

JOHN THOMAS BURCHMORE

1898-1985

His favorite admonition was “make every post a winner”

Jack was the 7th child of the 7th child, so family lore anointed him as someone special and in the eyes of his 3 sons, he was much admired. Of course, his reputation for reliability, honesty, and thrift, not to mention his managerial credentials which came later, but during our childhood, although he was a firm taskmaster, he was held in high esteem as a role model for tackling just about anything- plumbing, electrical, construction and most certainly automotive repair; always without drama.

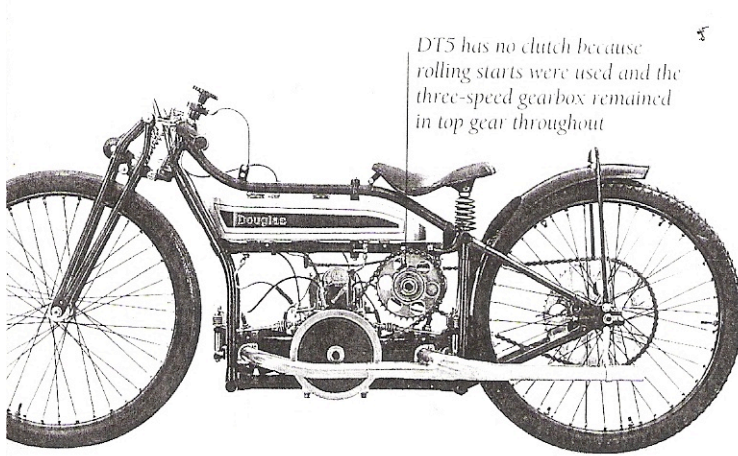
Mum once told us that he was the only man in the street to work throughout the depression and our house was the first to have a telephone - a magnet for neighbors who were required to deposit the few pence per call in the adjacent Commonwealth Savings Bank money box.

In retirement he often quoted this motto:

"If you would walk in wisdom's way, five things observe with care: of whom you speak, to whom you speak and how and when and where."

At birth in Alexandria, Jack had 3 brothers and 3 sisters, ranging from 12 down to 1 year old. He attended Sunday School at the Congregational Church on Belmont Street, where the family lived in Alexandria, and at age 14 left an Erskineville Public School for work, holding minor jobs until nearly 17 when he was apprenticed to the trade of fitting at John Heine & Son Ltd.

The Great War was well under way when he applied for the NSW Aviation School before enlisting in the army but his troopship had barely cleared Sydney Heads when the armistice was declared. For the next 4 years Jack worked as a mechanic at Automatic Totalisators Ltd. before commencing what turned out to be a 42-year career in the glass industry. After the family moved to Arncliffe he developed a passion for speed.



He was dubbed “Hellfire Jack” during his motor bike years riding a hot machine like this DOUGLAS DT5, which we found under 14 Withers St. and took to Bexley where Noel and friends got it going again after many years in cobwebs.



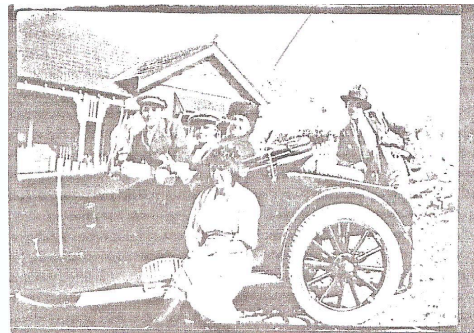
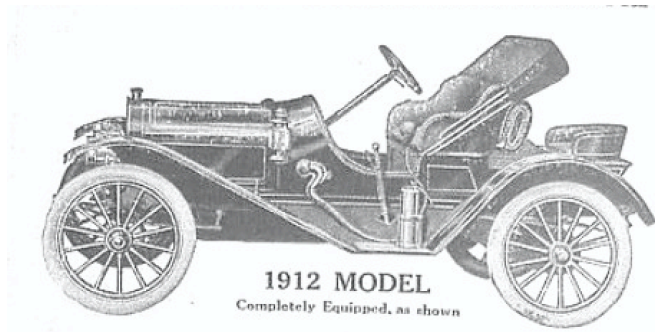
Jack on Invicta with brother Ernest 1920

But the responsibilities of a family quickly settled him down. We remember being told that his first car was a METZ and can now rely on a treasured 1978 letter he addressed to David, then 17 and living in Rosemont PA, which lists his early cars:

“Your trip to the antique car show takes me back to 1912 when I was a boy and I can tell a lot about early cars and motorcycles. I had a 1908 METZ, a 1915 T.FORD, a 1924 BUICK four cylinder tourer with a Packard shape radiator, and a '33 light six ROCKNE by STUDEBAKER.”

