

Meet Alf Shields — a man of many parts

Frank Clune, noted Australian author and traveller, in his book "Try Anything Once", listed an amazing variety of vocations that had occupied his time and energy.

Right here on the Gold Coast is an interesting personality who has not tried everything once, but in considerably less than his three score and ten, he has built twelve homes and engaged in 25 differing business ventures.

(By Reviewer)

At 17 years he owned his own motor bike and competed at Penrith, the Showgrounds Speedway Royal, and the concrete "saucer" at Maroubra, a

where he opened his first garage—today it would be called a service station.

In turn followed service stations at Bellingen,

segment of his career at a property some 300 miles south-west of Darwin. His time on the station enabled his family to holiday with him, and his rifle returned the revenue from some hundreds of kangaroo skins.

Through it all his passion for racing cars had not diminished, and in a station workshop Alf Shields built his first midget car, No. 12.

Thus was set the pattern of following the sun by speedway racing in Adelaide during the summer; then north to the Territory and the cattle station to dodge Adelaide's winter. One trip via the Rocket Range at Woomera and the opal fields at Cooper Pedy. Another trip via Larrimah where he halted to build a steel cattle yard for the Department of Works.

Steel for the cattle yard comprised the old rails of the Darwin to Larrimah railway.

And the rails had to be prised from the steel sleepers.

Still visible on each section of rail is a trade mark, once hated, now tolerated; it reads "Krupp 1884."

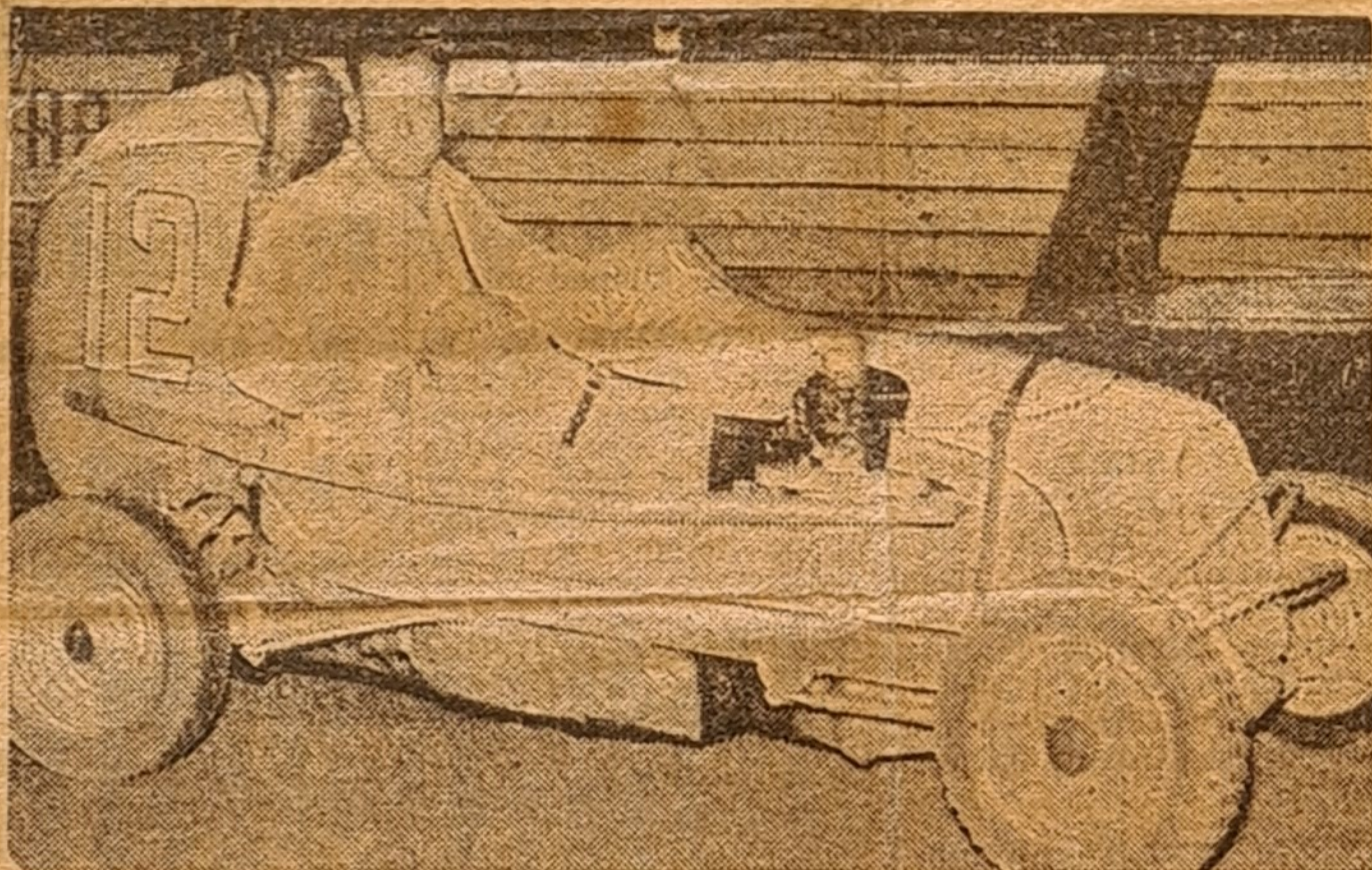
Those steel rails, rolled in the controversial Krupp mills, were laid by Chinese labourers indentured to work in the desert — "not fit for a white man"—that was at that time Northern Australia. And those same rails were torn up by modern wrecking equipment, and replaced with United States steel by United States Army personnel when Australia's North was threatened.

