

# *My Wrestling Journey*



**The travels of Our Man from  
Down Under**

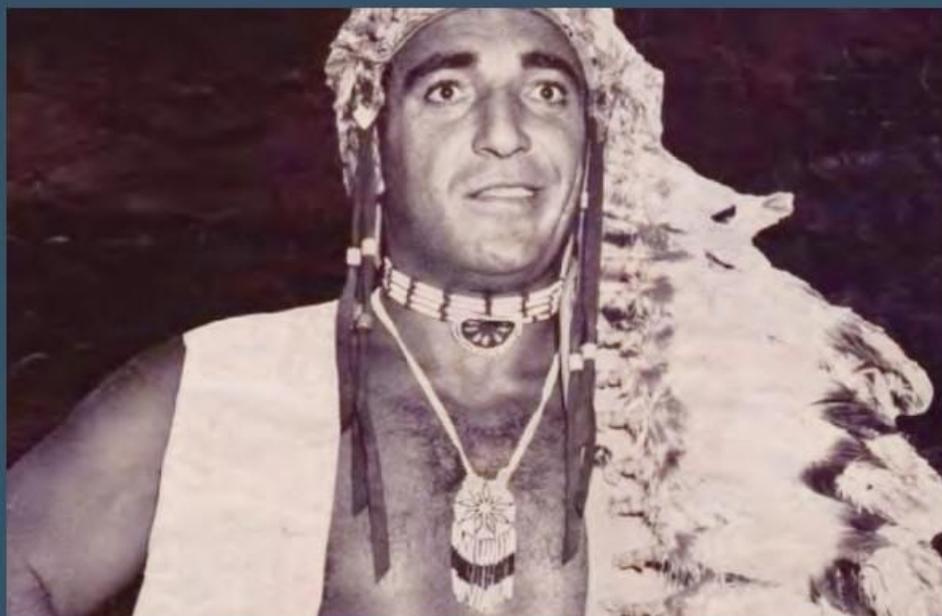
***John Shelvey***

## Part 20: The End of the Journey (For Now)

Across the road from the factory back door, was a huge cemetery and on a wet windy, dark and dismal day, it was a very bleak and somewhat scary sight. Just as bleak, was the mood inside the factory, since the acquisition by the current tyrant. Troubling me was the fact that since his arrival there had been two accidents to workers on the woodworking machines due to all and sundry of the workforce using them although not qualified to do so. A carpenter, one who perhaps was an immigrant with little knowledge of the machinery, who decided it was quicker to use a planer, instead of his hand plane, would change the cutters, sometimes mismatching the sizes of the blades and the result could be catastrophic if the machine spat out a blade at lightning speed. I had to be careful to check, before I used a machine, in case the foregoing had happened, also it was common to find the guard had been taken off a machine, just because a user had decided he could do a job, easier or quicker without it. In the first accident, a carpenter ran a bandsaw down his finger and suffered only a small cut (and a lot of ribbing from his mates), the second happened when Vic the foreman sliced his thumb badly, lengthways, with a rip saw. The guard had been taken off by a worker and as he had just one cut to make, Vic decided to 'save time' and cut his timber without first replacing the guard. He should have known better! He returned from the hospital with a massive bandage and was having to return there as an outpatient regularly, when tragedy struck.

The guy involved, a carpenter from Essex had been in Aus. for just a couple of years and had been with us for some months. I found him to be a pretty confident chap, albeit a bit cocky. When the machinist I was apprenticed to left for greener pastures it was pointed out to the 'Baker the boss', that an apprentice machinist had to have a qualified machinist supervise him. The Essex lad, spotting a chance to increase his wage and add some authority to his persona, volunteered to be that guy. As he wasn't qualified I presume he shouldn't have been given the position, however I suspect Baker the boss saw an opportunity to save himself a new employee's wage and gave his consent. The Essex lad, hadn't had the job for long, when he lopped off the tops of all four fingers of his right hand (the hand he would normally use to eat and hammer with) whilst using a router without a guard. He was rushed to hospital in an ambulance and on the same day, having made up my mind pretty quickly, I walked into Baker's office and told him I'd be leaving on Friday. He coldly told me that I couldn't, as I was an apprentice. I replied that I was a trainee apprentice and not an indentured one. The trainee worked under the same conditions as an indentured one, with just one exception, that the trainee could leave at any time, but could also be dismissed if the owner/manager had a reasonable reason for dismissal. The indentured apprentice was safe in the knowledge he could only be terminated for very good reason or reasons (and even then the union would have to give their assent). Baker didn't blink and got on with his paperwork and I worked (very carefully) until Friday afternoon when I left. Vic the foreman, who you may remember I said was a good bloke, said a few nice words to the assembled, the only ones I recall being 'John's leaving us, because he'd rather play with the poofter wrestlers, than work with you lot' (He must have thought he'd get the last word in regarding that particular pastime). A day or so after the Essex boys accident, Vic, on his return from visiting the patient, told me that Baker the Boss had viewed either the accident report or the compensation claim form and noted that Essex lad was twenty years old and not twenty one, as was on his job application he filled in and signed, on joining the firm. This meant Baker had been paying him adult wages instead of juniors' wages, so he put it to Essex lad that he withdraw any claims against him and the company and he magnanimously, would not sue him for the money he had purloined and he would give him his job back (carpenter or machinist, not clear) when he had made a recovery. What a sweetheart he was!