He goes on to give a little grandfatherly wisdom:

“David and Bruce must realize the time has come to plan the future and keep the good name of Smith and Burchmore...”



Here we see Jack at the wheel of the Metz with his mother alongside. His sister and brothers complete the scene

This two-passenger roadster was built by the Metz Co in Waltham Massachusetts. It was powered by a 22 horsepower 4 cylinder engine linked to a friction drive. Its advertisement read; "The Gearless Car, No clutch to slip - No gears to strip". In 1913, this car sold for about \$475. An electric starter, electric head lights, electric sidelights, electric dash and taillights brought the cost to \$ 600. Metz automobiles were built until 1922 after which the name was changed to the Waltham.



Model T parked outside Geelong Library at its launch in Australia in 1915.

Ken's first car memory is not of one but two cars in the drive. The tiny Ford was giving way to the capacious Buick needed for the growing family now totaling five.



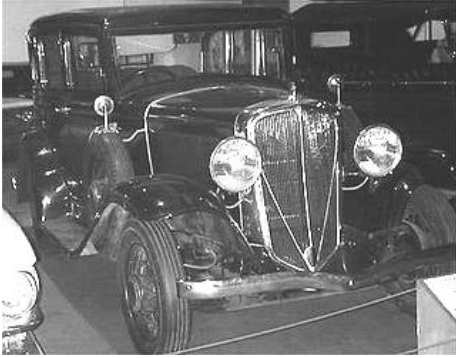
1923 Buick 45 (ours was a drab khaki color)

Those were the days when a 100-mile Sunday drive without changing a tire was an achievement. One weekend the Raine and Burchmore parents plus a couple of us kids took the Buick to Stanwell Park to visit

the senior Bill and Jane Raine. Jack was driving with his left leg in plaster to above the knee with Bill in charge of the hand brake. Bald Hill is a bit frightening to this day but imagine the doubts of a 7-year-old going down that fearsome slope under those circumstances.

Then came the 1932 Rockne Studebaker sedan. It was a red-letter day for us kids who witnessed the arrival down our drive (around 1938) of this maroon beauty; second hand, but a stylish improvement on the old khaki Buick tourer.

1932 Studebaker Rockne



Jack did virtually all of his own automotive maintenance, and during WW2 when petrol rationing restricted non-essential driving, he converted the Rockne to get him to work and back on coal gas. In those times many cars and trucks were mounted with coal fired gas producers but he preferred the cleaner town gas.

Picture an 18" high by 10 ft. long and 6 ft. wide rectangular plywood tray painted dark brown mounted on the Rockne's roof. Inside was the gas bag; a giant rubberized fabric bladder which would be filled morning and night. It was a slow process at home because of the low (domestic) gas pressure served from a 2" line run under the lawn to a standpipe near the garage.

As soon as GM Holden started production after WW2 he bought his first new car.

1948-215 FX Holden (ours was black)

The 1948-215 FX Holden was a four-door, six-seater sedan, lightweight and durable, with a torquey 2.15 litre "grey engine", chosen for its efficiency and durability. It offered exceptional performance and economy. With a top speed of over 80mph (130km/h) the Holden could cruise all day at 65mph (105km/h), take steep hills in its top-gear stride and typically return 30 miles per gallon (9.4l/100km). Aerobilt body construction, at the time a relatively new engineering principle, combined body and chassis into one all-steel unit.



Years later he was rewarded with a 1961 EK model Holden as a management bonus. This car, fondly known as Black Bess, "saw him out" until he gave up his license when night-times became a bit hazardous on the road.

