

LEIGH CREEK – THE OLD TOWN PROJECT

Hi my name is Peter Smith and I arrived for work in Leigh Creek on the 22nd May 1969. How do I know that date? – it was exactly 1 week after my 21st birthday party. The first person that I saw and talked to on arrival was the receptionist/switchboard operator in the Admin building. She was a freckle faced, red head, and had a pretty good set of legs which she showed off with some of the shortest miniskirts imaginable and her name was Rhonda. The freckles are still there, the hair has changed colour and the legs have changed over the years. How do I know all this? That same person nearly 51 years later is the one that I see and talk to every day in the mornings when first waking up. We have 2 girls, Michelle and Melissa, -both born in the LC Hospital and long gone from home now but all 4 of us have some beautiful and lasting memories of the old town that was Leigh Creek.

We moved from the old Town to the new in Feb 1982, so I had nearly twelve and a half years in the old town. My first work day in LC was a Sat morning and I was thinking on the way to Northfield, how good is this, first day at work and on overtime!! I definitely am grateful to ETSA for the opportunities that were given to me as an employee and as a resident in the town.

I was involved in most sports at LC- football, cricket, basketball, tennis, table tennis, darts, motor bikes and even Badminton under Laurie Dorton. This did not last long as Rhonda could beat me regularly and as a result I soon lost interest in badminton! Very early I was co-erced into volunteering for the Football committee and I had only just resigned from that committee when we decided that it was time to draw stumps in LC on the last Sat in Sept 1984. How do I remember that date, I drove the removalist truck while listening to the VFL grand final when Essendon gave Collingwood a hiding, Essendon being my preferred team at the time – pre the Crows.

I mentioned ETSA as an employer, I was extremely lucky to have such a varied work role with lots of unusual duties. A quick rundown of these roles and significant memories that come to mind are:

I started work as a fitter in the Repair shop at N/Field under George Sbona with Meggsie as the leading hand. My chosen apprenticeship was as a Toolmaker and I knew next to nothing about heavy machinery. Meggsie took me under his wing and taught me lots in the 12 months that I worked with him. Some others in the gang were Gordon (Bones) Owens, John Booth and Kevin (Windy) Algate.

I then moved to the Outside Maintenance gang under Pud Holmes with the Reverend - Len Collins as the leading hand, his title being bestowed upon him by his loyal followers in the rear section of C Block Single Men's Quarters on a Sunday morning. His sermon was mostly delivered with a 5 gallon keg as a prayer table!! The Colonel – Ron Lawn was his loyal and faithful altar boy at these gatherings together with Tommy Miller, Brickie Payne, Sugar Joe and lots of other single guys as the congregation.

We had a lot of fun on Afternoon shifts in Pud's gang and got up to lots of escapades whilst at work. One of the fitters was a Train Buff and we would wait, sometimes for hours for the Ghan to pass just so that he could wave to the Drivers. It got to the stage that the Train Drivers would toot the horn when he saw the ETSA Truck parked next to the Railway line. In the summer on afternoon shift it was common to spread a lot of water around via the rechargeable fire extinguishers on the Maintenance Truck. One time I can remember vividly was coming up the Lobe C haulage ramp and a mad Dutchman – yes his name was "Dutchy," was moving the old Moore LD7 loader. As we passed him in the maintenance truck we hit him with every fire extinguisher we had. He could not do a thing except to grin and bear it. He got the last laugh though as about a week later we were doing shovel maintenance with the truck parked away from the shovel and all of us in the shovel. Dutchy dumped

a loader bucket full of coal onto the back of the truck. It took about an hour to shovel the coal off the truck tray. The Reverends tool box looked as if it was lost for awhile!

After a short stint in the Outside maintenance gang, I was seconded to work on the Page Dragline construction. John Booth and I were the first of the ETSA fitters to be seconded to this role. I subsequently had a second stint later in the dragline build. Memories of this period being that I made the pipework and fitted all the automatic grease lines, I can remember it later took in excess of 4 x 44 gallon drums of grease to charge up the system from empty. I "dressed" the bucket with all its fittings initially and also welded the nameplate to the machine housing before commissioning. This is a bone of contention with Rhonda's cousin John Davidson. Davo was the last operator of the Page before decommissioning and he ground that same nameplate off and has it still. He won't show it to me as he knows I would claim rightful ownership of the nameplate. After all I put it there!!!

I then moved to a staff position in the Mechanical Drawing office, Ray Gray initially and then Brian Pryor were the Mechanical Engineers with a heap of junior engineers over the period. Graeme Atwell, Trevor Menz, Chris Thomas, Ian Reischmiller, Roger Bills and Alan Wallace were some of the engineers that I worked with. 4 projects that I worked on during this period stand out, these being a carport that was built and erected for Peter Mussared's house in East Terrace, this was designed by Chris Thomas, drafted by myself and erected by my brand new father in law, Ron Hatch. What stands out in memory was that instead of corrugated iron as the covering a new product called KLIP LOK was used, this product is used universally now but was new at the time. The carport created some comments at the time as it was for the Managers house and no other houses had carports!!

