

REGINALD JONES

Interview, Tuesday 31 October, 2017. The interview at his home.

I am Reginald Arthur Jones, I live at 153 Canterbury Road, Middle Park. I have been a resident of the Middle Park area for just under 70 years. I was born in Auburn on the 8<sup>th</sup> Dec, 1927. Auburn is really Hawthorn. I went to school in Hawthorn, and when I got married I moved to Middle Park which is just on 70 years ago. I was about 22 years old when I moved.

At first I went to *Camberwell Central State School*, because I lived at the top-end of Hawthorn, then I went to *Auburn South School*. At first I just studied to Intermediate, and after that I went to Swinburne to do *Turning and Fitting*. I served an apprenticeship, which came under the *Manpower Scheme* during the Second World War. At first, for five years I worked as an apprentice with *A. H. Mc Donald* in Richmond. Then I branched out and was a maintenance engineer at a company around on The Boulevard. Then I got out of that and went into a business in Middle Park. Actually it is Albert Park by about 50 metres.

We have in front of us my apprenticeship papers. The apprenticeship paper is signed by Gilbert Leonard Jones, my father. The apprenticeship was at A H McDonald in Bridge Rd Richmond. The wages are listed. They were in 1<sup>st</sup> year, 21/6 p/w, then reduced from 23/6. When I became an apprentice it was reduced to 19/6 p/w. Then later it was 93/6.

*Could you live on 21/6 a week?*

Well my father said I should clothe myself, but not pay board for first couple of years. To clothe myself, there was a men's clothes shop called "Snows" in the city. I would put two shillings or so each pay and have credit. A sort of lay-by, so if I wanted a suit or something I had credit. A suit was about 3 pound ten shillings.

I got married at 22, and moved to Middle Park soon after I got married. I didn't start the shop. An elderly lady had it. I got it via contacts of my wife. She knew the accountant (for the business), and I became interested, and that's how I got into it. At first I only bought the business. I bought the building later. The shop was a general store. A sort of mixed business.

*Wasn't this adventurous given your age?*

It certainly was. When I first went into it I put money into the bank. We lived in 16 Harold Street which we rented via *Matthews* the estate agent. Rental was very hard to find, but my wife kept putting her head in the door and finally he (*Matthews*) got frustrated enough and got us something. So that's how we got it. *Mathews'* office was in front of a house in Canterbury Rd near Sam Brown's shop (*Number 96*). My wife had rented her shop from *Mathews*, so she knew him. My shop was in pretty poor condition, with a leaking roof, etc.

The shop in Herbert St was a timber, two storey building. It was actually two shops with residences. One residence was accessed via the shop, and the other (*on the left*) had a side entrance. I rode a bike to the shop from Harold St. I was only renting the shop at first.

I was inexperienced. One day I got a call from the bank manager. He said, "Mr Jones, do you have any money?" "Oh yes", I said. "Well you are running out of money in your cheque account. So can you put some in?" I said "OK". You see I used to put all the money from the shop takings in a kit bag and ride home to Harold Street each night. I usually paid by cheque, so I didn't worry about actual money. That's how inexperienced I was!

Up the road in Herbert Street there was a dress shop and a bike-shop together. Mr Vaines ran the bike-shop and his wife the dress shop He lived in Richardson St, just the other side of Kerferd Road. Behind the bike shop was a

wood yard and during the war he (*Mr Vaines*) had the right to collect and sell wood. Because of this we had access to getting wood and briquettes. The bike shop in Herbert Street is now built in at the front. It's more like a house.

Eventually the owner, Mr Vaines, was selling my shops. He came to me and said; "You don't have a lease. I said, "I know". So I thought, I'll have to buy it. What else could I do?

How did you have the money to buy the shop? I felt I would have to buy it, How could I do it? Well, I had some War Bonds, so I cashed them in and bought it. I didn't want to do it. I had been in the shop since about 1952. I bought it in about 1956.

The other shop was used by a plumber, Mr McBean I asked the plumber to move out, then I used it as a storeroom for a while - for drinks and things like that. It was a mess. I thought, "My God! What have I done? What am I doing, I own the place". But I hadn't even inspected it when I was buying it. I was still living at Harold Street, so I moved to live at the shop. Then children came along.

The place was terrible. The floor in the kitchen was dirt. I pulled down a wall and put up a new wall. At first I let the other half of the shop.

