

The ALDECC inc

News



December 2006



A Few words From the President

Christmas Greetings to One and All!

Well it doesn't seem so long ago that we sent out the annual greetings and invites, but here we are again.

It has been a mixed time of highs and lows this year. Wonderful co-operation for snippets of "where are you now" from various members, so thank you ever so much for your participation and letting us know how you are.

We've been keeping a check on Porepunkah Pines to see if all is still going well for our annual re-union (a bit like Santa checking on all the good boys and girls eh!!!). There might be a change in the kitchen as Lyn informs me; all did not go well with the Restaurant plans. However she knows who we are and what we are about and has assured me in the good old' Aussie spirit that "it'll be all right on the night"!

We are in for a good time again in February...the committee has been keen as mustard to provide the frivolities...some shy ones too! But all in all a laugh or two.

Many thanks to them for the help they give me and travelling the long distances to attend committee meetings and a big thank you to Mary P for the hospitality at the lunch table.

At this time of year we would like to wish you all Peace and Goodwill for Christmas and a New Year of Hope, Prosperity and Good Cheer

Safe travelling folks!

Kevin Gough (President)

And Ruth Carmichael (Secretary)

And the Secretary Says...

It was so nice to hear from Andrea Croker and her letter is here and available for your perusal. Thank you Andrea.

Also, a note from Ruth & Stan Tidy, still doing OK up at Agnes Waters Qld. Good to hear from you too!



Ruth

News in General



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An inquiry has been made from Janice Horton about the unfortunate loss of Guths Panorama by fire.

Maybe someone can shed some light on the cause or result of same.

I believe a good time was had by some at the Peter Severin bash. Alison Coop has kindly put a few words to paper about it.

With Regrets

Sadly, we bid farewell to Val Mack on Oct 21st, 1 day short of his 70th year. At the request of several members I've been asked to print the eulogy Margie Goates paid at his funeral and it is enclosed with this newsletter.

Oct 27th with barely 24 hours of Mackies funeral we bid farewell to Lance Grenda. Lance's service was a fitting tribute to this icon of our industry. Tributes to him have been written, one of which is reprinted here of the years he spent travelling the outback, ably assisted by Barb Conner.

ALDECC committee and Members offer our sincere condolences to the family & close friends of these two esteemed founding members of the Association. May the warmth & comfort of the campfire embrace you all.

My name is Margie Goates. Many of you will not know me. I worked with Val for 24 years. Val was the Australian Pacific Tour Driver and I the Cook/Tour Guide. My story is similar to what you have just listened to, but from a road view, it is different to the family view.

When I was asked to say a few words about Val, I shuddered. From listening to his stories and experience I am sure he was 200 years old! How do you condense that into a few minutes? Well – start at the beginning! When I first met Val it was last century – July 1976. I had worked on the road for several years and had heard of Valentine Beveridge Mack, but our paths never crossed. My first impression was that he was 'different'. We did not wear uniforms in those days but Val did – moleskin pants, check shirt, high heel boots, akubra hat and a beard. No drivers were allowed beards, but apparently Val was the exception – he said he was too handsome and had to hide his good looks. Camping safaris were the go at the time. It was hard work driving all day then pitching tents and preparing meals for up to 46 passengers in all weather conditions. Val blazed many new tracks and actually made up itineraries for desert towns for Australian Pacific. In the 70's unmade roads, no budgets and lots of rain made for interesting touring. Val's bush mechanics paid off in the different methods of fixing coaches – coathangers, pantyhose, pepper etc.. Sometimes these methods were not to Australian Pacific specifications but it got us to town and sometimes even back to Melbourne. Flooded creeks and closed roads were never a problem because Val, with his love of nature, would take passengers tracking for animals. He often complained he could not even go behind a tree for a pee without passengers following him! They did not want to miss anything! Passengers were fascinated by his knowledge. The tall tales were something else! Some stories went for 1km, but some stretched to 20km. I got to know them off by heart and often smiled because passengers were enthralled until they heard the punch line!