When the Page buckets arrived, they were "archless" compared to the arches on the 770 dragline buckets. A "Rotisserie" frame was suggested to support these different buckets during maintenance welding in the Boilershop. The idea being that all welding could be carried out in the "down hand position". Chris Thomas and I spent literally hundreds of hours designing and drafting this rotisserie for manufacture with it being canned at the last minute due to the concerns of how high it had to be to rotate the bucket, the crane in the workshop would need to be raised and how high the welders would have to be to achieve the "down hand" position. As far as I know that series of drawings is still in the "too hard" basket at Leigh Creek.

One other project that stands out was an enjoyable one inasmuch that Chris Thomas, another junior engineer named Tommy Qiu and myself spent a full week camped out at Sliding Rock doing a long term pumping test from the old mineshaft, the reason being that water capacity in LC at the time was an issue with Aroona Dam silting up. We camped out in Neil Ransom's caravan being towed by an ETSA short wheel base Landrover with a Euclid battery as a power source for lighting. A chainsaw was also supplied for firewood collection as it was in August and Sliding Rock can be very cold at that time of the year. We initially ran the old diesel pump for 8 hours, switched it off and checked the oil level as it was prone to losing or burning oil, we then topped it up with the used oil quantity, started the pump again and then ran it nonstop for 7 days measuring every hour the water level drop in the mineshaft, the water level rise in the ¼ million gallon tank and to check and make sure the old diesel pump was still doing what it was supposed to and to top it up with the required previously measured amount of oil every 8 hours. After a couple of days we found that the pump motor was again losing oil, this time through the dipstick. The seals had taken up and the pump was no longer using or losing oil !! At the end of the test some 8 gallons of oil was drained from the pump to bring the oil level back to normal! These water measurements were taken on the hour, every hour and took about 10 - 15 minutes to record. This left one person to sleep, one person doing not much for the rest of the hour and the third person free to do his own thing. I can tell you I had a lot of fun shooting rabbits, bush walking and lots of other activities with the best part being paid to do it and mostly on overtime!! During this test the water in the tank had to be dumped on a regular basis. It

was hard to believe that by dumping a ¼ million gallons of water on a regular basis through a 6 inch valve, the water only flowed about 30 metres down the creek before disappearing back into the aquifer. It gave me a real appreciation of how much water is present when the creeks flood in the Flinders.

On the Thursday night Brian Prior came out to pick me up as I had an engagement on the Saturday - it being our wedding day!! We were married in the United Congregation church on Second Avenue and had our reception in the Community Hall which is a story in itself. Because of the number of guests and his friendship with Peter Mussared at the time, my future father in law convinced Peter to allow a strictly private function to use the Community Hall for the very first time for our reception. This was the first and only marriage reception ever held in the hall. An ulterior motive was that the RSL Hall was usually used for private functions and in due respect to the RSL members, the prints that were on the walls were not the ideal background for wedding photos



After about 12 months of married life and living in 28 Sixth Street I was asked if I would transfer to The Production Branch Survey Group to be the Liaison Officer with the South Australian Mines Department in a grid drilling program to prove the coal reserves at LC. There were 3 rigs drilling all around the old town and including one hole right alongside the Canteen, this was good as the drillers worked until 5.30 pm, then downed tools and rushed across to the Boozer to get a couple in before closing time at 6.00pm. This was in the days that the Canteen closed between 6 and 7 o'clock so that the single guys could get to the mess for a meal before it closed at 7 o'clock. These were great times with the drill crews who played hard as well as working hard and also having a lot of fun with BBQ's every Friday lunchtime at one of the rigs. Their preferred beverage was beer, however one driller introduced Rhonda to "Harvey Wallbangers" and she still is a fan of "Harveys".

At the time there was a real shortage of work vehicles and I was allocated Peter Mussared's Valiant Sedan when he left LC. It was the most unsuitable vehicle imaginable for driving between the rigs and carting boxes full of core samples on the back seat. I can remember the seat being destroyed from the nails in the core boxes and being chastised by the Garage Foreman at the time, I was very quickly allocated a Ute after this explanation.