I lived it in for a while until we had children. Then we then bought the house in Canterbury Rd in the 1970s. That was after children arrived. I wanted to move because of children coming in after school. I didn't want them bringing their friends into the shop after school.

When the plumber moved out I decided to do it up. I had some problems getting a permit to do the work. I took plans to Council and showed them to a young guy and described to him what I wanted to do to the front of the building. He took the plans away and come back in a while. They were signed, and so I had a permit. Then I got the builder to start. The builder was a man in Merton Street. So he began. But later a building inspector turned-up and said; "You have no permit". I showed him the permit, but he said the person who signed it shouldn't have done so. He was a young guy about 18 years old. He said was withdrawing the permit. So I called the builder, and he told him the story of going to Council, getting it signed, etc. He said, "Leave it to me. I have a lot to do with him. We're in the same lodge". So work started again.

When the plumber moved out I decided to make it a double shop, a general store on one side and a self service on the other side.

I was in the shop for about 20 years. I got out of the shop about 1973 or 1974. I loved being in it. The people were almost like family. Thursday use to be really busy. People would come in on Thursdays, or Thursday night as it was pay day. But what made it difficult was the rise of Coles.

A man from Spartan paints used to come into the shop. When I told him I was leaving the man said; "We'd like to have you." He liked the way I ran the shop. He'd see me mopping the floor, etc. Later I chased him up and when I sold I chased him up and went to Spartan paints.

I sold it to some boys who lived in a shop across the road. On the corner (NE corner of Mills and Herbert) was a former butchers shop run by a Mr Sheehan where a lot of Greek boys lived. They used to come over and buy supplies. A lot of Greeks were coming to Middle Park. Most had jobs at Tom Piper in Port Melbourne. One of them opened a hardware shop in The (Victoria) Avenue (near the garden part). I told him I was selling, so a Greek man bought it. After that it went downhill. I don't know why. The new owner told me it was going down hill. It went backwards. I was driving cabs at first - before I went to Spartan. So I said I would come in to help for a few weeks. He said would pay me, but I said no. I would do it for nothing. It made a difference. The customers starting to come back again. He wasn't doing this and that, etc.

*Did you ever not get paid?*

Oh, generally I did. There were just a few. There was one man who would cross the street to avoid me. One day I saw him in the pub and he turned and walked out.

Was it the Greek person who had it when it finally closed? No he sold it. There was a Greek butcher in Mills St diagonally opposite. He rang him up – it was a friend of his who bought it and it eventually closed.

There were many shops around Mills St. There was a butcher's. Mr Norman and his son ran it. There was a mixed business. There was Mr Bill Hales, the barber. Carter Street had butcher. There was a mixed business run by an elderly lady. I wondered how she made a quid, then, after about three months I realised she was an SP bookie!

Mrs Griffiths lived in a double fronted house nearby. There was a Hungarian or Yugoslav migrant who came out (to Australia) and was a designer with Stamina. He lived in a house between wine shop and corner. Mr Agostinas ran the wine shop on corner. He had a little girl who had paralysis. Then a local resident, who lived in Hambleton St. took it over, but he was too fond of the product.

Then it was run by a family who still live on the corner of Herbert & Wright Streets I forget their name. A lovely couple. They worked very hard. The wines came from South Australia on a truck and on top of the truck would be a boat. Someone in South Australia was making boats and he delivered them.

*Talking of boats, Savages, the boat builders were somewhere in Middle Park?*

Yes, they were. Somewhere down Beaconsfield Parade. There was also a rope works. My brother had a net made by them. There was a rope works in Langridge St, You went up the side to a sort of factory. The asbestos factory (on corner of Paterson and Langridge Streets) was still there.

The double fronted house in Mills St became the McGains nursery shop. There was another house there but it was demolished. The owner had an hotel in Carlton. (No initially that was Peter McGain. Peter Poynton, the hotelman came later). You could get a lawn mower from them, but some people were getting petrol from the mower and using it to mow lawns elsewhere for payment. So they got a bit toe-ey about that.

It really was like family. If we went away for a holiday for a while, when we came back there were young neighbourhood kids to welcome us. I would have 10-12 bikes in the shop on Christmas night. They were stored to hide them. And then I would deliver them to the various houses late at night. Then Christmas morning at 6.00am., I would look down from the bedroom and it would be; "Mr Reg, Mr Reg" (they called me that - not Reg). They would call out to tell him, "Look what Father Christmas bought me". I would be up on the second storey saying "can you ride it?".

