

Profile

BOB OWENS

Bob Owens, known to his nearest friends as "Ocker", has a philosophy of "keep happy and keep working". From the day he joined the St. John Cadets at Thebarton, until today, as the Assistant Metropolitan Superintendent, he has certainly kept working and everyone who knows Bob realises that he is always happy, even if at times, serious.

His love of outdoor life has probably been the most influencing factor in his forty years. As early as 1953 he joined the Henley Beach Surf Life-Saving Club and stayed with that organization until 1964. By then he was on the Life-Saver's National Board of Examiners.

As a boy, Bob attended Henley Primary and Thebarton Technical Schools. He was apprenticed as an electrical mechanic with Otis Elevator Company and was with that firm for eight years. He vividly recalls falling sixty feet down a lift shaft, but fortunately came out of it none the worse for his experience.

Robert Kingsley Owens was called up for National Service in 1958. Army life interested him so much he remained in the C.M.F. until 1976, when he retired with the rank of Lieutenant. During that time, and after the initial training at Woodside, he tended to specialise in Army health and medical services. Various training courses were attended in Healesville — Victoria, Canungra — Queensland, and Ingleburn — New South Wales. He was also selected to attend an Air Em-planing Officers Course with the R.A.A.F. at Richmond, New South Wales.

Because of his medical knowledge, Bob was hand-picked to go to Vietnam in November 1968, and was second-in-command of a medical platoon attached to an infantry battalion. We are told this

group of 33 men bore no resemblance to "MASH" on television, but did, in fact, support fighting troops on the front line. Bob was in Vietnam for fifteen months.

In 1974, Bob spent three months in Ethiopia with a mobile team of four, treating up to 1,000 people a day in country 10,000 to 15,000 feet above sea level. (Mount Lofty is 2,300 feet). Famine was evident on his arrival, however its effects were only one of the problems to be treated by the team.

Disease was rife, and in addition, the people were rebelling against the King and creating a civil war. Smallpox was also in existence prior to an eradication programme carried out by the medical teams. Ethiopia, interestingly, was only the second to last country in the world to be cleared of the disease.

Before his return to Adelaide, Bob toured Southern Europe and the United Kingdom, and as you can imagine, looked at Ambulance Services in those places. Life must have seemed fairly tame on his return to Adelaide.

Bob has played baseball, cricket, and football, but all came to an abrupt end at the Payneham Oval in 1961 when he broke his leg.

His sporting interest is now rifle shooting which he does not do on a competitive basis, but every month or so, he and his son Shane go away for a weekend camping and hunting. Shane, like his Dad, likes the outdoors and enjoys trail bike riding in addition to the weekends away. Bob proudly tells that his son won the school's and West Adelaide's medal for the best and fairest footballer for 1979.

Bob Owens has virtually had a life of St. John. He joined the Thebarton Cadets in 1953, transferred to the West Torrens



Bob Owens.

Transport Division in 1959, worked through the ranks to Superintendent, and joined the regular staff in 1962.

In addition, his older brother, Dr. Des Owens, is still actively involved in a training and advisory capacity, and his younger brother, Wayne, was a keen member of the West Torrens Division. All have won State First Aid competitions at some time through their St. John careers.

Bob is currently the Assistant Metropolitan Superintendent in charge of the southern area, working out of the St. John Centre at Unley.

SAN FRAN-CISCO KID

From the U.S.A. comes a report of ex-Unley man, now Paramedic, PETER LEONARD, who is working for the Medevac Ambulance Service in San Mateo County, just south of San Francisco. Peter has had his fair share of problems with the language barrier (they can't understand him). Although his speech is now understood, some Aussie phrases are still a bit baffling to the Yanks. This story has reached our ears from a reliable source:

Peter, at the home of a patient to be transported, is talking to the patient's wife and taking details —

Peter: "Are you on the phone?"

Woman: "No, I'm talking to you."

BITS 'N' PIECES

Peter: "Yes, but are you on the phone?"

Woman: "You can see I'm not, can't you?"

Peter (as the penny drops): "I'm sorry, what I meant to say was 'Do you have a phone?'"

Woman: "Yes, of course we do!"

Keep trying, Pete — the first 10 years are the worst!!

SPOTLIGHT CENTRE-FOLD

Doug Smith (Cas-Sim Corner) was being chided about being on the centre-fold of the December Spotlight dressed only in a pair of shorts. Some bright spark added:

"That photo wasn't a centre-fold, it was a centre-spread!"

WELL-TRAINED PUBLIC

An old fellow was picked up in a northern country town about 8.30 a.m. recently with respiratory difficulty. When asked when his problem had begun, he said (between gasps and wheezes) when he first got up at 5.30. His wife retorted from the front seat, "Yes, and he wanted to call you then, but I wouldn't let him, because I knew you would still be in bed"!!