About this time, Rhonda won the job of Pool Attendant and did this for a couple of seasons, Melissa at one stage was less than 6 months old and used to ride on Rhonda's back when she went for a swim before starting work, Melissa virtually lived in the pool and became a very good swimmer because of the exposure during this period. Michelle was also a very good swimmer and held a lot of school swimming records at Leigh Creek. About the same time I started on a roster to check the pool water quality after closure of the pool at night. Laurie Dorton and Ray Gray also were involved in this exercise on a rotational basis. At the time we had a Golden Retriever dog named Sabba. Sabba used to walk with me from home to the pool when I tested the water. She was a water dog and it was impossible on a warm night to keep her out of the pool whilst doing the water testing. Probably not

the most hygienic scenario but Sabba certainly did not care !! I justified this exercise as being acceptable as I was the one that tested the water for any “nasties”.

Once the drilling program wound down I did some Dragline Planning under Laurie Dorton’s guidance in the Planning section. Members of this group being Laurie, David Swift, Bob Tulloch, Phil Jones and Mick Itcheff as the Surveyor for a short period, he was replaced by Serge Olenich and later Geoff Sandford. Honest John Lucas and Bruce Wedding were the 2 chainmen. Bruce Dorton used to fill in also during the University Holiday periods.

I was sent to Eastwood for a period working on the 11th Floor in the Leigh Creek Long Term Planning Group. Dieter Hauschildt had also joined this group when he left Leigh Creek. In those days there was no Flexi Time and every person in Eastwood finished work at the same time. There was no lift to the 11th floor and all personnel on that floor had to dash down one floor to the 10th, this being the executive floor. It was Dieters job to be at this lift with the door open and holding the lift at knockoff time. We all used to charge down the stairs, hop in the lift and away we would go straight to the ground floor avoiding all the rest of the workers! Dieter used to drive some weird and unusual vehicles, one of them being a Fiat Bambino, he had worked out that the key not only started the Fiat but also over rid the button floor controls in the lift! **We thus had the express lift from the 10th to the ground floor!**

In this period I worked closely with Jack Townsend, a Mines Department geologist who raised my interest in geology and is an interest that I still maintain today. Sir Thomas Playford paid a visit to Leigh Creek about this time and it was a real pleasure to drive him and Jack around the field and to listen to them talk about the geology of the field and the early stories and history of the operation. At the same time Coffey and Hollingsworth were doing a lot of geo-technical work with regard both high wall and low wall stability scenarios. Professor David Stapleton was the leader and I can still remember some of the explanations he gave me regarding unstable slope problems in Leigh Creek. can recall him hanging off a rope tied to the bull bar of my 4wd and inspecting with his geology pick the high wall of the Main Series test pit dug by the 9w dragline. The Ute had by this time been replaced by a 4wd as I had got the Ute bogged too many times driving to the drill rigs.

Prior to this I was heavily involved in obtaining insitu shale samples from the 9w dragline dug test pit. These samples weighed up to 40 kgs and had to be man handled up from the bottom of the test pit and sent to Germany for testing. I complained strongly to my boss Dave Fee about how physically exhausting it was to firstly obtain and then to retrieve these samples. He was not convinced this was so and I invited him to carry one sample up the face. The end result being a dozer track and 4wd provided so that Bruce Wedding and I could bring the samples up from the cut without drama!! When the test pit was dug, a dozer was required to rip for the dragline. At that stage experienced Operators were being employed for various reasons without having to go through the then in-house Training program. A later mentioned very good Operator (Dennis Conlon) took the dozer down in the test pit, did the ripping, and then found the dozer would not climb out of the cut due to the steepness of the walls. Very embarrassing for Dennis, with the dozer having to be helped up the slope with a sling attached to the 9w bucket!!! This reinforced to me with earthworks projects, prior planning is essential!!

I can vividly recall on a wet day to the east of the old golf course, being bogged rather badly. The drill rig had just finished a hole at about 8 am and they could still drill in the rain so we decided to shift the rig only 100 metres to a new hole on the grid pattern. The drill rig went down after my 4wd was dragged out, a grader was then used to pull the rig out, it too got bogged, the 824 Rubber tyred dozer was in the vicinity and was called in, it too got bogged and finally about 3 o’clock in the afternoon we managed to get a track dozer to pull the lot out. I learnt a very valuable lesson that

day and one that I stuck to right up to my retirement in the earthmoving game. **The lesson being if it is too wet do not attempt to use or move heavy machinery. We worked our butts off that day and achieved absolutely nothing!!**

