

Albert Negrine's Story

I was born in Alexandria in Egypt in 1928 as number 10 of 12 children. I was educated at the Boys School in Alexandria from 1935 to 1946 when I sat and passed London University Matriculation to further education. I went to Cairo and enrolled at the British Evening Institute for a B.Sc. degree.

During the day I worked at my father's stockbroking firm. In the evening I studied from 6.00 pm to 10.00 pm Monday to Friday. When I graduated in June 1949, I was offered a job in the Egyptian Copper Works in Alexandria.

My first job was to establish standard production methods and costing. The company had invited the chief engineer of a similar industry in France as a consultant to see the tube factory which was newly installed in operation. He gave me the clues to go about how to set standard production methods and costing. I was his shadow for the six weeks he was there.

The person who ran the tube factory was an ex Egyptian naval officer. He was not happy when I went to the factory to implement the recommendations suggested by the consultant. He was pushed aside, and I was appointed chief foreman in February 1950.

The workers were on a production bonus system and with the improvements adapted, earned more money. They called me their priest.

My break came in 1952 when there was a ship in the Suez Canal with a broken propellor shaft.

It needed a 4 inch brass rod to replace it. The largest diameter of billet we used was 7 inches and weighed 110 kilos. To get the length of rod we required, we needed a 250 kilo billet. We had 3 million tons of steel army scrap which was 10 year's supply of feed for the steel factory, which produced 300,000 tons of round rod a year for buildings.

I sent a welder to cut 70 centimetres of a 10 inch gun barrel and cut a piece of steel from the tank plate for a 10 inch pressing disc and a 4 inch die bore. The machine shop, which had equipment to produce anything had the pressing disc, and die done the following day.

I had the 10 inch billet cast the next day. Everyone was wondering how I would insert a 10 inch billet into a 7 inch container.

What I did – I had removed the inner liner of the container to enable to accommodate the 10 inch billet. I had the job done within 72 hours from the time I was told what was required.

The sales department told the general manager what I had done. I was given a cash bonus and appointed assistant Production Manager of the Tube Division – a position I held until the time I resigned in October 1956 due to the Suez Canal crisis.

The family was spread in five countries in 3 continents.

A sister, who was a fashion designer in Paris, stayed there. My eldest sister, whose husband was a lecturer in English in Alexandria University, were on holidays in England with their son and two daughters.

They stayed in England.

My youngest sister whose husband who had family in Brazil went there.

One brother whose wife had family in France – went there – to France.

My brother, who had gone to Australia 3 years earlier organised visas for my youngest brother – my second eldest sister and me to go to Australia.

We had to go to England to get the visas, have a medical test - show that we spoke English – sign that we would not depend on the government when we went to Australia,

I booked myself a plane ticket to Australia and arrived in March 1957. My brother and sister followed 6 weeks later by ship.

The brother who was already in Australia bought a unit in Bondi. My sister had no problem finding a job, as she was a nurse. She was employed as a receptionist at a doctor's surgery. She lived with a family for a while.

My brother who came to Australia with me, rented a unit in Bondi. Through the ads in the newspapers, I applied for a job with 3 factories. Alcoa in Yenora, Austral Bronze in Alexandria - and Metal Manufactures in Port Kembla. I visited the 3 factories. I was offered a job at all of them but accepted the job with Metal Manufactures in Port Kembla. I could not start until January 1958 as they closed the factory down over the Christmas and new year's holidays.

I moved to Wollongong in September 1957 and stayed in a boarding house for a year. Then I moved to a family in Atcheson Street – The Lumsdens– which I called my adopted family. They bought a cottage in Thirroul in 1960. They had a small unit alongside it and which I rented. I was there until October 1974

when I moved to Pleasant Avenue where I still live. They had a daughter, Jill, who has a son, David and a daughter Kim and they are my godchildren.

Q - My first job at Metal Manufactures was to establish standard production methods and costing which I had done in Egypt and brought with me. Over the years I was appointed to various positions until I retired at the age of 62. I was asked by Reynolds Sharebrokers if I would like to open a branch for them in Wollongong. I said yes.

I had to spend 3 months in Sydney, pass an exam at the Stock Exchange to get my license as a financial adviser. I opened the office in 63 Market Street, West Wollongong in 1992.

When my last brother passed away in March 2014, I asked myself how long do I have to live? I retired in June 2014 and here I am here 7 years later and still alive.

I miss the people.

- Note at the time of writing, it was 7 years later. 2021 - I type this in 2023.

~~Re Typed by~~

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