*"Ladies and Gentlemen, introducing, In this corner..... Here are just a few of the characters that appeared in Australia over the next years before I sailed back to the Motherland.*



### **Chief Billy White Wolf.**

The Red Indian from Baghdad. He later morphed into a Sheik

### **Chief Billy White Wolf**

The Red Indian from Lebanon

### **Pat Patterson & Harley Race.**

Two cocky young punks, good enough to be given the tag team title belts and who morphed into legitimate legends.



### **Harley Race and Larry Hennig.**

Two legitimately tough guys, who had stellar careers.



### **Pat Patterson**

Great worker. Another 'young punk' who became a star.

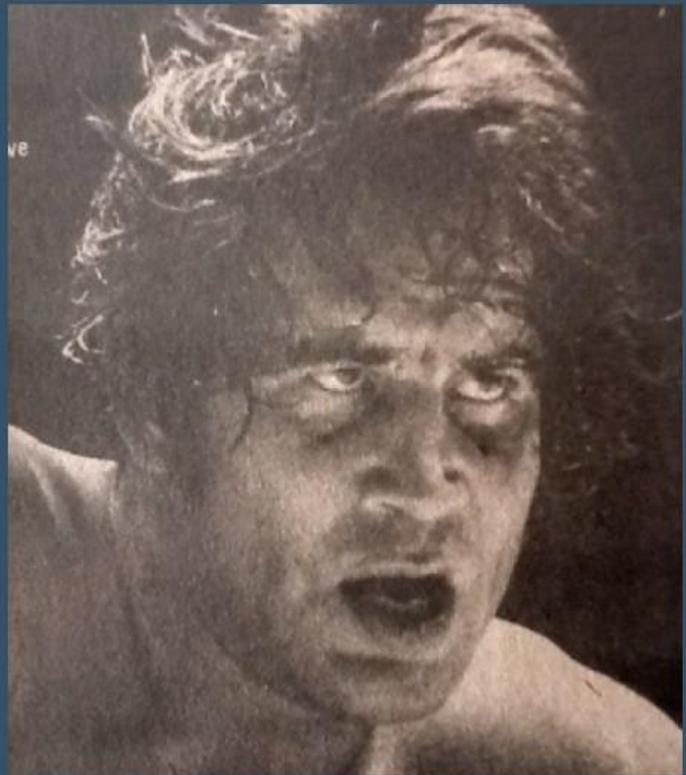


### **Pat O'Connor**

Another to hold the World Heavyweight Title when the title meant everything.

### **Pat O'Connor.**

New Zealander and one time holder of THE NWA World Title.



### **Jack Brisco**

Appeared here as the defending NWA World Heavyweight Champion.

### **Jack Brisco.**

NWA World Champion. He and Billy Robinson wrestled for real in a hotel room once.



### Bearcat Wright, Father and Son

The son held a decent version of the World Title and Dad had one hell of a boxing record, worth looking up.

### Big Bill Miller.

Very big man, very good worker, main eventer everywhere he appeared.

**Karl Gotch.** One of the greats, comparable with Billy Robinson.

**Luther Lindsay.** CLASS!

**Bearcat Wright.** Very good worker who's father boxed five world champions.

### Bobo Brazil.

He of the coco butt (what else). Main Eventer ... Main Eventer..

So the cavalcade of North American grapplers, complemented by others from overseas rolled on. Mr Barnett knew a good thing when he saw it and had no intentions of letting that good thing go.



### Bobo Brazil

Bobo across the decades. Big man, main eventer wherever he went.

*Sometime in the not to distant future, I hope to be able to share with you all, my 'journey' not only in wrestling, which took me back to Blighty (twice) and the grandeur of London's Royal Albert Hall, but also to the not so swank Butlins and Battersea Town Hall. Along the way, I'll tell of how overnight I went from recluse to suddenly living a normal teenage life and recall a few fun stories of my time in Fulham, Torquay and St. Neots.*

*In the mean time, in the Heritage 'Anything But Wrestling' section I'll tell you guys some more of the Aussie idiosyncrasies and introduce you to two co-workers, one of whom was the best liar I've ever known, the other, the incarnation of the TV. character Frank Spencer! Till then STAY SAFE and look after yourselves and loved ones in 2021.*

*Cheers, John.*