

William George Manley (1938 – 2011)

George Manley as he was universally known, or Bill as he was known as in his early years with Lyons Rugby Football Club was larger-than-life in both personality and stature which fitted him perfectly to be a prop forward on the rugby field. He always gave one hundred percent to what ever he was involved in, be it work, pleasure or family. This normally meant he was running at two or three hundred percent.

To show his sense of humour and his joie de vivre, reproduced below is an interview he conducted with himself as editor of THE CENTAURION, the monthly newsletter of Centaurs Rugby Football Club, which Lyons R.F.C. had become when the company withdrew support for sport, and sold The Lyons Club ground at Sudbury Hill. It was in the April 1973 edition at the culmination of the Golden Jubilee season of the club. As editor, writing under the pseudonym, Jube Lee, he interviewed George Manley as a Vice-President of the club or, President of Vice, as he liked to call himself. For the Jubilee season he also produced a magnificent 52-page booklet of the club's first fifty years. The pieces italicised in square brackets, [...], are added by way of explanation.

"Jube [*George*] was born in a Royal Borough – in fact THE Royal Borough – of Kensington (Northern Division), in the street of the thousand armholes next door to a singing twit. Another coincidence is that also like the Rampant Russian [*Nigel Morgan, one of three Morgans - Bruce, Nigel and Tony, who were LEO engineers and played in George's nascent Extra B XV*], Jube was born under the sign of Pisces not far from the North Pole (a well known Royal Borough boozier). Being the son of a master chippy (his father was a fishmonger), Jube was prominently displayed in his fancy pram bearing the proud motto '7 Stone Cod – property of Billingsgate'. Surviving the blitz in London (the rest of the family evacuated themselves to the country), Jube was universally loved for his kindness, lovely nature – and the fact that he got free chips for his mates.

"Jube's first introduction to the halls of learning was a half bombed out school a half bombed teacher. Being a bright little bleeder, he won a place at Christ's College Hospital but neither his old man nor the Almighty thought he was in need of first aid and so he went to a public school at the expensive end of Hammersmith [*Latymer Upper*] not to be confused with the Educational Rowton House opposite the Red Cow.

"It was at school that Jube played rugby – at the request of the football club. He concentrated on goal kicking, as one pitch's dead ball line was only a few yards from a girls' school playground – and a good hefty belt gave him a good reason to play with the girls (or vice versa). Playing rugby (throwing his weight around) and athletics (throwing somebody else's weight around) were his main activities (as well as riot inciting) and by mutual agreement he left school for the big bad world.

"Continuing his (sic) sciving [*deleted*] studying on a day release basis, Jube won himself an HNC and many deferments from the mob. One of his deepest regrets is that due to his educational failures, he was unable to accept the Queen's shilling and fight for the good Queen, country and St. George (at 28 bob a week). So he went to work for a computer company and proved conclusively that the computer's main job in life was to play carols at Christmas.

"For services for nothing in particular, he was banished to Scotland [*he joined Honeywell Computers*] and then escaped to Germany for a 2½ year sentence before returning to England, becoming one of the Maidenhead, Berks., and living in a padded house with his long suffering wife Eve and son Bruce.

"He first met his wife years and years ago at a dance and always being a mug for a gamble and a well filled skirt – he bought five tickets for two bob which has cost him thousands of pounds and cost his prize her youth although she still has a fine sense of humour (and how she needs it!)."

The computer company he joined was LEO Computers Ltd., the subsidiary established by Lyons to manufacture computers for customers because the electrical industry in Great Britain didn't believe computers had a future. George was the first LEO apprentice, continuing his day release for his HND he was involved in the commissioning of LEO II/1 at Olaf Street and Elms House. He became Engineer-in-Charge (EIC) of both LEO 1 and LEO II/1, probably the youngest EIC in the whole history of LEO.

In 1958 he then went to Minerva Road to commission II/5, the bureau machine for the company's new headquarters at Hartree House and the first LEO to feature tape decks. Frank Walker, who became his lifelong friend and tragically pre-deceased George by a few days, took over II/1 and Charlie Warwick took over LEO 1. He became EIC at Hartree House and returned to Minerva Road in 1961 with Frank to commission the magnetic tape system for LEO III/1.

He was designated to commission III/2. This was a collaboration between LEO Computers and Rand Mines in Johannesburg, where he was going to become resident EIC for three years. However Peter Mann, the Commissioning Manager, left to go to Honeywell Computers and George took over the department. In the event Tony Morgan commissioned and installed III/2 and Lou Weatherill was employed to be the resident engineer.

In 1964 George and Frank were head-hunted (if the expression existed at that time) by Honeywell and Tony took over at Minerva Road. George became Production Director at the new Honeywell factory in Newhouse, Scotland. (I have a photo from Honeywell Times that a friend of mine who worked for Honeywell Controls gave me of George with Ted Heath at the factory. It is entitled 'Opposition Leader at Newhouse'. I added an 's' after 'Opposition' and had it on the notice board in my office at Minerva Road until I moved on at the end of the main LEO production run in 1968).

From Scotland George went to Germany for 2½ years. When Minerva Road finally closed in 1970 there was a party on a Friday evening and George was supposed to be there. When he didn't show, on the following Monday morning, I got the phone number of Honeywell House on the Great West Road and asked for George. I told his secretary to tell him Tony Morgan was on the line. She put me through and virtually his first question was 'I can't find the Lyons rugby results in the Telegraph'. I explained we were now Centaurs and played less than a mile from where he was sitting. He was back with the rugby club the next Saturday and involved himself with starting the newsletter and doing annual long weekend tours in the UK and to the continent, invariably losing his voice for a week afterwards due to drinking, smoking and singing.

In 1974 he returned to ICL, as it now was. He admitted to me in later years that his and Frank's return to ICL was in part due to him being seated (deliberately) at a Twickenham rugby international next to David Caminer. Doug Comish has told me that he got involved. With ICL he went to West Gorton/Kidsgrove in charge of 2900 production and in 1978 was involved in establishing the new automated warehouse in Stevenage where sales orders were processed. The final years of his career are unknown. Frank Walker would have been a source.

I have lost a true friend and colleague.

Eve predeceased him by eight years and he is survived by their son, Bruce.