



DANDENONG

# examiner

**HIGHWAYS TABARET**  
Cnr Princes Hwy & Corrigan Rd Springvale  
9518 1370  
**NOW OPEN**  
**24HRS**  
**7 DAYS A WEEK**  
314292

TEL: 9706 7111 CLASSIFIED 5979 7777

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1998 Vol. 11 No. 34

## The last round up

By Mike Morris

DROVER Tommy Lane had keys to the back door to get in and out of Ryan's pub in Dandenong.

He and his pack of dogs were on call at any hour to unload rail shipments of live stock from the Dandenong rail terminus to the nearby saleyards.

The call would come and Tommy and his dogs would head down to the station to deal with a large chore.

"Yes, it was a hell of a job getting them off the train," recalls Ted Cooper. "The cattle would stand up all right while the train was moving, but when it stopped the cattle would lie down and wouldn't want to get up.

"Sometimes when Tommy got there he was ready to lie down with them."

Jim Kelly braced himself on his walking stick and laughed himself almost silly.

Ted Cooper, 74, and Jim Kelly, 82, have spent the best part of their lives around stock pens assessing selling livestock.

They were reunited last week for a nostalgic look over Dandenong saleyards, due to close later this year, ending Dandenong's reputation as 'market town', to look over the yards

CONTINUED PAGE 16



# Auctioneers' last round up at saleyards

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

which were once the biggest and busiest in

the southern hemisphere.

Ted is still an active, briar pipe smoking, stock agent and auctioneer from Cranbourne who is always there at Dandenong on Tuesdays at Cheltenham Road.

His first boss was the legendary Tom Carroll in 1938, when the saleyards were in Lonsdale Street. Ted later went off to serve in the war, came back and has never gone away.

Jim's dad Percy was a stock agent and auctioneer at Beaufort, and Jim used to stand up on his bed at age two and practise a spruiking technique which later captivated the ring of buyers and sellers at the market. He too was a stalwart of the old saleyards and was there when they moved to Cheltenham Rd.

"When dad was selling a cow the dogs stopped scratching and listened to him," recalls daughter Fran Henke.

Jim later went on to become the manager of Gippsland and Northern Co-op stock and station agents in Thomas St, Dandenong, later bought out by Dalgetty's.

Among those he trained was Brian Rodwell, now one of the biggest stock agents in

northeastern and central Victoria.

It had been more than 25 years since Jim had stepped on the steel walkways at the Dandenong stockyards. He had not seen Ted since he became sick and tired of standing in the cold, clammy and cloying Gippsland mud and moved north, but you would think it was only a year or so. They embraced fondly, as brothers might after a long absence.

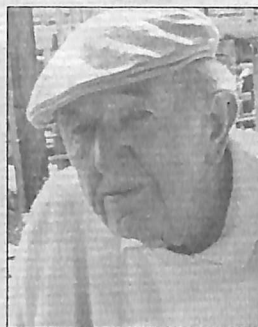
It came back to Jim in a flash, last week at Dandenong. He looked fondly down at the concrete flooring of the pens with the bluemetal poking through.

Jim was responsible for the bluemetal being mixed with the cement shortly after the place was built by Dandenong Council.

When the markets opened the decking was smooth concrete and the beasts would slip and break their legs. The people who designed the place did not have a clue about beasts.

"Dad got mum up at three in the morning and dictated a letter to the Dandenong Council to tell them to add bluemetal to the cement," said Fran.

Ted and Jim surveyed



JIM Kelly.

the place - the last metropolitan saleyards in Melbourne after Newmarket closed a few years ago.

"It's only a shadow of what it used to be," Ted told Jim, who remembers when it was on three days a week and brought everyone to town. Now it is on Tuesdays only, and it's not the same boisterous and busy place it was back in the 1950s and 1960s.

"There's not the comradeship among agents that there used to be," Ted said. "The agents used to help one another."

"A lot of the big buyers (like Castricum Bros at Dandenong) are going straight over the hook (buying directly from the producers)."

The pair puffed their tobacco and chatted about the good old days - arriving at 4am to size up the stock which would be going up for

auction, and heading for home at darkness after the last train left.

Later scales were installed and buyers now know the weight of the beast they are bidding for. Blokes like Ted and Jim could guess the weight within a few pounds. The poor buyer had to rely on the honesty of the auctioneer to know what he was bidding for, and you can bet there were some pretty sly and arch auctioneers at Dandenong (but not Ted or Jim, of course!). Understand, the auctioneer was standing up there to get the best price for his client.

Good clients were a premium for the agents.

When Fran was confirmed at St John's Anglican Church at Berwick a local producer's son from Lang Lang was also taking part in the ceremony.

Jim, who was living at Berwick at the time, introduced himself to the producer.

"You raise some of the best bullocks in the district, I'd love to have some of your business," said Jim.

The farmer said thank you for the compliment. "I'll send a truck of them down for you to sell at the next sale to see how

you go."

The farmer became as longtime client of Jim.

"How's so-and-so? Is he still about?" Jim asked Ted.

"He died years ago," was the reply.

Jim leant on his stick, shook his head and let out a sigh.

"What about . . . ?"

"He's gone too."

More head shaking.

"And . . . ?"

"The same."

Enough of that. The pair talked about the famous saleyard card games. Traditionally the game ended when the whistle was sounded for the last train leaving Dandenong.

"One night I was so far in front and I was waiting for the whistle to go. I won a Morris Minor from a bloke. The next week I won a new set of wheels for it," said Jim.

But while he was a genius on assessing the worth of a beast, that's about as far as it went for Jim.

When the Kelly's bought a farm at Berwick they had a cow called Daisy. When young Fran asked her dad how to go about milking it Jim didn't have a clue!

The introduction of decimal currency in

1966 brought a challenge to all associated with the saleyards.

"We decided to have a rehearsal before the sale. It was led by Tom Facey, who knew less than the rest of us," said Ted.

Jim went into fits of mirth at the memory.

"When it came to the auctions we didn't know if the bidders were raising their fingers to denote pounds or dollars. It was a hell of a mess sorting out at settling time!"

The end of the Dandenong saleyards will bring a sad end to a great epoch. It will end an era which saw Dandenong as the hub of Gippsland. We won't have the smell of cow dung wafting across the railway station. Dandenong is an old and wilting commercial centre.

"There used to be dairy farms as far into the city as Oakleigh," said Ted.

But there's Korumburra which is going very well, and the new markets at Pakenham, due to open later this year where the beasts will jostle and the auctioneers will spruik and the dogs will bark and the trucks will rumble and the old decks of cards will flap on the table. But it won't be the same.