

Lach Lumsden

Rosemary Phillis

I was originally from Strathfield and was looking for a place to establish a pharmacy. Setting up in Schofields was as a result of a co-incidence. My sister used to go around to schools with a Doctor checking on the health of the children. They were visiting Schofields' school, when the Doctor recalled seeing an advertisement in the Australian Medical Journal looking for an applicant for a pharmacist in Schofields.

The ad had been placed by Mrs Williams, who along with her husband had built a number of shops on the corner of Railway Terrace and Station Street. We went up to have a look at the shop. John and Lola Fulton who had just started a haberdashery shop on the corner made us feel so welcome and in 1960 we decided to move into the shop next door where Dr Lalji is now.

At the time many of the locals were emigrants from places such as Poland, Germany, Italy, Malta. I remember a Dutch-Indonesian family named van Gorp used to bring us an Indonesian style meal at Christmas.

The only other pharmacy in the district was Williams the Chemist at Riverstone. The population was not quite big enough to sustain two pharmacies, so we had to come up with ways to get business, such as introducing home delivery. We got to know a lot of people.

About three years later, when Lola Fulton closed her business, we moved into the shop on the corner.

We purchased a block of land next to where Jack Mills had the butchers shop, and I had a single storey building constructed in 1968. I later added a second storey and Geoff Pfister was the first tenant with his hair dressing salon.

I always tried to use local tradesmen and they never let me down. People such as the Wattons were good old fashioned tradesmen. I had Alan Scott put all the fittings on the wall and the flooring in for £100 all told.

The local kids were good kids. Geoff Pfister and a few of the others wanted to learn judo. I was still living at Strathfield and driving back and forward each day. The kids used to come with me in the car to judo, then they'd catch the train back home again.

We ended up playing cricket together for Schofields. We made Schofields one of the biggest clubs in the Parramatta district. At one stage we had six senior teams and ten junior teams.

I recall playing with Dinky Knight. He had a hand that had been disfigured, but even with the disfigured hand he was the best spin bowler that I ever kept wicket to.

Nicknames were very big in Schofields and Riverstone. I remember when "Bozo" Lane got his nickname. He was fielding in the outfield and Bill Isberg called out to him " stop going about like Bozo the Clown" and the name "Bozo" stuck.

Mr de Chellis built the liquor shop in Railway Terrace with the beautiful house behind. He used to go back to Italy to get liquors to blend into his own special brand.

Mr Alf Parkhill lived in a house next door, which has been pulled down.

There were quite a number of people in the Schofields area who lived to their 80s and 90s, including Mrs Seville, Miss Rothwell and the Barclays.

Some of the others I recall were Pete (Pepino) who lived over at Cow Flat and was a good boxer. He was boxing around the time of Rocky Gattelari, but he didn't have the killer instinct to go on with it.

Harry Pizarro had a grocery shop up near St Albans Road. After the shop was burnt out in a fire he moved to Bondi.

In 1981 I bought into another pharmacy in Quakers Hill. My nephew Sean Kelly came into partnership with me and he moved to the Quakers Hill pharmacy. In 1985 we sold Schofields to Harry Beck, a pharmacist from Hornsby, and we bought into a newsagency at Quakers Hill as well as operating the pharmacy.

I was in Schofields for twenty five years before I left and I regretted leaving ever since. It was a lovely place, like a village and I made many life long friends there.

In 1989 Mrs Callanan offered me the chemist shop in Riverstone and I went to Riverstone while Sean stayed at Quakers Hill. We sold Quakers Hill in 1997 and Riverstone in 1998 and I moved into retirement.

I saw many changes in the pharmacy business throughout my career. When I started in 1954 we were making up prescriptions from the chemical ingredients. This was known as compounding and I was fortunate to have had the training in the old style. These days some chemists are coming back to it to allow them to vary the strength of particular ingredients. There was not much in tablet form at that time.

When the National Health Scheme was introduced around 1956 there were not many items that were included on the list, only life saving ones.

We were the first major profession to take on using computers. Many of the doctors are just changing over now, which makes reading prescriptions much easier. (The impact of women doctors also meant, as they were neater writers, their scripts were easier to read.)

Our system here in Australia is by far the best system, as, if you have nothing, the system will still back you up. In America, the cost of drugs is prohibitive.

These days I am retired but busy, as I still take the opportunity to be involved in the pharmacy business. My life has been a very enjoyable journey.

Information from a phone conversation with Rosemary Phillis February 2007.