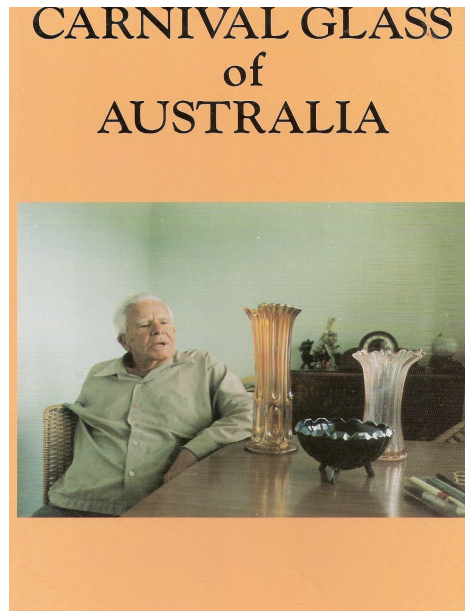
1961 EK Holden (Black Bess)



We know nothing of Jack's courtship of our Mum, Jean Alveen Harrower, but the accompanying photo of the wedding of her sister Sarah to Bill Raine shows they were an item in 1920. Four years later they married in Adelaide on one of Jack's production engineering

projects, and on his next mission, this time to Brisbane, their first son, John Robert came along.

After they moved into their new home at Bexley, 1929 saw them welcome Kenneth George. It is interesting to note that construction of their one and only home was very much a family effort. Our grandfather, Robert Harrower was a bricklayer and two of his sons, one also a bricklayer the other a carpenter, all worked on the new house. We also know that Jack and brother in law, Bill Raine toiled with picks removing a sandstone outcrop that interfered with the driveway. Later on he even tiled the front verandah in an attractive, geometric pattern. In 1931, the family was completed with the birth of Noel William.



Jack's working life revolved around glass manufacture, very early catching the eye of WJ (Knockout) Smith of Australian Glass Mfrs. with whom he contracted for the then princely sum of 8 pounds 10 shillings a week as a lead hand mechanic. In the 1920's mechanization of glass manufacture was under way overseas and Jack's mission was to install US forming and feeding equipment at factories in Waterloo, Sydney and later in Adelaide, Brisbane and Auckland. Improving the automated production of bottles, jars, and pressed glassware became his life's work during which he rose to Works Mgr. of Crown Crystal Glass Co, Bourke St., Waterloo.

Growing up, we would wake around 6:30 to hear the car backing up the drive for the 8 miles to the factory and would rarely see him before 6:00 at night. Saturdays were a bit easier, and even Sundays we saw him, often with a son tagging along, checking on production. Even when he became Works Mgr. in ... the routine didn't vary. Without any doubt he was the quintessential dedicated employee, and his 3 sons tried their hardest to emulate him.

Active until his final day, he passed away peacefully on 20th September 1985 in the home he and Jean's family built at "22". Afterword:

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Throughout his life, Jack was keenly interested in Burchmore history. Our grandmother had handed down 1906 correspondence about our ancestors listed as George1, George 2 and George3 and of course, he knew his grandfather William (to whom this site is dedicated). The 3 sons, 'following father's footsteps' continued the tradition by seeking out relatives from far and wide, finally obtaining the definitive genealogy from a Melbourne cousin - Terence A Walsh.

Commencing with Jack and Jean, many of us have paid homage to our roots at Flamstead Herts, signing the church visitor's book, even inspecting the old farmhouse where William's spinning of the walking stick took him to Australia.

It is entirely appropriate that Jack is remembered with his forebears on a brass plaque near the St Leonard's Church window, which reads:

THE WINDOW WAS RESTORED TO THE GLORY OF GOD
BY THE PARISHIONERS AND THE BURCHMORE FAMILY
1990 -- IN MEMORIUM

GEORGE BURCHMORE of Row End

Died Aug 1, 1843

Aged 80 years

His Son GEORGE BURCHMORE of Row End

Died Jan 31, 1838

Aged 52 years

His son WILLIAM BURCHMORE

Born July 28 1819 at Row End

Died Sydney, Australia May 22, 1916

Aged 96 years

His son GEORGE BURCHMORE

Born Dec 13 1863 at Sydney, Australia

Died Sept 9, 1920

Aged 56 years

His son JOHN THOMAS BURCHMORE

Born Nov 23 1898 at Sydney, Australia

Died Sept 20, 1985

Aged 85 years