

THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF N. S. W.

Paper No. 3.

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DATE: Monday 20th January 1992.

JOHN WILLIAM PILBEAM GOFFAGE.

a. k. a. CHIPS RAFFERTY.

John Goffage was born on 26th March, 1909, at Billy Goat Hill near Broken Hill, the first of a family-to-be of 3 boys and two girls. His father, also John William Goffage, was approximately 50 years of age when Chips, as he was to become known, was born. Because of this Chips claimed he was not particularly close to his father. John Goffage senior was about 6ft. 3ins. in height, pre-metric days of course, and was a silver miner.

The Goffage family moved around quite a bit from Broken Hill to Orange in N.S.W. and Adelaide before settling in Parramatta when Chips was about 11 years of age. He claimed it took 6 months to find the school so in his words he spent a glorious summer on the beach.

John Goffage grew very quickly when young to be a foot taller than other children and always stayed that much taller, in fact at the age of 13 years he was already 6ft. tall. At school, because of his height, he became a butt of jokes and a target for bullies so he learnt boxing and gave one of these bullies in his words "a hiding" and became accepted as an "accomplished lout". Later in life Chips remarked to the actor, Brother Charles (Bud) Tingwell that he felt he developed his personality as a defence for his height when he was young. The name Chips appears to have been given to him after a popular English comic of the time, Cornelius Chips, who was a long lean gangling sort of fellow and Chips himself said in 1970 that was how the name was derived. The Rafferty bit will be dealt with later.

When Chips was 16 he became an apprenticed moulder at The Clyde Engineering Works, but when his father died soon after, leaving the family penniless Chips broke his apprenticeship and "went bush", working at many and varied occupations including miner, kangaroo shooter, axeman and even as a false teeth packer. Over this ten year period Chips moved around extensively, at one stage having a mate, Willy, who was 4ft. 8ins. in height and it was a favourite trick for Willy to put on a long coat and sit on the shoulders of Chips and ask for handouts. It must have been quite a sight, all 10ft. of them! In these travels Chips worked with horses and also studied Aboriginal folk lore.

It is claimed that he commenced his acting career around this time,

the middle 1930's, with the Cumberland Amateur Musical Society as a magician's offsider but, as is often the case, stories vary. He was however at that time employed at Meggitt's Linseed Oil. While there he met a girl, married her and they bought an ice-cream parlour, and Chips also did some painting and wrote some poetry, both of which sold. After only eighteen months the marriage broke up and they were divorced. With the proceeds from the sale of the business he bought a cabin cruiser moored on Sydney Harbour which became known as a haunt for members of the Sydney art and journalist world.

John Goffage then worked at several jobs again and also drank regularly at the Black and White Club at Circular Quay, which was a favourite spot for actors and artists, and it was around this time, 1939, that he made his film debut but details vary. Brother Ken G. Hall certainly remembers meeting him in that year when Chips was 30 years of age. Ken was looking for "a long thin feller" to contrast Bert Bailey and others in "Dad Rudd M.P.". His assistant director, Ron Whelan, remembered seeing such a person working in a wine cellar and brought him in and John Goffage was given a part as an extra in the crowd. Previous to this film being made Cinesound had made a film called "Come Up Smiling" which was not successful and Ken G. Hall was called in to re-make it which he did. He re-named the film "Ants In His Pants" and also gave John Goffage another chance as an extra in the crowd. So real confusion about the debut is evident, "Dad Rudd M.P." being filmed before the second make of "Come Up Smiling" as "Ants In His Pants" but released afterwards.

Brother Ken G. Hall made 17 films between 1932 and 1940 commencing with "On Our Selection" and ending with "Dad Rudd M.P.", this last being regarded as the most polished of them all. Although John Goffage appeared in the film for 5 minutes as an extra he managed to make a mark as being visually funny and able to create a character. He then returned to work as a cellarman. Cinesound ceased film production on the outbreak of World War 2 and the Herald cartoonist, Jim Russell of "The Potts" fame, drew John Goffage in a cartoon after seeing his work in "Dad Rudd M.P."

John Goffage then met a girl from Yarrawonga in Victoria, her name was Ellen Kathleen Jameson, she ran a dress shop called "Quentin of Melbourne" and she was widely known as Quentin. They met on a blind date at the Mayfair Hotel at Kings Cross while John Goffage was still living on the cabin cruiser which was later burnt out. He then bought a wine bar and moved into a flat at Kings Cross.