Back to Adelaide where speedways were slumping as a form of public entertainment, and Rowley Park and Kilburn (with a succession of 14 different promoters) were compelling for the declining trade.

Walked In

Alf Shields walked in where "angels" had decided to tread no longer and he acquired BOTH Rowley Park and Kilburn speedways.

Next week's story will tell how Alf Shields became Adelaide's only and full-time speedway operator; built and raced his own midget cars and hot rods; imported overseas champion drivers; came, saw, and was conquered by the Gold Coast; pioneered the mini tours; and finally founded "Fun For All" at Burleigh Heads.



HE IS ALFRED CHARLES SHIELDS, WHO HAS JUST BUILT, WITH SOME OUTSIDE AID, A NEW HOME AT BURLEIGH HEADS — OVERLOOKING JOHN KELLY'S DRIVE-IN THEATRE — AND WHO CONDUCTS THE "FUN FOR ALL" PLEASURE PARLOUR IN THE SHOPPING CENTRE AT BURLEIGH HEADS.

In common with John Kelly's canned films, Alf Shields' mechanical fun provokers cannot contract the ills of human nature that beset live performers. Neither can they display temperament, answer back, or walk out.

"The Good Oil"

All they require in return for faithful service is the good oil and skilled mechanical know-how; something their owner, Alf Shields, has aplenty.

Alf Shields was born at Surrey Hills, Sydney. Early he revealed an intense interest in motor mechanics, speedcars and track racing.

At 15 years he rode as a sidecar competitor at the old Victoria Park track, now the British Motor Corporation's gigantic assembly plant.

Sydney harbourside suburb.

As a security measure, during the war, the concrete saucer was dynamited in spots to ensure that "the invaders" could not use it as gun emplacements. Likewise, the tennis court of a prominent citizen, whose home overlooked Sydney harbour, and whose tennis court was rumoured to be concrete, equal to a howitzer emplacement.

Personality of the week

Follow The Sun

Concluding his trade apprenticeship, Alf Shields started his "try anything once," "follow the sun" career that transported him to a blossoming Canberra, then Portland, near Lithgow, and so to Woodstock, in the Riverina,

Sydney and Stockingbongal where he stayed put long enough to share the operation of a picture show—in addition to running his garage. Mrs. Shields attended the box office, Alf projected the films, and his partner owned the power plant—and the hall.

When the Japs bombed Darwin, Alf Shields decided to be in it, sold out his interests, placed his four daughters at school, and went to Melbourne to enlist.

Manpower promptly placed Alf Shields' mechanical know-how at the Essendon airport where he was engaged on aircraft engine installation and testing.

As sidelines to his war job, Alf Shields conducted a newsagency, first at Glenferrie, later at St. Kilda; and much nearer to his base at the airport, a library at Coburg.

Released by Manpower in 1945, Alf flew to Adelaide, where he acquired a furniture business at Hindmarsh; disposed of the newsagency at St. Kilda; retained the library; gathered his family unto him in South Australia; and spent four weeks lazing on the beach.

Dreaming on the seashore he missed the first Army disposals sale at Darwin, but he caught the next, and the next. Also he caught the fever of chasing the sun, and to this day since has not seen a winter come and go.

Built Up

From an initial start with one truck and a miscellaneous collection of "junk" from his first disposals sale, Alf Shields built his new found business to a fleet of vehicles and tons of war surplus materials ranging from field glasses to fridges, and bullybeef to bulldozers.

Meantime he met a mate in the Territory, a fellow passenger on the "Ghan", the train, made famous in many writings, that shuttled between Darwin and Larrimah.

With his new companion, Alf Shields commenced the cattle station

THE ALF. SHIELDS' SAGA...**From 'hot rods'
to sun and sand**

Today we complete the story of a man of varied interests — Burleigh Heads amusement parlour owner, Mr. Alf Shields.