During this period some holes were also drilled in the Copley Basin. It was in the summer and as a matter of course every time I drove through Copley on the way to the rig I called into the Packsaddle store and got cans of Coke for the drillers. One particular day I pulled in and it was stores truck day with lots of cars out the front, I parked right outside the batwing doors of the Copley Pub and then went to get the Cokes at the store next door, I got talking to Max Beaumont the store owner as he was interested in what the rig was doing and what was being drilled up. One thing led to another and I left him after about a half hour. The next day I had to front up to the boss who was Dave Fee at the time and had to give a reason why my work vehicle was parked outside the Copley pub during working hours for a considerable amount of time. To this day I do not have a clue who dobbed me in. I like to think it was someone who was jealous of my work role as I seemed to be involved in any unusual projects going on in this period in LC. Later on when Thompson Drilling Company was drilling in Leigh Creek a series of holes were drilled in the sand hills on Myrtle Springs almost west of Lyndhurst. Thompsons were a very professional outfit with very good equipment. When they arrived in Leigh Creek they initially parked in the new Workshop area and made contact with me. I arranged for their trucks to be moved to the Compound at the other end of First Avenue near Beal's Garage. This was just after dark and well outside normal work hours. The drill rig was a big, very loud 6WD unit with a 16 speed gearbox. The driller went the length of First Avenue going up thru the gears at maximum revs in each gear and then the same down shifting through the gears at the other end of town just because he could. Sergeant Herde arrived very quickly to give a very stern talking to the driller! I can remember after a hole was finished on Myrtle Springs and the logging truck was over the hole. The driller moved to a new hole, it was in soft heavy sand and I was amazed how well that 6wd truck coped on the sand without bogging. The drill rig and water cart had fun in this period playing "chasey" in the sand. That same rig had to travel back to the logging truck which had bogged badly, a sling was hooked up to the bull bar of all things on the log truck, the end result a bull bar on the sand looking rather sad with no logging truck attached !! The drillers used to work until 6.00 pm and then had almost an hour's drive to Lyndhurst. On the initial trip from the rig to Lyndhurst I had to lead the drillers on the station tracks in the dark. It was a real case of the blind leading the blind, my previous experience being shooting rabbits on these tracks in daylight !! I had a puncture in my Toyota and as a result we were very late back to the Pub. On that trip in I was lucky enough to pick up in the vehicle headlights a very rare hopping mouse on the track. I have never seen one since and spotting it was a real highlight. The Pub at Lyndhurst was a real problem bypassing it on the way home with the drillers camped there and all were very partial to a refreshing ale or two after work!

During this same drilling program a series of holes was drilled out near Stone Hut on Myrtle Springs. I was looking for a survey peg that marked the next hole in some scrub. I was about 50 metres away from the true position and stumbled across a recently harvested marijuana crop with a 44 gallon drum on a stand together with a spade and a rake plus hoses. It was interesting because all of the tools had ETSA stock item numbers on them!! Doing the right thing I reported it to Constable Rod Malkin but the guilty person never revisited the site. It was really well camouflaged with green shade cloth over the top and amongst scrub and it was by pure chance that I had stumbled upon it.

Another project that I was involved in that stands out was the digging of the Southern drain with the 9w dragline and also various road constructions in Lobe B. John France was the leading hand, Vic McBratney and Dick Ford were the dragline operators, Fred Jeromel and Ricky Stokes were operators full time and I think John Hancock was also involved on a watercart, Jockstrap ran a tight crew and one of his jobs was to con equipment from the mine operations for road construction in Lobe B on weekend work. It was frustrating as a supervisor to set up a work program for a Sunday

using the Euclids to cart road materials and to be loaded by the Michagan 275 Loader which had a larger capacity bucket fitted. The reason for the oversize bucket being that coal is relatively lighter in weight so the bucket could then be utilised to its full extent loading out coal. When loading out heavier material the bucket initially had a false back which from day one was a spectacular failure. The idea being that if loading heavier material the false back was utilised and the weights were then controlled. When this loader was used in heavier material minus the false back, the operators soon realised that the hydraulics were suspect with the heavier weights and deliberately overloaded the bucket and down went the machine for the day! All the drivers, operators and others were then paid a minimum overtime payment and were sent home because everything relied on that god awful Loader to play its part. **VERY FRUSTRATING** from my perspective and easy money for the people involved!!

In this period in the Production Branch or just after I was asked to take on the role of Contract Overseer with Tripodi Constructions and Quarry Industries. Tripodi were contracted to shift Upper Seam High wall dragline dumps, construct two Upper Seam Haul Roads and to construct the Retention Dam. Quarry Industries role was to supply 50 mm crushed rock for the new haul roads together with concrete for the new town.

About this time the then Planning Engineer Mick O'Brien encouraged me to study and sit for a Mine Managers Certificate which I did and also with his help via time off etc, to pass the Local Government Works Overseers Certificate. I then studied for a Local Government Works Managers Certificate by correspondence via TAFE in Adelaide. Part of the Mine Managers study involved exposure to explosives and as a result I spent some time in the Drill and Blast gang under John Taylor as the Supervisor and Bill Nicholls as Leading hand together with Terry Fuchs, Trev Moroney, Tom Hatch, Jonny DeBruin and Dickie Dowell as the rest of the gang.

