

The DUCK SHOOTER

(the man who ducked the war)

by

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My father is a Goulburn farmer. He was a War Service farmer after world war one near Bookabie, a service centre west of Goulburn. He bought another big rough place next door and had this going along well on bank financed clearing loans when the depression rolled along and put a big stopper in the works. However we didn't starve. Mum is Swiss, an Agricultural scientist that he met when she was lecturing at Roseworthy. I was born in the good years of the very early 20's and born in Geneva no less. My mother was visiting her banking family and I lobbed along far too early. Thus I achieved without any effort on my part dual citizenship. My mother is as smart as a whip and I actually hold two passports, one Australian and one Swiss.

My two elder brothers are early on the farm, they have no plans to do anything else, I go on to Melbourne University to read economics and politics and for pocket money I work for the Hansard Dept. of the Victorian Parliament, I develop a slashing shorthand, this is before Handsard typewriting came in.

I look around our family and district on the effects of the last war. Dad, in the 11th Light Horse and prominent at Beersheba drank bad water at el Arish, it's affected him all his life, kidney glitches. Uncle Aub's minus fingers on his hand, mortar bomb casualty in France, Uncle Dan 11th Light Horse Egypt and Palestine, possibly Gallipoli, he never says, can't walk properly, gun shot wounds to his leg. There's 49 names on the war memorial at Bookabie, mostly single blokes, that's over 30 local girls that won't find husbands at least not locally, there's farms that should be farmed by sons on the 49, sold now, no one to carry on, all the artefacts and effects of war.

I go to Zurich in late 1938 and stay with my mother's family in Uncle Hans and my grandmother's apartment. All tickety boo, restrained rich and plenty of house servants. Hans is the older of the Banking pair, Pieter is a brisk banker. They are prescient about the looming war. "We have no worries here", Pieter says, "we have an accommodation with the Nazis, we won't be touched."

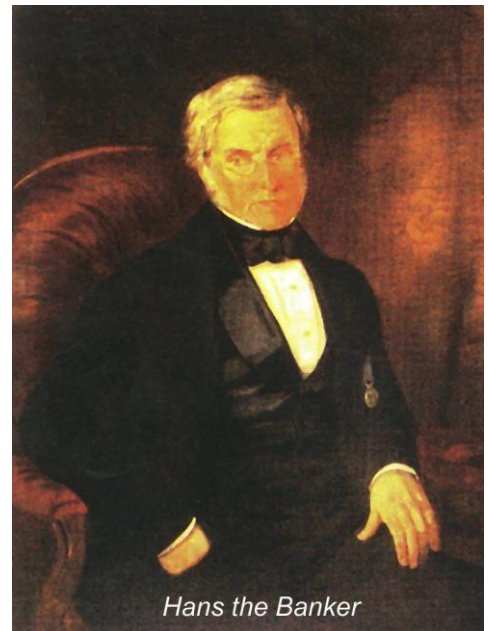
"How so?" I ask, "How can you trust that nest of misfits and psychopaths.

"Easy," they say, "it's essentially a Gangster Government whose actions make Al Capone look relatively benevolent. They need private safe deposit and banking facilities and where better than Switzerland? But don't take our word Simon. There's no war yet. Old Adolf hasn't got his synthetic fuel production near what he must have for a mechanised army. Go off to Germany and look for yourself."

So I do.

The Nazi Rally I get to isn't Nuremburg but it's a big bugger despite that. It's at the Sportz Pallast, the old Olympic Stadium left over from the '36 Olympics.

Thy cavil at letting me in, "your only a Swiss" they say, I stick out my arm and say "Heil Hitler" like a clockwork mouse, they laugh and say "go in". A photographer picks up



this picture; it is later in the Sydney Morning Herald. Jumping Jesus, what a show, there's about a million uniformed Nazis there, the whole circus is present, Goering. Ribbontrop, Keitel, Rosenberg, Doenitz, Hess, Raeder, Baldur Von Schirach, Sauckel, Jodl, the evil blond bloke they sten gunned in Czechoslovakia and whose name I can't remember and in the background Spiedel.

Leni Reisenhal is also there filming Hitler as he speaks, this genius cine camera operator of all time is filming from a camera gurney thing fitted on a tiny railway track. She always said that you could have fired a gun when Hitler was intent on a major speech and he wouldn't have noticed. I have omitted the mad genius Goebells and in thinking back where was Himmler? I couldn't have been more impressed or more frightened at this powerful but bewildering outburst of what Churchill called German Volcanic energy. I bummed around Germany for nearly three weeks after this, nobody bothered me much although I was searched for a camera several times.

