

A Gentleman and a Rascal



Autobiography
by
Brian Buzzard

A Gentleman and a Rascal

**An autobiography
by
Brian Buzzard**

CHAPTER 20

Sheep export

Front Cover: I wish to thank artist Laura Cole for her kind permission to use the second painting from the triptych **Kimberley Grasses**.

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to contact the people mentioned in this book, we apologise if any omissions have been made.

**Copyright 01997
Brian Buzzard
All rights reserved**

CHAPTER 20

Sheep export

It was only the other day that a friend reminded me of a shipment of sheep the company purchased and sent to the Persian Gulf, on the account of an Arab company. The order to purchase six thousand heavy wethers was given to us by Sir William Gunn, through Bill Horwood who was the WA representative of the Australian Meat Board. We duly purchased the sheep and marshalled them at Horwood's property about four miles out of Geraldton, where they were vaccinated by a veterinary surgeon for Antrax. The ship Cymbria was late arriving, but when the date was given to load at the Geraldton Wharf we found that the price of the motor transport was too expensive. We obtained permission from the shire council to drive the sheep from the farm through town to the wharf.



Loading sheep for export.

I suggested to our director, Gerry Clune, who had a property, Newmaracarra to use the town football oval to agist them overnight.

Gerry was also the President of the Geraldton Football Association and was horrified at my suggestion, saying that they would foul up the oval for weeks, so we decided to split them into two mobs of three thousand each, which is still a lot of sheep to move in one go.

We progressed very well until we hit the housing area of town. Some of the houses did not have gates or fences and some of the sheep decided that they did not want the sea trip to Kuwait, or to be slaughtered, so they went into some of the people's backyards and gardens and caused a bit of havoc on route. They were large, heavy sheep. Very sensibly we had brought a couple of hundred extra in case of any emergencies and we were able to load six thousand, one hundred on board. We spent the next day picking up our strays which had been hunted out onto the street by the irate house owners. It is marvellous what you can do with a good sheepdog, because we finished up having very few losses. Later, we heard stories in the bar about house owners who had thought that it was "manna from heaven" because they had free meat for several days, after they had promptly killed and dressed some of them. Some months later when I was having a beer at the Victoria Hotel, run by Marge and Harry McGregor, he told me that was the first lot of sheep which had ever been driven through the town that he could remember and that it would certainly be the last. He said that the council had been inundated with complaints.

I hear a lot of criticism about the live sheep industry. Some people say that they should be slaughtered here and transported frozen. That would not work because the religion in some Arab countries demands that the blood first flowing at slaughter must be done by the high priest. Another factor is that refrigeration is very rare in most parts of their country districts, and while the sheep are alive they can be transported out to remote inland villages.

My friend Bob Graham understands the difficulties because he has handled sheep for export for many years and is also a shearer. At aged

seventy he still goes North with the shearing teams and can still shear a good average tally for the day.

Bob is an old Aquinas boy and I first met him in Three Springs with Arnie Sagers not long after the war.