In Canterbury Rd there was a big gambling place. One guy I knew jumped out the back window when there was a raid on. The gambling was upstairs. It was a raid. A big two storey house and the gambling went on upstairs. It was on in a big way.

Many two storey places had bungalows out the back. And the verandas were often filled in with a kitchen. But South Melbourne Council started to crack down on them in the 1960s as they were unsafe. Then these houses would have just a section of the upstairs veranda built in as a kitchenette. Nearly every verandah along Canterbury Rd was a kitchen. Then the South Melbourne Council, Health Department, said it was too dangerous and made them pull them down. Some of the bungalows had pipes running everywhere. Upstairs in the house might be a bed living area, and you stepped out to the kitchen. There were a lot of boarding houses along Canterbury Rd.

*Do you remember 50 Canterbury Rd? Now Lakeside 50 high rise flats? A double fronted, double storey house.*

Oh, yes. It was a big house, between Mills and Wright. "Was it Mr Lewis, the electrician?" Or was he the one near the corner? Perhaps it was run by Mrs Davison. She lived in Carter St. Her son, Ian, played a few games for South Melbourne. He kicked a winning goal against Geelong. She sold her house when her husband died, and bought a unit there (in the new block of flats). I didn't know the people in the big house. She lived to be 100. I was surprised when she bought the unit. That was in the late 1960s.

There was a shop on the corner, on Canterbury Rd - Cox's a mixed business. Then another shop, a mixed business. Then at Hambleton St another shop, then one on the opposite corner. Then one on the corner of Richardson Street, opposite the church. Then further down on the left was Corrigan's, the grocer shop.

Then there was a licensed grocer, Mr Les Cunningham, next door to Mrs Hynes' milk bar. They were going to move to Aspendale as he wasn't well. They are the people who owned my house.

*Do you remember the Tranter family - Wally Tranter - who lived in my house?*

No.

*What of Mrs Crawford?*

She lived nearby when I came. The house next door (*to me*) was a boarding house. Then Mrs Crawford was in Joe's (*Begg*) house. I remember her. She gave me a scene (a painting) of a beach scene. Looked like Woolamai (near the beach house). I once admired it, and one day she came down and said you can have it. It might be the one in the hall. No, maybe I gave it to the club for charity raffle. I think they got about 300 pounds for it.

*Mrs Crawford's house was full of newspapers.*

Yes, it was very dangerous, but then she had to move and the house was later bought by Joe Begg, a good friend.

There were houses which had notoriety. Do you remember the affair of the horse which was "switched" (for another). It was up the country. That family lived in Canterbury Rd. They ran a boarding house. I knew the family.

General motors. They employed a lot of people around here.

*What about South Melbourne (football team) leaving.*

A lot of people got upset. I was one of them. I went to the Caulfield Town Hall (*to a meeting*). "Basher Williams" (A local identity) could not gain entry because he was not entitled to vote, although he was a life member. There were fun and games then outside! It was absolutely shocking what was going on.

*Was a lot of the action centred around the Middle Park Catholic Church?*

No I don't recall that. But there were meetings over at South Melbourne club. Bill Collins (*the racing caller*) was number 1 ticket holder. He supported the move. I told him I was disappointed in him. He asked me why. I said, "Your heart is in leaving it here, - you're the number 1 ticket holder. But your job (with Channel 7) means you have to support it going to Sydney." He got a little uptight about that.

I was a member of past players (*of South Melbourne*) and had a card to prove it. I didn't play for South Melbourne, but I was an official. I have the card somewhere. I'll find it. The envelope had a symbol which was white with a red "V" on the envelope. I had forgotten I kept it. They moved in 1982.

*You continued with local South Melbourne team?*

Yes, they played in the same colours. Their history goes back to the 1900. It was called the "foreign legion" because there were so many players from Western Australia. They helped the club out. We owned a lot to the West Australian club. The early photos of the committee had them all dressed up and there was a song sung by the club members about the "Foreign Legion". I was on the committee. In the *Clarke Shields Pavilion*, the social rooms are named after me; *The Reg Jones Social Rooms*. Clarke was a great guy. When things were bad he would help out.

