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Engineering Heritage Canberra
Queanbeyan Age Project

Interview with Bill Johnson
### Date of Interview
**Wednesday 23 May 2012**

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| 00:24 | Paperboy for 12 months before joining The Age in 1960 at 15 years of age  
Describes a typical working day as an apprentice  
Trained by correspondence for 12 months then attended Kingston Technical College ACT |
| 2:00  | As an apprentice, allowed to use the Hand Platen, a hand fed pedal machine  
Hands-on experience worked well until he started the Tech course  
Then apprenticed as a Hand Compositor  
Also worked the Letterpress machines  
The Age was a small business so gained experience doing different jobs |
| 3:00  | Describes the steps in producing the paper.  
Used Hot metal press when he first started, then the Linotype machine. Describes the Linotype later worked on the Ludlow. Describes why this job was given to him and how the job was done  
Paper boys distributed finished product |
| 5:00  | Describes the tasks allocated to a first year apprentice  
Progressed to working machines & setting up & composing  
Describes using hot metal and type set on Linotype and compares length of time it took to set and print the paper compared with previous methods |
| 7:30  | Explains how the handset type worked and notes it was a laborious process |
| 8:30  | Details again equipment he used as an apprentice  
Describes the Ludlow machine and how it worked |
| 9:40  | New offset machine purchased in 1970  
Describes how the three News King units worked and how the paper was assembled for printing, including photos  
Describes the camera used and outlines the process for printing photos  
Helped with the paste up, photographing, plates and printing |
| 14:00 | One wage dispute led to a strike and Jim Woods got the paper out on  
Another stop work meeting called in response to introduction of Bundy clocks  
Time cards made Bill’s job easier for invoicing purposes for commercial work |
| 17:00 | Describes progression of equipment which provided greater flexibility for larger jobs and the introduction of colour |
| 21:00 | Jim Woods’ membership of Country Press allowed him to keep up with changes and progress in the industry and the Age followed |
| 22:30 | Discusses the move to computerised equipment, how jobs changed and how this changed the whole way of producing the paper  
Unions intervened when staff multi-tasking  
Some staff successfully adapted and learnt new skills, others did not  
Tack about ten years to settle in properly |
| 25:50 | Canberra Times owned one third of The Age so some camaraderie between staff and Canberra Times Engineers assisted with introduction of computerised equipment |
| 32:00 | Tells stories about mishaps with equipment including fire hazards  
Recounts the circumstances in 1972-3 of the scoop when a Mirage jet crash near Queanbeyan  
Mishaps less of a problem because the paper was regional |
| 34:30 | Discusses how The Age assisted other regional papers owned by Jim Woods  
Tells story of the old Wharfedale press being operated in the Monaro shopping mall in Canberra and then being sent to Bega |
| 36:00 | Recounts a few stories that caused some controversy when printed  
Describes how the editor decided where each story appeared in the paper, the use of fillers and how |
the content was trimmed or expanded to fit
Stories also covered personal news, about football and horse racing

38:50 Talks about his colleagues, especially those who mentored him
Some interesting stories about various apprentices he worked with

41:00 He had offers of other work but preferred to stay with The Age because of the family style of business and close to home
Jim Woods was the owner/manager, but always reasonable, one of the team

43:50 Jim Woods assisted with renting a Decentralisation home, then assisted with the purchase of his own home
Talks about how this style of management was unusual, but worked well

45:00 Equipment was regularly upgraded which made a difference to the success of the business and its circulation and the business as a Prior to Offset, the business was limited in what it could produce
Following the introduction of Offset, circulation increased and the paper moved to tri-weekly production
The introduction of computerisation meant more varied and commercial work and a better quality paper

46:50 Discusses how customer and community relations and the use of up to date equipment were the main reasons that contributed to the success of the paper
The Age also participated in community events and supported the town's fundraising activities.

48:50 Bill left The Age in 1997 after Rural Press purchased the paper
As Rural Press subsequently let go of the commercial work, Bill started his own business using his local knowledge and relations with previous customers

49:50 Prior to Rural Press purchasing the paper, circulation was 5,500, now 2,500.
Describes how circulation is determined
The Age was previously a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, with sales mainly through paperboys, subscribers and a mail out list of 1,000
Gives his views about why production has returned to one edition per week, the drop in circulation and the reasons why it may not improve

52:50 Provides detailed description of how the Printing Museum was established, its premises and how it is staffed

53:50 Lists the equipment housed at the Museum and says more is elsewhere waiting for larger premises to be found
Machines housed at the Museum date from the 1880-1900s up to about 1965
Talks about how donations of machines are sourced and received

59:00 Talks about how The Age assisted in printing other regional newspapers owned by Jim Woods, and assisting during times of strikes or when break downs occurred.
Details how the content of these regional papers was delivered to Queanbeyan
Explains camera ready art

1:00:00 End