That year, 1939, he was asked to take a part in the earlier mentioned re-make of "Come Up Smiling" and when the film was shown he took Quentin to see it but she missed his part, it being so brief. Ron Whelan, also mentioned earlier, was at that stage assisting Charles Chauvel in casting for "40,000 Horsemen" and John Goffage was given a screen test and was then chosen to replace the comedian Pat Hanna, who had been previously selected. It was this film, "40,000 Horsemen", that first made Chips Rafferty a Star and credit has gone to a lot of people for this but Chips always maintained it was largely because of a fellow named Snowy Ascot who caused him to be introduced to Ken G. Hall, but the story varies, Hall

always maintaining that it was Ron Whelan who brought Chips to the studio. Although they did not see a lot of each other from then on Chips and Ken G. Hall always remained good friends, Hall saying later that he always remembered three actors he directed, Chips Rafferty, Bert Bailey and Fred McDonald.

It was at this stage that John Goffage assumed the film name of Chips Rafferty, as John Goffage was seen as unsuitable for an actor. Charles Chauvel suggested Slab or Slabs O'Flaherty but Quentin, his wife, refused to be Mrs. Slab and suggested Chips O'Flaherty, the nickname Chips having been with him since childhood as mentioned earlier. Chips is then reported to have exclaimed, "What sort of Rafferty rules business is this anyway?".

"40,000 Horsemen" began filming in 1940, largely in the sandhills of Cronulla, under the direction of Charles Chauvel, who had worked in Hollywood in the 1920's before making several films in Australia including "The Wake Of The Bounty" starring Errol Flynn. Chauvel, since 1930, had been trying to raise money for a film based on the charge of the light brigade which was commanded by his Uncle, Sir Harry Chauvel. Interestingly the troops used in the charge of the light brigade during the Crimean War belonged to a regiment which had originally been formed by the grandfather of Charles Chauvel. In a Hollywood visit in 1937 the idea finally all came together and Frank Baker, brother of the legendary Snowy, together with E. V. Timms wrote the storyline for "40,000 Horsemen". The film had a budget of \$64,000, took about four months to complete, was premiered on Boxing Day, 1940, at the Mayfair Theatre in Sydney and was an immediate hit. Chauvel also used some footage previously taken in 1938 near Bathurst of 500 army horses assembled for the N.S.W. sesquicentenary exhibition.

In May 1941 Chips enlisted in the R.A.A.F. and on the 28th of that month he and Quentin were married. Chips was assigned to welfare/amenities duties, putting on a show at Narromine before being promoted to Flying Officer and then being transferred to New Guinea organising entertainment. During the war he appeared in some Department of Information films including Ken G. Hall's "South West Pacific" and "while there Is Still Time" for Charles Chauvel.

1943 saw the making of his next film, "The Rats Of Tobruk" which was the only Australian feature film entirely made and released during the war. It was largely shot at Curran's Hill near Camden using R.A.A.F. planes and 250 A.I.F men, the rainforest scenes of New Guinea being shot at Lamington Plateau. It was almost a re-make of "40,000 Horsemen" and was not really a great film but the acting of Chips and Peter Finch was noticed. In fact the British film maker, Harry Watt, seeing Chips in this film put him on an "if" and "when" contract. Chips then returned to New Guinea and the war during which time he lost his brother in a P.O.W. camp and also himself suffered a back and an ear injury.

In 1946 Harry Watt put Chips on a salary of \$50.00 per week to make "The Overlanders" for Ealing Films. This was not really an Australian film but an English film made in Australia. The genesis for the film was a complaint made by Australia to Britain about lack of attention to the Australian war effort shown in British films. Watt decided against a war film as "The Rats Of Tobruk" as just concluding. "The Overlanders" was a success and even to-day stands up as a good film. It is argued that this film cast Chips as an outback character rather than an actor, but Harry Watt described him as an Australian Gary Cooper and a real find.

The year 1947 saw the making of "Bush Christmas" for the J. Arthur Rank organisation. This was filmed at Carss Park in Sydney, Burragorang Valley and Newnes, by then a ghost town. This film was also a success being released simultaneously in Australia, U.S.A. and Great Britain. During the making of this film Chips is reported as having expressed sorrow at not having any children of his own.

Also released in 1947 was "The Loves of Joanna Godden" also starring Googie Withers and John McCallum which was filmed in England after Chips had departed Australia for that country on 16th June 1946. Whilst he was in England for the making of this film Ealing Studios used Chips heavily to promote "The Overlanders". It is also said that at times Chips overdid the "ocker" Australian image, with exaggerated beer drinking and use of Australian slang, on one occasion at a cocktail party asking for a pint of beer and insisting on rolling his own cigarettes.

"Eureka Stockade" which also commenced in 1947 was filmed at the re-equipped Pagewood studios and at Singleton in N.S.W. This film was a major failure for Ealing Studios. Harry Watt took almost a year to cast the film, there were troubles with the British quota system, the film took over 6 months to make, being the most expensive production yet made and also Ealing insisting on Chips Rafferty playing Peter Lalor in which role he was not successful. Finally the film was not released until 1949.

