

# **His work was his great hobby**

# **SIR NORMAN MYER**

# **MODEST MAN**

**THE LATE Sir Norman Myer, the biggest shopkeeper in Australia and one of the biggest in the world, was always a salesman at heart who took a personal interest in every department of his giant emporium.**

**"Of course I'm a salesman," he would say with pride. "That is my business."**

**And he made a point of being able to take over any job in the Myer Emporium.**

**A giant in Australia's business world—he was a director of more than 20 companies—he always remained a simple, even shy, man.**

**He never sought the limelight, but became so big that the limelight sought him.**

**But as a boy of 14, the same Norman Myer had just**

**arrived in Australia from Russia. He could not speak English. He was lonely, shy and bewildered.**

**That youthful shyness never left him. For a man regarded by the public as Australia's "top tycoon," he was remarkably sensitive, even artless.**

**Walking through the store that was his hobby as much as his work, he would often be stopped by some shopper in a hurry.**

**The shopper would say: "I'll have THAT, young man."**

**The "young man" would wrap the article, give the shopper a receipt, a smile, and thank her for her custom.**

**The shopper would leave Myer's, thinking that his, or her, custom meant some-**

Myer's, thinking that his, or her, custom meant something to the store.

Norman Myer would continue on his way, **CERTAIN** that it did.

That type of anecdote typified Norman Myer's attitude to the Myer Emporium — his attitude to people.

## UNCLE SIDNEY'S PUPIL

*Norman Myer was one of four children. He was born near Smolensk, in Russia. His father died when he was six months old.*

His uncle, Sidney Myer—founder of the store—brought him out to Australia. He hired a tutor to teach the boy English.

It was Sidney—still regarded in Australia's retail trade as a sales genius—and his brother, E. B. Myer, who founded the business in Bendigo, and in 1912 brought it to Melbourne.

**And it was Uncle Sidney who made young Norman "mad about merchandising."**

**While the business was developing into a great department store, young Norman was at Wesley College.**

"I learned more about boxing than books there," he often said ruefully.

In 1915, aged 17, and still at Wesley, Norman Myer showed his independence — he joined the Army against the wishes of his uncles and three sisters.

HE JOINED AS A

**HE JOINED AS A PRIVATE.**

On the way to Europe in the troopship Ulysses, he won

the ship's boxing championship.

He was commissioned on the Western Front while serving with the artillery.

**HE LEFT THE ARMY AS A CAPTAIN.**

## **He swept the floor**

When he came back from the war, Uncle Sidney made sure he was not coddled.

He went into the store and learned its ramifications from the bottom up. **HE SWEPT FLOORS, AND DROVE LIFTS.**

In 1927, this short, young man with the kind smile took over the Adelaide branch.

In 1934, his mentor, Uncle Sidney, died.

Norman returned to Melbourne as managing director and deputy chairman under E. B. Myer.

Then Norman Myer became chairman and managing director in 1938 when "E.B." died.

The death of Sidney Myer was followed by a fall in Myer shares.

**AND THE RISE OF NORMAN MYER REALLY BEGAN WITH THAT SHARE**

**GAN WITH THAT SHARE FALL.**

## **Tireless worker**

"I'm not a detail man," he often said. He proved it first when he took over the business.

So that he could concentrate on overall policy, he appointed eight more working directors and associate directors.

There are 21 now.

This decentralisation of executive work allowed Norman Myer to spend most of his time in departments outside his office on the 7th floor of the Lonsdale st. building.

Until his illness a year ago he would arrive at 9.30 a.m. He was often one of the last few to leave.

Daily he would "do the rounds," walking through the different apartments.

To his managers he would say, "What's fresh?"

"If we didn't have an idea on tap," one of the departmental managers said last night, "Sir Norman would give us one."

## **Man of vision**

## **vision**

Norman Myer had much more than the personal touch. He had real vision.

Since taking over from Sidney Myer, he boosted the store's turnover to nearly £50 million a year—15 times as much as in 1934.

He refused to be bothered by little things — he paid others to attend to them, and trusted the men and women he employed.

Always he was an "ideas" man. For instance, after World War II he realised that the influx of migrants was a chance for business and for service.

He established a new department for New Australians. One huge section of the huge shop is now a Continental food mart, probably unequalled anywhere in the world.

And here is a clue to the Norman Myer thoroughness — he engaged interpreters to help the New Australians who could not speak English.