRAL BLUE