The last film for Ealing was to be "Bitter Springs" commenced in May 1949. This was largely filmed at Quorn in The Flinders Ranges in South Australia with a mostly Australian cast who are reported to have returned to Chips' flat occasionally for some conviviality. The film received only a luke-warm reception.

The year 1949 saw the start of many problems for Australian film makers with the British quota system, lack of investment money and change of Aust. Govt. policy on investment. In 1951 Chips said that The Capital Issues Board had effectively "cut the throat" of Aust. film making.

Then in 1951 came the making of Chips' first American film, "Kangaroo" with Maureen O'Hara, Bud Tingwell and others. This was largely shot in The Flinders Ranges, with a weak plot, a cast of cliché type characters and Lewis Milestone under pressure to complete the film. Aborigines were dressed like Zulus in the film and Chips was on screen for about five minutes with twenty or so lines to speak.

During 1952 Chips and Brother Charles (Bud) Tingwell were invited to America to make "The Desert Rats". The film was roundly condemned by Australian commanding officers who were at Tobruk as historically inaccurate and was generally received with ridicule in Australia.

Platypus Productions was set up in 1953 with Chips Rafferty, cameraman George Heath and Producer Lee Robinson, who was Australia's most prolific film maker during the 1950's. Robinson had previously worked with Chips on a radio series of outback yarns. This team made "The Phantom Stockman" in twenty-six days mainly being shot around Alice Springs. It did well, being re-named "Cattle Station" for British release. This film also made money on overseas sales. For Chips the great thing was that Australian film making had been kept alive. The Capital Issues Board then stopped further films being financed and also production of television shows for sale to the U.S. mode

During 1953 Platypus Productions became Southern International and "King Of The Coral Sea" was filmed in 1954 on Thursday Island and also on Green Island in 30feet of water. This film did well in Australia and overseas.

Two films were made in 1956, one being a co-production with a French company and was called "Walk Into Paradise" being largely filmed in New Guinea. This film tested the language skills of Chips and voice-overs were used. The cost of the film almost broke the Australian company and it was sold to American interests who put lions, tigers and elephants into it and made a fortune from it, re-naming it "Walk Into Hell". The other movie made that year was "Smiley" for the British Division of Twentieth Century Fox. A sequel to "Smiley" was made two years later and was called "Smiley Gets A Gun". Both were filmed around Camden near Sydney and both films were successful.

Chips and Lee Robinson in 1956 set up another company and bought the old Cinesound studios at Bondi Junction before spending large amounts of money refurbishing them for film production, Chips still having faith in an Australian film industry and also being prepared to produce Australian Television shows. The company was named Australian Television Enterprises and always struggled as it was so much cheaper to purchase American T.V. shows than to locally produce them.

1958 saw Chips as co-producer only of two other films as well as the earlier mentioned "Smiley Gets A Gun". The first of these was "Dust In The Sun" from a Jon Cleary book. This film was just a mess from the start and was not released in Australia until 1960 and not overseas for two years after that. The other was another French co-production called "The Stowaway" which also was not released until 1960. This was filmed in Paris and Tahiti and was adapted from a Georges Simenon novel. A third co-production in 1959 was called "The Restless And The Damned" which was also filmed in Paris and Tahiti. All these films were failures and Southern International went into liquidation. Chips then gave up producing and returned to acting in other peoples films. Ken G. Hall at this stage described Chips as naive, saying he budgeted badly, spent unwisely, should have stayed acting and was blinded by enthusiasm.

"The Sundowners", made in 1960 was to be the last feature film made in Australia for five years. It was an American production filmed in Port Augusta, Whyalla and Cooma and the film was a success although Chips played only a small role. Chips and Quentin then set off for America where he co-starred with Jack Lemmon in "The Wackiest Ship In The Army" which was filmed in both Hollywood and Honolulu. On returning to Australia he and Quentin journeyed to Alice Springs to work with Bert Newton on T.V. shows and commercials. Chips had had some previous television work in 1958 and 1959 with Lee Robinson on a series called "Adventure Unlimited".

On their return to Sydney Chips was offered a part in "The Mutiny On The Bounty", which was scheduled to be made in six months but was beset with difficulties from the start. Brando was difficult, rains came, directors were changed and it finally took 14 months to complete at a cost of \$19 million. Chips' part in the film was to hold a couple of ropes and say "aargh, aargh there" for which he was apparently on a salary of \$10,000 per week for 10 months. When he returned to Australia in 1962 he purchased a block of flats with the proceeds from this film and these he owned until his death. He also again had high hopes at this time for a resurgence of an Australian film industry and proposed making 15 or 16 films with the assistance of subsidies but none came to fruition. He also spoke strongly on the need for Govt. assistance for Australian film and television work. He appeared before several committees but no support was given. At this stage it was costing \$10,000 an episode for an Australian production and these could be purchased overseas for \$400.