During this period a bad batch of waterproof explosive was delivered to site. It was considered too dangerous to truck it back to Queensland so the Drill and Blast gang was used to destroy it. It is supposed to be done by burning each individual stick. It would have taken months to do this so it was trucked to Lobe C Northfield in small batches, loaded onto rafts made from Euclid tubes, floated out to the middle of the cut, the tubes were then shot out with a 22 rifle, the explosives were then sunk and detonated under water. I have 8 mm movie film of the huge water spouts that resulted from the detonations. I even have footage of one spout creating a rainbow with the sun in the right position. The gang has never had so much fun and the best part was getting paid to do it!!!

Sometime after this I was given the job of doing a dozer study as it was felt that possibly the wrong type and size dozers were being utilised in the mine as a result of the change to Truck and Shovel Operations. One role the dozers fulfilled was ripping for the draglines, this was a reduced role due to the draglines slowly being phased out and a consequent increase in coal dozing. Cavill Power – the Caterpillar agents in Sth Aust were very keen on what we were doing and arranged to get a brand new D8 dozer with the new triangular track configuration shipped to LC for trials. One test that was carried out was slot dozing with the new machine versus one of the D9 dozers on site. They supplied their “gun” operator and we supplied a very good one in Dennis Conlon. Cavill assured ETSA that the D8 with the new track configuration would be equal or even better than the D9 as a production machine. The tests were to confirm that theory. To make the trial as even as possible both operators operated each machine with Dennis easily out producing the other operator in every test no matter what machine according to the surveys carried out. What started as a small project turned into an almost 12 month exercise with a report produced that would make an author proud. It contained some 240 pages with some recommendations that upset the unions, their thinking being that BIG IS BEAUTIFUL and that the dozer fleet should be the biggest machines available to match the new Terex Trucks. The report found that the dozer fleet should consist of some big machines for coal

pushing and ripping, smaller dozers on the dumps for pushing over the edge with a change in job methods also and mobile rubber tyred dozers for shovel clean-up etc. After all the work carried out and the facts presented it was disheartening to find that the report was binned with very little action regarding the recommendations of the report. At the time I was Secretary of the Footy and Cricket Club and saw it as a good opportunity while Cavill was in town to ask for sponsorship of the footy team in the newly formed Football Association consisting of Hawker, Quorn, Pt Germein and Leigh Creek. We gained sponsorship with the new team being called the Leigh Creek CATS and I think \$1000 dollars in the bank.

Another project that was carried out during this period was a Truck and Shovel study to determine the number of trucks required, based on the overburden that needed to be removed in the future. This again started a mammoth project that involved almost the whole Planning Group recording information about every movement of the trucks and shovels including downtime, shovel movements along the face, etc, via stopwatches. This meant riding with the truck drivers on all shifts as it was found that all 3 shifts had different production rates using the same operators doing the same thing. There was a lot of other interesting and surprising data collected during this project. At one stage both Rhonda and I were working night shift, she documenting shovel movements and me riding with the truck drivers. I recall that Anna Testagrossa, Phil Jones, Bruce Wedding and Barbara Rajkowska also being involved in this project. The perception by some union members that we were employing a BIG Brother scenario was far from the truth but also made me unpopular in some quarters with the unions. About this time I became interested in all sorts of civil construction, I know I learnt a phenomenal amount regarding road construction from one of Tripodi Constructions Foremen His name was Mal Hogan and he was very old school. It was fun to watch him in action constructing a haul road, he would have the grader, water cart, roller and any other machinery required all lined up and he would whistle them in as required, if the operator missed his whistle and wave he was definitely in strife with Mal!! Mal was retired when he was asked to go to Coober Pedy to sort out problems that the contractor was having in getting the compaction correct because of the material used for the runways at the airport. He sorted this out and then came to LC with Joe Tripodi who was also having trouble with achieving compaction requirements using the 50 mm crushed rock on the haul roads being built. He would complete a section of road and absolutely flood the road and then leave it for at least 24 hours before testing. Watch out any body that drove on that road in this 24 hour period!! The end result being that almost every time compaction was achieved with very little rework required after this unorthodox approach. I later used these learnings which Mal taught me when building haul roads in the Pilbara on various jobs. Thank you Mal Hogan for passing on your knowledge.