The whole country is an armed camp, a very armed camp and despite my uncle's convictions that the lack of synthetic fuel stocks would keep Hitler's armies quiescent for another year my impression was that the whole shooting match is ready to roll. One thing did catch my eye that beautiful summer was the huge number of glider pilots training wherever there was a deal of flat land.

I venture after returning from Germany that I should go home, war is inevitable. My uncle's say "you don't know the half of it. Have you any idea of the present strength of the Japs and how many floating air fields (carriers) are being built in Nagasaki?" I haven't, I don't take the Japs too seriously.

"If you go home the first thing your stupid Government will do when the balloon goes up is to follow the old Poms into Armageddon. You, Simon, are prime cannon fodder. Hang in here for a while; we can always get you home through the Argentine. The Zingli Bank has an operation in Buenos Aires.

While I'm pondering, Hitler scales up his activities and Sept 1 sees the Juggernaut rolling. It's very impressive so I hang on in Zurich and do confidential secretary work for my uncles and customer relations work where directed again by my Uncles.

The Nazis are gathering up the riches of Europe in a very big way and the oddest people come to our discreet door (the bank main door is very solid cedar, said to have come from the famous Cedars of Lebanon the same cedar that Solomon built his temple of wisdom from.) The name plate, which says the Bank's name is about the size of a box of matches but that doesn't stop hordes of people finding us in the quiet city side street the bank stands in.

All sorts of Krauts come in our door carrying this and that. My uncles suss them out and allocate duties. I score the unholy triumvirate of Colonel Klienderhurts, Sargent Staeffel and Erich Von Honzen. The first two are S.S. and thugs of the first water. The



The famous painting by Corot, called "Morning" or "The Dance of the Nymphs"

latter is an intellectual and whimsical psychopath. The Colonel and sergeant bring in hard currency, swags of jewellery, much of very high quality and heaps of dental gold from the concentration camps, blood curdling stuff. Von Honzen is pure Gestapo and he is an art collector, he collects mainly Corot's for Himmler. As he collects them he stashes them with us. It's a territorial thing. Goering is looting the galleries on a wholesale basis, Himmler is much more selective, he just wants Corot's and more Corot's and he wants

them where Goering can't get them. Whether both are aware of each others activities I never really find out.

There's a lot of Corot's around and they're top stuff. Ol Corot was up there with Turner and Constable, Claude etc, one of the best landscape painters ever. There's heaps of them around, particularly in France and Holland, many Jewish owned. Von Honzen uses the full weight and power of the Gestapo to hunt these out, often eliminating almost entire Jewish families to find out what he wants to know. The Swiss don't want to offend Hitler, not at all, but they expect the Huns to be discreet when visiting their country. Thus they unload their treasures from Wermacht trucks at the border crossing and bring them to us via taxi. They come in mufti wearing very high quality but creased suits, no doubt kept for this purpose. They are uniform freaks as I easily see when I visit them on business within Germany.

The British Secret Service tap me to spy for them on German Trips. However I tell them to see me after the war when I'll give them chapter and verse. I do however suss out their synthetic oil refineries as when I can and pass that on. It's totally intrinsic to what the Allies are trying to do. Personal details on the quirks of the lives of the Nazi hierarchy, while fascinating, might get loosely talked and traced back to the Zingli Bank with disastrous results. As the 30 year rules later proves the fact that I was asked and refused was black marked against me by the Australian Security Service. This, together with the Heil Hitler which I gave to get into the Sportz Pallast Nazi rally and which showed up on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald later, prevents me getting a gong in the Australian Orders. Bureaucratic memories are elephantine

The Swiss expected the Krauts using our banking facilities to come in and out with minimum visibility, thus we dined them at the bank in a private dining room with a very good restaurant handling the catering and we also provided them with privacy and girls for afterwards. One of the bank secretaries Lisa Voegel handled the recruitment of the girls; Lisa and I are tight and spend a lot of nights together. She has a bawdy streak and tells me about what the girls report the Krauts get up to. "My God", they say, "if the money wasn't over the top." I generally join the trio for lunch and pour the booze with a heavy hand. They're often Brahms and List before the girls arrive and do they brag of their seedy work and of what they are doing in the concentration camps. They let slip one pearl that I was very tempted to pass on to the British Embassy but don't in the finish. I often regret this as it allowed a real baddy to get out of the war early.

The war ends, our Kraut friends still come through in a trickle, they're taking money away now but only in manageable handfuls. Most we never see again, other people have bagged them up or they've been on the submarine run to the Argentine. The Branch in Buenos Aires gets many of the banks former Zurich Customers coming in. There's no glitches from the bank, if they're the bona fide old customers they have access.