Chips made some T.V. appearances with Dawn Lake and Bobby Limb before again going to England in 1962 for discussions on a new film. While there he was badly beaten up in the September, following which he had a heart attack and was found to be suffering from emphysema. He returned to Australia in 1963 when a Govt. committee recommended assistance for the Australian film industry, which recommendation was rejected in 1964. Chips returned to England in May 1964 for work on T.V. show "Ward 10" and on May 28th, his 23rd wedding anniversary his wife, Quentin, was found dead in their flat in Sydney. He then completed his work in London before returning home in August 1964, totally distraught on the loss of Quentin and announcing his retirement.

However during 1965 he made guest appearances on American T.V. shows before playing a relatively small part in "They're A Wierd Mob" in 1966, which did well in Australia but was not well received overseas. More television work followed in America before "Double Trouble" with Elvis Presley in 1967, "Kona Coast" with Richard Boone in 1968 and "Skullduggery" with Burt Reynolds in 1970. He also appeared in T.V. shows such as "The Man From U.N.C.L.E." and "The Monkees".

Chips appeared in his last film in 1971, an Australian production, called "Wake In Fright". This film took 5 months to make and was filmed at Broken Hill, with the hotel scenes being filmed at the Sydney Cricket Ground. This film was really well received by the critics and also overseas but did not do well in Australia probably being a little bit too close to the bone for Australia. Interestingly this seems to be the only one of Chips' films available on video.

Apart from a few T.V. shows, commercials and public appearances this film was Chips' last performance. He was awarded the M.B.E. in January 1971 and on 27th May that year he suffered a heart attack in Billyard Ave., Elizabeth Bay and died that day exactly seven years after the discovery of the death of his wife, Quentin. Newspaper headlines that day simply read "Chips Is Dead". His funeral was held on 31st May 1971.

In 1984 the distinguished actor, Michael Pate, said, "He was a very thoughtful, very sensitive, very sort of self-possessed, often opinionated sometimes aggressive, lovable old bastard."

Chips Rafferty appeared on an Australian stamp issued on 12th May 1989, one of a series honouring eight great names of the Australian Stage and Screen. These were Gladys Moncrieff, Roy Rene, "Mo", (Bro. Harry van der Sluys.), Charles Chauvel, Chips Rafferty, Nellie Stewart, J.C. Williamson, Lottie Lyell and Raymond Longford. Charles Chauvel and Chips were featured on the same stamp, of 85cents in value.

John Goffage was initiated in Lodge Literature No.500 U.G.L. of N.S.W. on 5th December 1957, Passed to the Second Degree on 6th February 1958 and Raised to the Third Degree on 5th June 1958 and called off on 3rd March 1971 three months before his death in May 1971.

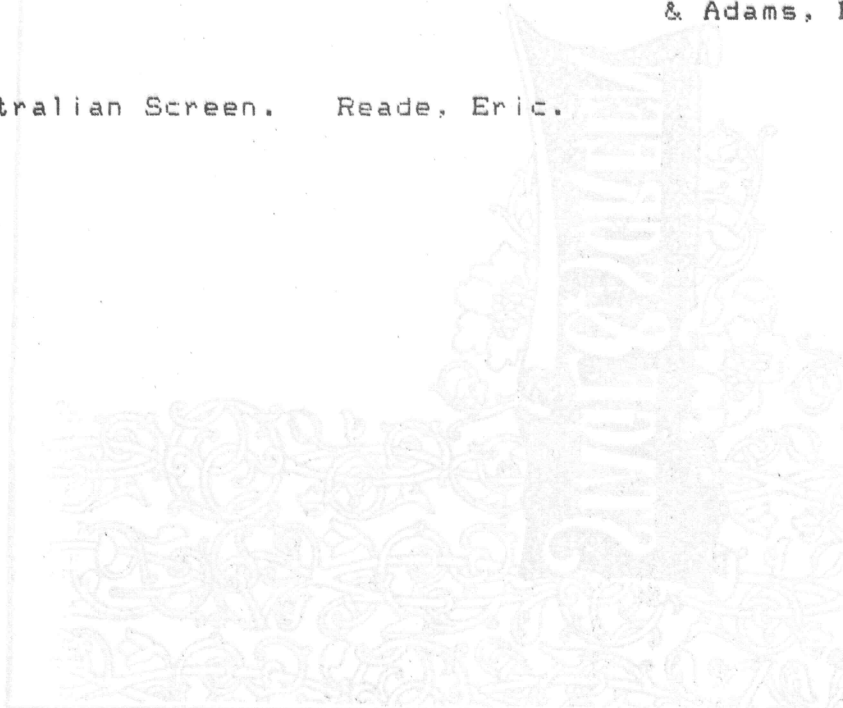
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