During my time in Leigh Creek I was the Secretary of the Footy and Cricket Club who had a really keen bunch of players and committee members who arranged and ran lots of Community functions. Bob Renshaw was President at the time of my arrival, later for the position to be filled by Glen Reye. Bob was a "Bull at a Gate" type guy and got things done, He worked for the PMG which was later renamed as Telecom and subsequently Telstra. His work crew was Bob himself, Terry Fuchs and Peter Bould. They built the Footy Clubs sheds out at Tobacco Bush Creek in mostly work time I might add and after matches functions were held there after playing Marree. Bob's vision was to gather all the sporting clubs under the one banner with an overriding Committee made up of all the various sports having an equal vote in decisions. For various reasons this did not happen but as a result the Footy and Cricket Clubs combined and became the most prominent sporting club in LC.

One function that comes to mind was the Sponsorship of Leonie Ward (at the time) in the Miss Sth Australia quest. A Gala day was organised at the grounds at Tobacco Bush creek with all sorts of events ranging from a car Gymkana to foot races of all sorts and tug of wars between most of the sporting clubs. It was an all-inclusive cost to attend with refreshment and meals, etc supplied. It took

a massive amount of organising and planning and was a huge success with a lot of money raised for Leonie. Peter Daulby was the treasurer at the time and as money was collected at the gate he put it in bags and locked it in the boot of his car. Later on all the accounting was done and the money banked. Some time later Di Daulby was cleaning their car and came across a bag of money that had worked its way behind the spare wheel. Leonie finished up with some \$400 more than initially thought!!

Speaking about Tobacco Bush Creek, another incident that occasionally occurred when the creek ran during work hours was that the 824 Rubber tyred dozer was used to ferry all the Northfield workers across the creek. It was sight to see with about 10-15 bodies hanging all over the dozer whilst it forded the water. Definitely would not be allowed in today's era !!

The Footy and Cricket Club organised most of the Cabarets in the Community Hall, dancing and socialising to Peter Bould's Band called PER GRATIS. Various members were in the band over the years, Peter (Spiro) Bould, Billy Davies, Ron Kehr, Peter McGowan, Michael Andrews, and Judy Hatch as a singer for a period followed by Sheree Ward. I can remember Trevor Moroney made a guest appearance one time as a singer in a duet with Spiro. Don't quit your daytime job Trev !!! The Cabarets were so successful and were always sold out, it got to the stage that the hall was not big enough so the Footy Club approached Kevin Waters to get permission to remove the first 3 rows of seats in the hall. A nervous Kevin reluctantly gave permission on a one off basis initially. Removing the seats would allow some extra 30-40 people to be seated around the extra tables this allowed to be placed. On every Cabaret Saturday after this it was all committee hands on deck with spanners to undo the seat rows. New Year's Eve were the best, we used to suspend the cricket Practice net across the hall and then fill it with a couple of hundred balloons, at midnight the net was dropped and every one then had fun bursting these hundreds of balloons !!

For a couple of years we also arranged a Town Christmas show on the oval, again an all-inclusive cost. These shows were a roaring success with most town people attending. The Footy and Cricket Club made a lot of money, however the first priority was always to present a Community event and results show that we were successful in doing this albeit with a lot of work by the club.

There were a lot of Contractors about during this period with the Camp at Copley housing New Town contractors together with Tripodi personnel and others. The old town houses were all filled, the caravan park was enlarged twice and I even think some extras were housed in Silver City huts. It was a very busy town with an excitement caused by the building of the new town.

On my very first trip in the hired ETSA bus to Marree for the footy, two incidents stand out. After the game all the players climbed on the bus with Kel Corbell being the driver and off to the pub for refreshments for the journey home. Kel asked if any other driver previously had taken the bus under the railway line, Somebody said yes no problem, the end result was the bus was jammed under the line and the tyres had to be let down to free the bus !! The other incident was I went into the pub for 6 cans for the trip home and the publican promptly ripped the tops of all the cans – me not knowing this was a requirement for Sunday trading in those days. I am just thankful that I did not ask for a carton. !!

The cricket was a really well run and competitive competition, although some would say with a distinct lack of talent. There were initially 3 teams, Township led by Peter Little, School led by Peter Gillespie and Production led by Dave Fee. The Hockey club came into the comp a bit later to make a fourth team. Production were runners up in the first 3 years to Township. There was a revolt in the 4th year and Dave Fee was forced to step down with me replacing him and leading Production to the title. I won the man of the match trophy in the final with a personal score of I think 32 runs and a

couple of catches behind the wicket. As I said there was a distinct lack of talent but good fun was paramount!! The trophy presentation night was carried out in the Telford room in the canteen and was a big affair. The AFL can have their Brownlow night with the flash dresses, etc but The Footy and Cricket Clubs night was its equal. Peter Henty Smith was the Canteen Manager and he supported us tremendously over the years as we bought a lot of custom to the Canteen and purchased a lot of kegs from him. He was an avid amateur photographer and used to shoot photos of all the action during the games on Sunday. He then developed these photos and displayed them in the bar on the Monday. It became a ritual that all the players went to the pub on Monday after work to see if they featured in the photos. Of course you could not just have a look, you had to have a beer as well. There was definitely an ulterior motive to Henty's photos!!