I get back to Oz early on one of K.L.M. flying boats. What a way to travel, you land before dark and overnight at top hotels. I had quite a lump in my throat when we set down at Rose Bay. I train to Goulburn, things are very different, I lose one brother in Syria, the other luckily is man powered to grow wheat for the war effort. Dad has moved closer to town and runs his late father in law's property 'Shallowford'. Rich, heavy country, good infrastructure. The old place Quamby has grown a lot of wheat over the war years. I gather in the situation and we get to work using a chemical of simple nature which I picked up in Switzerland from the foresters there. Its diesel based and we power it from a drive belt on our oldish tractor and spray for days on the regrowth from the thirties chopping down. Its not dangerous stuff but we wear protective gear to keep it off the skin. We then spend weeks spray seeding oats through this tiger country and follow up with one of the very first bladed tractors in the district. I have a large lump of cash in my pocket and buy a caterpillar 22 to which we fit a winch lowered blade. It's primitive but we're pushing up timber that has been rotting on the ground since 1929. We put months into this, working

shift and shift about while Dad jollies the sheep along leaving us free. My brother has married since I went away. She hates the isolation of living at Quamby and truth to tell the whole district is lacking in creature comforts after the austerity of war.

I diffidently suggest that Dad move into his late mother in laws house in Goulburn and let Les move into Shallowford. It doesn't quite strike the right note. Les talks of walking off and getting a job in town. He's had a very hardworking war. Everything has been a slog. I put forward my Uncles views that post war farming will be very profitable; it sure as hell isn't yet its still subsistence work. He listens to me but wants out, or his wife does, so we juggle things around and I finish up with Quamby and he goes off. I suggest to Dad that when the scales drop from his eyes and Les dumps his nagging wife overboard he will be back and suggest Dad, or Mum rather as she's the title holder with a will that gives Les the chance to return to farming on Shallowford in years to come. They accept my view. I like Shallowford but it's a small though rich property and I think the broadacre farms will be very successful in the longer run, especially when the German trace elements become available here.

I rather prefer the isolation of Quamby, the district know's I was away for the war and living well, also my unfortunate newspaper photo of the Sportz Pallast Nazi rally gets reprinted from time to time. I may not be persona non grata in the district but I'm treated with reserve too. In tackling vigorously the work started on Quamby by my father pre depression. I'm vindicating myself in the district as much as anything.

My Uncles write me from Zurich, they want me to take over the bank in the longer term. I write them the same sort of letter I wrote dad when I was tied up in Europe for the duration. I will be back but it will be later rather than sooner due to the work in hand on Quamby.

I re-think the matter and decide to go back to talk to the Uncles. I don't need to take much; most of my clothes are still hanging in the Zurich apartment. Mum travels back with me for a break. She hasn't seen her mother since before the war. We have a great family time and also I have serious discussion re heading up the Bank.

The vaults are loaded particularly with Nazi loot. There has been a huge transfer of the wealth of occupied Europe to Switzerland and we are holding over our weight of this. The majority of the money will never be redeemed to the people who left it with us but a deal of it will, especially through our office in Argentina which now has an inordinate number of Nazis resident including many of the real, real nasties. My Uncles feel that they will never be called on for withdrawals for the bulk of the dough but having hankered the Nazis at the expense of the Jews I feel that in the fullness of time the Swiss Banks will have to cough up. Fast forwarding through time proves me right, but the Zingli Bank payout runs out then at about 3% of the take. It's one of the biggest scams in history. We talk the relevant matters through and I promise to be back in 8 months ready to get into banking harness.

Brother Les comes back. Some truckie runs off with his wife, he should be so lucky. "But you've got to have a wife, Simon" he says. My personal view is that most husbands finish up doing whatever comes into the squirrely little heads of their wives. "Rubbish, Les" I say, you must have sex, yes, but wives no." Les scrubs up well when he wants to, the times have made us very prosperous and he soon gets amongst the women and has fun.

We put a steady share cropper onto Quamby, he does all the tractor work, there's 10,000 acres now in very tidy order and we're working on the other 5,000. We build a decent house for the sharecropper and I run water to where I'm going to build a really good Georgian House a bit later and plant trees and windbreaks. All Les has to do is run the sheep, there's a fortune in wool and he's pretty full time looking after it. I'm off to Switzerland soon and I may be gone some time. I settle the house details, it is built over

the next winter, finishes up with impressive stone gates and we change the name to Quamby Estate. All fair enough.

