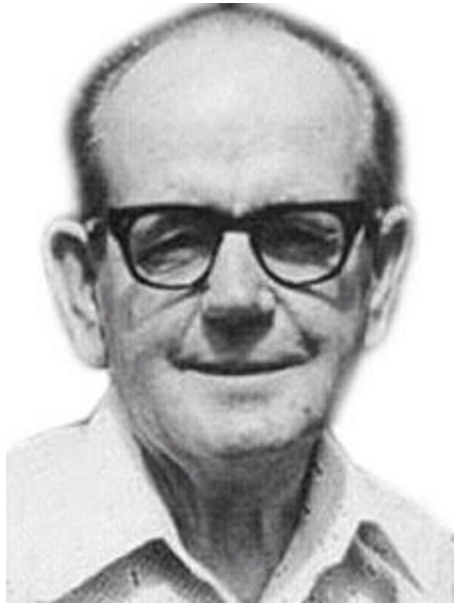


The Tom Bowen Story

a short biography by Heather Edmonds and Pam Trigg, daughters



Thomas Ambrose Bowen was born on April 18, 1916 the third child and only son of William and Norah Bowen. He had two older sisters, Norah and Beatrice and a younger sister, Agnes.

Tom left school at an early age, possibly at 15 years of age, and became a carpenter like his father. If he had ever entertained the idea of going to medical school this would never have happened as his father would never have considered any of his children getting a better education than was necessary to be employed.

Tom married Jessie McLean at the Salvation Army, Ringwood in 12 September 1941 and they proceeded to live with Tom's parents had moved to Geelong, Victoria (large provincial town). Tom and Jessie had three children, Pam, Barry and Heather.

During their married life Jessie suffered from very bad asthma, often being hospitalized in an effort to help her breathe. This was in her early forties. Tom started to somehow learn how to help her shift her congestion and along with some special medicine obtained from a chemist in the state of Queensland and a change of diet; Jessie received considerable benefit. It was most unusual in those days to change your diet for an "illness" but Tom was convinced this was the way to Jessie's recovery. After some years she no longer required the medicine but thanks to Tom's method and diet she never had to go to hospital again.

It was during the 1950's that Tom began an association with a man named Ernie Saunders, often referred to as a 'legend in the 40's and 50's as a physical manipulator'. Tom would visit him and they would share many hours together and it was through talking with Ernie that he began to learn what was later to become Tom's technique. It was not long before Tom's ideas far outweighed those of Ernie's and the visits ceased. The development stage commenced.

In the late 1950's Tom worked for the Geelong Cement Works and it was during this time that there were obvious signs of an interest in healing. What he did and how this came about is a mystery. During this time he became friends with a man, Stan Horwood, who believed Tom had a unique gift. Tom started helping people with 'bad backs' and other ailments and so his life of helping others began. Stan Horwood invited Tom to set up a practice at his home every evening after completing a days work at the Cement Works.

[Return to BAUSA website](#)

At this time, Jessie kept the family going at home with three children and the formal events of family life. She always had his meals on the table when he walked through the door of an evening. He would be at home for about an hour when he would change into good trousers and a shirt and tie and go to the Horwood's. Mrs. Horwood ran a hairdressing business at this time and so she assisted with the running of the practice.

The business grew and grew through word of mouth. There was no advertising. People would wait outside the Horwood residence for hours to see Tom. Cars would line the pavement. It became obvious that the practice could not continue this way and so it moved to 99 LaTrobe Tce., Geelong, on a full time basis. He stayed at this address for a few years and then moved to 283 LaTrobe Tce, Geelong where he moved between two rooms. At this time he used single beds with a mat at the bottom of the bed. It was many years later before he moved to electric massage tables.

At all of Tom's clinics there were collection boxes for all kinds of charities. At times there were novelty items available for sale. Anything to help those less fortunate than others.

Tom did not have appointments as such. A patient would ring his clinic and told the opening hours of the clinic were between 9am – 11am and 1pm – 4pm. On arrival at the clinic patients were given a number from 1 to 33 in order of presentation. They would wait in the waiting room until their number was called. When all patients were seen during the morning he would then go home for lunch which Jessie had prepared and had waiting for him. He would return just before 1pm and return home when all patients had been seen in the afternoon which would have been some time after 5:30pm. During the evening he would do house calls returning home at approximately 9:30pm.

Tom had a Saturday morning clinic for disabled children where they were treated free. Parents would bring their children to him from many miles away, sometimes traveling 3 – 4 hours. Results were not immediate with these children but over a number of years results were amazing.

He held a clinic every Saturday evening for those who had injured themselves playing sport during the day. This was also a free clinic and people once again, came from near and far.

If Tom had people attend his clinic who were in desperate circumstances or with disabled children needing extra care, he was a most generous person. At this stage of his career he could have made a great deal of money, but this was definitely not his priority. What Tom could do for people was his greatest reward and this continued to be his cause throughout his life. He did not always immediate have the answer to a problem that was presented to him but he would analyse the problem and have a solution in a few days.

[Return to BAUSA website](#)

Tom trained several men during his lifetime. These people were: Keith Davis, Nigel Love, Kevin Neave, Oswald Rentsch, Kevin Ryan and Romney Smeeton. These men each had their own set day at which they would attend the clinic. There were others who would attend his clinic to learn his technique but if Tom felt that they didn't 'have the touch' he would ask them to leave.

Due to circumstances beyond his control, he moved from 283 LaTrobe Tce to Villamanta Street, Geelong West. It was during the 1970's that Tom applied for registration of his business. This process took considerable time and was eventually refused. This had a devastating impact on Tom as he felt that the 'establishment' was telling him he was not worthy or appreciated. He was interviewed by a government inquiry where it was stated that he saw 13,000 patients per year. Whether he was registered or not people still came from far and wide to see him.

It was during this time at Villamanta Street, that he had his first leg removed. The reason for this is unknown. The members of the family were told it was due to poor circulation. This was a devastating time for Tom who was a very active man. A friend would drive Tom to physiotherapy a few times a week. After some months he had a prosthesis made which enabled him to have an easier life. At this time, the clinic ran on a part time basis and Tom eventually returned to work. It was not long after this that the clinic was again opened on a full time basis with Tom back at work full time. The practice continued to grow as it had always done, by word of mouth.

In the 1982, Tom had his second leg removed. Due to a serious infection he was moved to the infectious disease area of the hospital where he never recovered.

Today Tom's work has been taught world-wide and is taught at university level in Australia. Each person who has been taught Tom's technique has their own unique way of interpreting it. Each persons interpretation is different. The only original Bowen therapist was Tom Bowen himself. He continually developed and adapted his technique to whatever situation presented itself to him – perhaps sticking to the same basics but always a different interpretation. He had a favourite saying by which he lived his life: "I expect to pass through this world but once, any good thing therefore that I do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow-creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall never pass this way again."