Another incident that stands out was at one stage the Tractor Mower was broken down and parts had to come from interstate. It was out of action for an extended time. The grass on the oval in some places was 3-4 inches high – not conducive to the good cricket as the crowds were then used to!! Terry Fuchs and I bought our mowers from home and attempted to cut the oval with them. We and the mowers ran out of puff eventually but we managed to do our own version of a 50 metre circle around the pitch – one part of the oval a billiard table, the other side almost a jungle, however the cricket went on regardless!!

Whilst Quarry Industries were onsite they had their own camp situated on the high ground south of the old golf Club initially. John Workman was the boss and his wife Louis was the cook, Louis was a Maori and as they say “pretty easy on the eyes” all the single guys imagined they were in love with her, especially when she went to the pool in a bikini!! She used to make the best toasted sandwiches for the boys for smoko and it became the normal to visit the camp at around 9.30 am to attend to the days paperwork associated with my inspection duties!! Peter Little at that time was the Concrete Inspector in the new town and he had paperwork to attend to also regarding the concrete supplied. It is funny that the only spare time that he had for this was between 9.30 and 10 also every day!

I am flitting between memories now and different times, however one incident leads to several others not in a sequence.

Whilst in the Drawing Office at Northfield another unusual project I was involved in was one at Aroona dam. The dam when constructed incorporated a sluice valve through the wall. The idea was on a regular basis this valve was to be opened and the silt in the bottom of the dam against the wall would be flushed out. From day 1 of the dam this was not done because of the fear that a tree or some other obstruction would jam in the valve and not allow it to be closed with obvious results. At this stage there was about 16 feet of silt against the wall and action was needed. A 24 inch gate valve was found at I think Osborne Power Station, shipped to LC and a flange about 2 metres long between the existing valve and the new one was to be fabricated by Ron Hatch and his boys. I was involved as I drafted the flange prior to manufacture. It was duly fabricated and installed in parallel to the existing valve with the thinking that if the first valve could not be closed the second one would.

Valve day came and both were gingerly opened, if you can imagine a tube of toothpaste being jumped on from a height of about 2 metres with the cap off, this would accurately describe the result. This lasted for about 30 secs and then dirty water gushed out. Obviously the silt did not fall in before the water. Proceedings were suspended for a few days and then tried again, silt ran for about 3 secs on the second attempt with luckily no problems tree wise. The end result - the gate valve was packed up and sent back to Osborne in disgrace and the silt is still in situ in the dam!!

There were some well fought cricket matches held outside of LC in this period, the most notable being the Mount Serle test series and double wicket competitions. Hosts were Ken and JoAnne Smith and half of LC travelled out for these contests. One game Ken was rolling the pitch the previous day in readiness for the game and came across an ant nest right on a good length. We poured petrol down the holes and flicked a match to burn the ants out, the petrol exploded 4 inches below the ground level and as a result there were some interesting ball movements off this hastily repaired patch. The Smiths also hosted the Mt Serle Invitational Tennis Tournaments with the pavilion set up amongst the Stink Bean tree next to the court, together with the refreshment booth. Not a good exhibition of tennis but certainly a lot of fun!!! The Smiths were also gracious enough to allow the Netball Club, with help from The Footy and Cricket Club to hold a couple of Woolshed Dances, these were monumental affairs to organise but were outstanding events with people being turned away at the, in this instance, the horse paddock gate.

Roulette on Friday night pay nights were always a big affair, provided the crowd behaved themselves, the Sergeant's (Maple, Herde, Withers and Reid in my time) turned a blind eye to proceedings. Mervyn (Darkie) Dalton was usually the star attraction at Roulette. You could always tell if he had a good night, - next day on the bus into work he would blow his nose on a \$10 note and then throw it out the window !! If he was feeling under the weather at work, his favourite trick was to walk around the compound all day at Northfield with a length of rope over his shoulder. His excuse was he was going to a new job!! At one stage he was relief storeman in the Repair shop for a period and was responsible for tea making duties. He was sick of all the single guys on shift flogging the spoons for their soup. He booked out some more spoons and promptly drilled a small hole in each spoon. His reasoning was that they could not be used for soup but were OK for sugar as the spoons could be dunked in the tea and then the sugar would stick to the spoon! I still have bad moments when I remember the taste of the supplied tea, I swear it was the sweepings from the tea factory!