Back at Quamby In late summer I now start burning off Quamby in sections. The oat crop carries the fire and the regrowth is now as dead as a door nail and the results clearing up wise are as good as gold. I now put on a man full time to push up whatever's left into long heaps and we fire these as they build. We fire up late afternoon and the sea breeze pushes the flames along the lines.

By the time the first rains come along a lot of the land has been dry plowed, the dust rising from the old Sunderseeders we are using look like something out of the Wizard of Oz. The ground is well cleaned up but won't be fun to harvest. We leave all the ring barked timber standing and later get a contractor using a huge Allis Chalmers bulldozer to bump out the stumps on chopped down ground. The Taming of the Shrew has nothing on the taming of the land on Quamby.

I return to Zurich after the wheat crop is off and get back to banking. There's a million deals a month being offered around Zurich to finance this or finance that in capital hungry rebuilding Europe. I pass on them all. The bank is seriously rich and it needs troublesome venture capital deals like a dog needs fleas. I take on only gilt edged, Municipal raisings and so on. I become the most conservative of conservative bankers. My Uncles are reaching the sere and yellow stage and totally approve.

I get back to have a quick look at progress at Quamby every 18 months or so. My 1965 visit proves to be very different I'm all booked and packed to return to Zurich but have delayed few days to go the opening of the duck shooting season on the lake a bit north west of Quamby. In these pre conservation days this was a big sporting and social occasion and shooters come from all over New South Wales and Northern Victorian to shoot on our lake, big sprawling lots of dead and green timber and so on.

If you'll pardon the pun the season opens with a bang, I'm shooting with a beautiful short barrel Nikko shotgun and downing teal, black duck and blue wing shovellers and pass on mountain ducks. Leaning against the tree my gear is strewn around, is a 3 shot Mossberg shotgun with an exterior choke device to extend the range of the gun. I'm used to using trap type guns, beautifully machined Japanese Nikko's and American Browning's. But I've been impressed with a technical advance made by the Mossberg Co. Their guns look like something made in a Lada factory and the tolerance in their machining can only be described as very sloppy. I used to look at the 12 gauge 3 shot bolt action shot guns with horror until I realised that the choke device on the outside of the single barrel when screwed down tight gave these guns extraordinary carry for a shot gun. Shot guns usually only have about a 40 yard carry, twice the length of a cricket pitch say. The Mossberg's go a helluva lot further. I've been shooting in the early stages with no 8 shot in a Nikko gun and now as the birds are flying higher I come in from the swamp to try out my Mossberg with heavy load no 4 shot. You can get the high flying ones if you're on the bird. I still have my Nikko gun in my hand when my Labrador retriever Hoover pricks his ears. Three men, two very large, one tall and are wading strongly along in the water. I recognise with a sinking feeling all three instantly and they me.

"Salud, Jew Boy," says the colonel.

"And Guten Tag to all you Krauts" I say. "What are you doing here?"

"Well, Jew Boy, we are Hahndorf fruit farmers now, you can't touch us legally, but neither can you leave here alive."

These beggars are smart, they're out of shotgun range and they know it. They stand looking at me near a big dead tree and I can see the sergeant fumbling in his waders for the inevitable Luger. I throw my shotgun out towards them. "Good boy," the colonel says and they start walking up the lake bank towards me. "Now, dear boy," the colonel says, "your Jewish day has come."

“Oh, I don’t know colonel,” I say, “there’s that famous old war time saying: We also serve who only stand and wait.”

They’re now quite close, the range has diminished in my favour, the waiting game is over, the sergeant is now clipping the steel stock to his Luger. My left hand is screened by the dead tree (I’m left handed). I reach and grasp the cocked and loaded Mossberg and grin at them. I shoot the sergeant in the face; I note where his Luger falls. “Do look at me colonel” I say and shoot him full face, the Art dealer has his gun at the Port, I debate with myself for a short second and then say “For the Corot’s Erich and give him the third shell, same target.

Taking a small towel I wipe the three spent shells from the Mossberg and open and insert one in each of the late villains’ shotguns. Forensics are almost impossible on shotties, finger prints apart.

I walk over and souvenir the Luger, a Great War model, I have it still, then toss my shooting gear together and fade in the general direction of my Tojo which is well hidden by trees fringing the swamp. I’ve seen no other shooter since I arrived, other than the late Trio. In an erratic flight of fancy I rather think I can hear massed mobs of Jews, standing on cloud edges calling out in unison Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi, Co-Oee, Co-Oee.



Some of Hitler's Sportz Pallast audience after the music stopped. Nuremberg trials 1946.