Clarke Shields lived in Wright St at the end near the beach, near Danks St. Clarke was a good friend of mine. A wonderful guy. Had a boat at the marina. At one stage he had a heart transplant, done by (the famous) Dr Chan. He got about 14 years out of it. He was in the car one day when he got a call that a heart was available in Sydney. He drove straight to the airport, and went to Sydney. He was an orphan but made money from trucking. People battling for a job would ring him (in the Sydney hospital) to ask him how he was going. They guys would phone him to sing "Deep in the Heart of Texas" and "You've gotta have heart".

He had horses. One was called "Transplant Lad". I often say to his partner, he's out there in the weather, and I'm up here.

*Were you in the Middle Park Bowling Club?*

I did join the bowling club, but only for one season. I was a member of the *Danish Club*, but some friends joined the (*Middle Park*) bowling club, but I couldn't commit to it. I had young children, and a house at Phillip Island. And I ran into some trouble (*at the club*). One day I was with the curator from South Melbourne (*football club*). We got off the train (at Middle Park) and went for a drink in the bar (of the club). We were there for about an hour and the barman said a particular member/official was going to report me because the visitor was not signed-in. I said "Oh god, I forgot". So I said, we're leaving. I had even lent him some shoes because he had sneakers on. I then went over during the week and saw the him (*the "dobber"*). I said to him; "Report me. It will make you happy. But I'm putting my resignation in". So I left the club.

Where did your children go to school? My children went to school at the Catholic school, then Peter to CBC St Kilda and my daughter to Presentation Convent (Windsor).

*Do you remember the convent in Middle Park, near the school?*

No, not much.

*Do you remember the other churches (in Middle Park)?*

It is interesting to see the aboriginal flag outside (*the Catholic Church*). My wife was an entertainer. There was a club downstairs near the Capital Theatre. June (*wife*) entertained at Carmelite Hall dances on Sunday nights. One Sunday night she invited the negro boys, who played at the Capital Theatre club, to the Carmelite dance. They didn't bring their instruments, but they stood in and played using the instruments there. They were a sensation. But the guy who ran the dance came to June after the show and told June that she was "no longer required". That would have been in the 1940s.

Richard Cheese, owned the newsagency opposite the (*Middle Park*) school. That was the spot for the "Sunday barrel" before the Sunday night dance. Footballers from South Melbourne - I won't mention names - came. They would then go to the dance, well primed.

*When did the dance (at the Carmelite Hall) cease?*

Probably in the 1950s. So it wasn't just Catholics, it was very popular. There wasn't a lot of entertainment around here then, so they went there (*to the dance*). There was also a dance at the ice skating place in Alfred square. I

can't remember the name. Also at St Kilda Town hall, there was a dance. And at "Leggatt's Palladium" (*in Prahran*). They had dance lessons at Leggatt's during the week.

*What of the church opposite the school, the Church of Christ?*

There was a soldier buried from there just after the war. It was terrible. Mournful. There was a slow march down Mills St. This was after the war. The one (*church*) on the corner was turned into flats.

*What of the Baptist Church?*

I know nothing about that.

*The Presbyterian church?*

Yes. It burned down. Or was set alight.

*We were talking about the shops in Middle Park.*

Yes, there was the hotel, then there was the bank. The State Savings Bank, then there was the ES&A Bank on the other side (*near underpass*). That was next to Jimmy Meredith (*car repairs*), next to the beauty salon. In that shop there was a bank safe. A big concrete safe. It was about 8-10 feet high and about 5 by 5 feet square. That was still there until it became a laundry. It was about 4 by five feet square.

*Was that building rebuilt?*

Yes it was rebuilt. There was wood at the bottom of the window. It was rotten. There was a man who ran the laundry, a Greek or something, with a little girl. He took her everywhere. To school, I think it must have been the Catholic School, He would even take her to the toilet. People got a bit upset about that. He guarded her everywhere I saw him everywhere but I never saw his wife.

Next to that was a hairdressers, then the Post Office. Then there was Moran & Cato's. Then it became an electrical place. The man who owned that lived in a double fronted house in Park Road, and also owned the three storey flats next door in Park Road, the painted ones. Moran & Cato's was a wide shop. It was wider than the others. The two women who ran the post office, lived in Albert Park in Findlay St, just down from Bridport St. They were really nice. Then there was Dr Thompson's house, a large house on the corner of McGregor St (*and Canterbury Road*). He had horses and a stable at the back. His family would go horse riding in the park. He was good to returned serviceman.

