

The day the Queen came to Town.

I'm sure many of you have looked at the wonderful document 'The Queen among us' that Stewart Underwood contributed to the website detailing the Queen's visit to the Elizabeth plant in 1963. This was a visit of much excitement for Holden's Management and in particular for the American Managing Director, Dave Hegland. Just think what the folks back in the States would say when he told them he had escorted the Queen! So there was more preparation for this visit than for one by the Chairman of General Motors: rehearsals, dry-runs, what could go wrong analyses, what to do if it rained, etc and of course who would be privileged to be in the official greeting party for a formal introduction.

Now to step back for a moment, in 1956 my father, Bill Gibbs, went on the first Duke of Edinburgh's Study Conference which was a 3 month program in England looking at world issues. This program is still going and certainly when Dad went, its objective was to broaden the thinking of the participants in the way the world was unfolding and what the future might bring. As a result, Dad received a very small Duke of Edinburgh Study Conference lapel badge.

Come 1963 and Dad was 2 I.C. to the American Director of Manufacturing, Frank Callahan, pending his taking over that role and eventually, Managing Director. For this visit Dad was relegated to the back row and if you look at the picture of young Amada Packer presenting a posy to the Queen, Dad is standing there at the back on the left hand side. I would like to relate what followed moments later.

The Duke was following the Queen the regulation paces behind and as he passed my father his eagle-eye spotted the Duke of Edinburgh badge he was wearing. Breaking rank, the Duke went over to Dad and greeted him warmly, presumably not remembering him but knowing he had been on the Conference, and they started exchanging reminiscences.

Looking at this, Hegland was obviously a little embarrassed that an old buddy of the Duke had been left out of the main party and perhaps for all he knew, Royal Blood flowed through the Gibbs lineage and so after the Duke had moved on, *sotto voce*, said "What are you doing back there, Bill, you must join us here"!