Whilst in the office at Northfield all welding repair work on the Euclid bodies was done on afternoon shift because of the noise associated with the gouging hammers. Malcolm (Chuggy) Davies was an apprentice married with a young family and always volunteered for this job because of the extra money. At this stage, staff only were permitted cream biscuits for smoko and they came in big 5kg tins. Whenever Chuggy was on shift all the biscuits would disappear very quickly overnight. Roy Barber (Mechanical Superintendent) was the self-appointed biscuit guardian and thought he could stop the staff biscuit theft. He organised, via a works order for a lockable box capable of holding two of these 5 kg biscuits tins to be made in the Carpenter Shop. The works order was titled Biscuit Cabinet which was a giveaway and it was given to another apprentice (John Grace) who was Chuggy's best mate, to make. The cabinet was delivered to Roy; he filled it with 2 tins of biscuits from the main store, locked the cabinet and kept the only keys. Next day he unlocks the cabinet and he has his cream biscuits for smoko. A week goes by, Chuggy is on afternoon shift, Roy unlocks the cabinet, reaches for a biscuit and the two tins are there but not a biscuit in sight. Gracie had made the cabinet as per the works order but with a back that was only screwed on as per Chugg's instruction. He raided the cabinet and took every biscuit via the back door but left the empty tins! To the day he left LC, I don't think Roy found out how the biscuit cabinet was raided.

Leigh Creek, in my time was a fabulous place to work, raise a young family, witness the building of a new town, the change to a Truck and Shovel operation with a consequent increase in personnel numbers, and finally the moving to a new home in the new town. Two down sides to these changes in my opinion were the advent of TV and the rapid increase in population some time later. I can vividly remember pre TV when we would push a very restless new born daughter around Leigh Creek streets and someone in the town would always invite you in for a cup of tea or something stronger and a bit of a chat or gossip. In one instance on one of our walks I can remember being invited into Eric and Enid Blieschke's home in Centreway. About the time of introduction of TV to LCk the Footy and Cricket Club decided to run a raffle with a huge screen TV as first prize. This was a really good money earner for the Club. The prize winner was Frank Cooke and it was Glen's and my duty to deliver the prize to the Cooke house the next night after work. Frank was that pleased to receive the TV it was quite a few whiskey's later that we left Frank happily watching the ABC TV programs on delay from Adelaide. The ABC news was broadcast with the audience watching the Test Pattern on the TV screen for 30 minutes followed by the previous weeks Adelaide programs that were recorded on tape and replayed a week later.

Another incident that comes to mind being on New Year's Day in 1972. Rhonda was in Hospital having Michelle, I was having New Year's dinner at the Hatch's place together with Ann and Merv Rantall. It was decided that a bunch of flowers was required for the future new mother to thank her for her efforts. The 3 of us then decided that we would tour around town and beg, borrow or steal flowers from the front yards. We pulled up in front of Eric Pengilly's place in Centreway in Ron's work ute of all things, me being the getaway driver and Merv and Ron doing the sometimes illegal deed. They were sprung by Enid in her very formidable voice, **"AND WHAT IS GOING ON HERE??"** After a hasty explanation on why they were breaking the law Enid said for them to come back later and she would arrange a bunch of flowers for presentation to the new mother! After Ron and Yvonne's traumatic car accident in, I think in 1976, ETSA as an Employer was incredible to the Hatch Family. In those days every expense possible was taken direct from the employee's pay packet, such as rent, Private health insurance, etc. Ron had used up all of his sick and annual leave and had no income at the time. It was arranged by ETSA to have the rent taken from Judy's pay, his private health insurance taken from mine and various requirements such as hand rails, etc fitted to the shower cubicle ready for his return home from Hospital. At this time Dr Jill Birdsey was the Doctor in LC. The Hatch girls were having a lot of trouble getting information with regard Ron's condition from the hospital in Melbourne, Yvonne at that stage was also in Melbourne with Ron. Dr Birdsey took it upon herself to ring the doctor treating Ron and getting and explaining the information to the girls. It became an every second day after hours consultation with Dr Birdsey and the Hatch girls in the surgery at LC. Sadly Dr Birdsey passed away not all that much later after this. The Hatch family will always be grateful to Dr Jill.

These sorts of things sadly would not happen today and is an example of why Leigh Creek was such a good place to live and to work. There was a loss of community spirit after TV was introduced in my opinion, and as a consequence, a subtle change in the social fabric of Leigh Creek occurred. I am not saying Leigh Creek was no longer a good place to live, it still was, but there is no doubt it changed in this period. With the increase in personnel numbers, post old Leigh Creek, the feeling and the unique Community spirit died off somewhat. I put this down to the fact that some residents, because of shift requirements would virtually not see others in the town for weeks at a time, and a lot of workers were there for the money only.

This was not the case in the old town pre shift work and was what made old Leigh Creek such an enjoyable place to work, play, live and raise a young family.

Thank you for listening to my ramblings about what was a fabulous part of my life.