When I was recently in Cabrini hospital, a nurse who was looking after me said "You live at Middle Park? I lived in the big house on the corner of McGregor. Did you know Dr Thompson?" "Yes, I more knew of him than knew him". She asked, "Did you ever see a little girl on the horse?" "Yes". "Well, that was me". She was in her 50s and still working as a nurse. That (*horse riding*) would have been in the 1950s. They kept the horse in the stables at the back. There were a lot of stables along Canterbury Rd. The house down the road (Paragunya) with the dunny hole at the back - (*into the lane*) - that had a stable. The dunny can hole is still there, the only one left in Middle Park.

Oh, then there is the story of the bank door left open. One day the bank officer left to have a drink after work across the road (*at the pub*) with the mechanic (*Merediths*). But he just walked out and forgot to lock up.

*What of the two shops on the corner of Richardson and Langridge Streets?*

Yes, there were two, one a wine shop and the one on the corner a sort of milk bar. The wine shop was demolished and a new house built there (*and the other shop became a general store, wine shop. Then just a wine shop*).

There are so many changes in Middle Park. (*in the Armstrong Street area*) There used to be three butchers, a haberdashery, Dowsetts – where you could buy fabrics, etc., a shoe shop, a cake shop, three barber shops, 2 ladies hairdressers, and a delicatessen – run by young Brian McGowan who played for South Melbourne with Bobby Skilton. There was a fruit shop across the road. There was an SP bookie there. Plenty of them!

In Armstrong Street here was an SP bookie in the lane behind the Fish shop. The people who ran the fish shop were 7th Day Adventists. There was another SP Bookie behind the (*current*) newsagent in a little lane. There was Adlers, the chemist, on the corner. There were two chemists.

To go to the toilet from the pub, you had to go outside – to the brick building beside the Tattsлото shop. There was no inside toilet. That part of the pub is probably now used for something else. Storage, or electrical or something.

*Which reminds me, the place next door was a theatre.*

Yes. One of the actors was the chap who was in Ben Hur - Frank Thring. That was the Arrow theatre, I think. There was another theatre around the corner in Richardson Street. In an old church. I forget the name. There was a barber shop – run by young Mr McLean - next to where you went in. Then there was a milk bar run by Bob and Frank. They were effeminate. The shop was spotlessly clean. Really good to go into.

But things are changing. We might even lose the Newsagent with all this electronic news. And the Post Office has changed. They now sell everything. I used to get the paper delivered but stopped as I was not home often. Joe (*Begg*) used to collect it for me sometimes. I have known Joe for about 50 years. He used to live in Canterbury Road (*near Mills Street*). When he was first married. They were very young and they used to come into my shop on Sundays after church, buy a paper, some bread and milk, and off they went. I first thought they lived in a two storey house in Young Street, but it was a house in Canterbury Road. When Joe bought (*his current house*) near me I was at the auction. Just sticky-nosing. And I recognised him and his wife Rosie from years ago. He has changed the place a lot recently.

One day I was going the Clarke Shields 50<sup>th</sup> birthday at the RSL clubroom when I noticed a young lady trying to park a big Dodge (*car*). She was having trouble, so I offered to park it for her. She became Joe's son's wife.

Clark Shields party was amusing. It was a surprise party and his wife somehow cajoled him into coming to the RSL rooms in the park. When he arrived he said, "You bloody idiots. I'm not 50, I'm 49." Well the others told him they had it as his 50th because he might not last till 50 (*he was awaiting a heart transplant*). He had said he was 49 to increase the chances of a transplant! But he did indeed live till 50 (and longer).

One day I met his daughter outside the chemist shop. She was very worried about her father who was in great pain, and no chemist had anything to relieve it. So I offered to drive her to the Alfred hospital – where I knew he was a patient. She got something there for him. When Clarke was in the Alfred he said to the staff – "see that building over there (*in Albert Park*) –that's named after me". You could then see it from the Alfred, but probably not now a with so many tall buildings in Queens Road and St Kilda Road.



Reg Jones



Reg Jones Shop



Reg Jones Shop