Last week we traced the career of Alf. Shields from his early love of motor mechanics, through the operation of numerous service stations, war service as an aviation engineer, partnership in a picture show, cattle grazing, and construction of his own racing cars, to acquisition of TWO slumping speedways in Adelaide.

Alf. Shields had decided that where two speedways failed, one speedway with skilled showmanship, overseas champion riders and drivers, and catering to family patronage could succeed.

So he took over Rowley Park and Kilburn. Then he closed Kilburn and concentrated the combined equipment on improving Rowley Park.

In addition to splash newspaper advertising, he

conducted a campaign of ham, raced at Rowley Park, and against Alf. Shields, before Jack went overseas to become the world champion.

24 Sheeteters

Twenty-four sheeteters are the large roadside hoardings that hit the eyes when car tripping on Sunday.

This was a new departure for Speedway publicity and it paid dividends.

Alf. Shields' Rowley Park attendance jumped from 1150 per meeting to 3500; to 9000. Then he started to import overseas names, and 14,000 adults paid to see Frank Brewer.

Famous English lady driver, Fay Taylor, packed Rowley Park, and Australia's own Jack Brab-

(By Reviewer)

passed certainly to capable hands and good administration.

Follow the Sun

But Alf. did not give up his interest in the speed tracks completely. He built a special trailer to carry his midget car and barnstormed all over Australia, still chasing the sun, and competing at interstate speedways.

In his last year of speedway racing the young veteran was placed second in the First Australian Hotrod Championship, a thrilling race in which only seven cars from a field of twenty crossed the finishing line.

Thus, in 1954, he came to the Gold Coast via Toowoomba and Brisbane where he had competed with some success. Alf. repeated the trip in 1956, and on that visit he bought a home at Broadbeach.

Also he bought a mini-bus, "hung up his helmet", and commenced operations as a charter driver on local tours.

A good raconteur, Alf. Shields spiced his descriptions of local landmarks with stories of other lands, other people, and many places. And long before "I've Been Everywhere" took a young Australian vocalist to Las Vegas and neon lights, Alf. Shields was dubbed by his mini-bus passengers, and Gold Coast-ers, as the man who's been everywhere — or knows someone who has.

Woody Away

Thus Alf. Shields was wooed away from the speedways, hot-rods and midgets. And he gave up chasing the sun because the Gold Coast delivered it on his doorstep daily.

But Alf. Shields is a long way from retirement. To prove it he graded and drained the block on which his new home at Burleigh Heads now rests; and in the process he shed a neat 28 pounds.

Adelaide's one-time "King of Whizz" still employs his engineering knowledge to keep the wheels turning. Now the wheels are encased in fun-provoking slot machines, and not attached to super speed cars and hot-rods.

From riding the hot-rods on the world's speedways to riding the surfboards at Burleigh Heads beach is a long gap. But Alf. Shields made it — also he made a lot of friends.

HE DID NOT "TRY EVERYTHING ONCE", BUT ALONG THE WAY HE HAD A GO AT MANY THINGS.

Alf. Shields managed several service stations; operated a picture show; served as an aircraft engineer; sold war surplus equipment; owned a furniture store; grazed cattle; shot buffalo and kangaroos; controlled a capital city speedway; built his own speedcars and raced against champions; pioneered mini bus tours; and finally settled for a fun parlour on the Gold Coast.

Red Carpet

Highlight of the trip was an invitation to the Indianapolis speedway, the Melbourne Cup of speedcar racing. As the Indiana world-famous car racing spectacle, that has provided newsreel features — and a few tragedies — over many years, Alf. received red carpet treatment and V.I.P. courtesy.

He treasures the pass that gained him entry to the pits — something, apparently, as rare and sacred as being admitted backstage on the opening night of a new Folies show; or watching a close-up of Liz Taylor and Richard Burton in a torrid love scene on a closed "Cleopatra" set.

In England he was feted at the Exeter speedway and interviewed on the B.B.C. In Paris he was the guest of Abe Saperstein, who in addition to controlling the world-famous coloured basketball wizards, the "Harlem Globetrotters", also dabbles in other business ventures including speedways.

Ideas

After visiting Rome, New York, Las Vegas and Honolulu, Alf. Shields returned to Australia full of bright ideas — then sold his Rowley Park speedway to South Australian millionaire sportsman and art lover Kym Bonython.

Born in Adelaide, where his grandfather founded the Adelaide Advertiser newspaper, Kym Bonython left school to join the R.A.A.F., become Squadron Leader Bonython, D.F.C., A.F.C., and survive a 70 mile jungle trek after being shot down in the East Indies.

He won the Australian speedboat championship, the Australian speedcar Grand Prix and came fourth in the world championship. A connoisseur of jazz music, Kym Bonython once owned his jazz band in Adelaide and "disc jockeyed" his own A.B.C. programme.

So Alf. Shields' Rowley Park speedway