Another love was camels, Val idolised camels and when we arrived at the Camel Farm he would disappear to talk to his favourite camels and give them a kiss and lollies. Val rode camels and in fact won a Cup at the Alice Springs Camel races on a camel called Bundy – which was quite appropriate, as he did like a dip of the rum – for medicinal purposes only. Slim Dusty was his favourite singer and I can still see the expression on the faces of the 'Classical minded' passengers when Val asked if they would like to hear some opera music – that is Australian Opera! And Slim would come over the PA system. Our touring covered the whole of Australia and it didn't matter where we were. Val knew the facts and figures and people of the area. He was an avid reader – but it had to be Australiana. In later years the camping gave over to accommodated tours, staying in motels, a bit easier life style, but still very demanding. Because of his involvement in tourism and his passion of Australia, Val was nominated for a N.T. Brolga Award, equivalent to our Logies! On the night of the judging he was pipped at the post but it was a great honour for him. Any chance to go bush was jumped at and so when the Queen was coming to open the Stockmans Hall of Fame at Longreach, Val said he would have to go help the 'Queen do the job'. Along with Eric Blizzard, Ruth Carmichael and Normie Brown (alias 'the ferret'). Val drove to Longreach and I flew in and met them there. On arrival I was driven to the camp – not in a camping ground but on the banks of the Thompson River. It was a very palatial set up with a tarpaulin for a roof – canvas floor, a windmill for air-conditioning, and that was it! Val cooked chops and vegies and we were then told to clean up after ourselves and get ready to go to town. In the centre of the camp was a plastic garbage bin with a lid so I scraped the chop bones and scraps into the bin. Soon there was a roar from the camp. Val was getting dressed and little did I know that the garbage bin was actually his suitcase and his clean clothes had our scraps over them. Why would you have a garbage bin for a suitcase? Because if it rained the bin would float and the clothes would not get wet. Plaiting was a great hobby – whips, belts, anything with leather. Passengers would order a belt or such and often I was told to take the passengers on the walks because there was urgent business to attend to. I knew there was a rushed order to fulfil.

Family was always close to Val's heart. Although he was away from home for long periods of time he always talked of the family. He was so excited when the grandchildren arrived and then the great grandchildren. When we learned that Val was not well people Australia wide telephoned to check up on 'Mackie' as he was affectionately known on the road. And since his passing the news has spread through the entire tourism industry. Many people don't know Nancy and the Mack families personally but they have a genuine sympathy and sadness and want you all to know their thoughts are with you – even though a lot are too far away to be present today. To many people Val was an icon and will go down in history as a legend of the road.

In closing, I know I have not done justice to my mate – who could? I have not mentioned that he was a drover, a shearer, a buckjump rider and a spreader of bulldust all over this continent of Australia. Val used to often play a song called "there is no indispensable man". Maybe no man is indispensable but we all certainly knew a man who is 'irreplaceable' and that man was our mate Val.

May he Rest In Peace.

Margie

LANCE GRENDA

Long distance coach pioneer

COACH TOUR OPERATOR

Born: February 22, 1930
Died: October 27, 2006

LANCE Grenda was a pioneering long distance coach operator and mentor for generations of drivers.

He was the "I've been everywhere" driver who instructed others on the Outback and the best way to get there.

Aged three, George Lance-olof Grenda was helping his father in a milk carting business, rolling the cans. By 15 he was a relief driver.

After World War II Lance developed an interest in motor mechanics.

He helped to service vehicles after his father bought a fleet of six buses for routes through the then wilds of Dandenong.

The milk carting business was sold 18 months after the buses were bought.

Lance began an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic while two of his brothers and a sister joined the family business.

Away from work Lance was a Scout in Oakleigh for many years, becoming a Rover and attending several jamborees.

At one jamboree he met Girl Guide Rale Curtis.

They were both keen on ballroom dancing.

Some of their time together was spent on the Oakleigh-Dandenong bus route or chartered trips at weekends with Lance at the wheel.

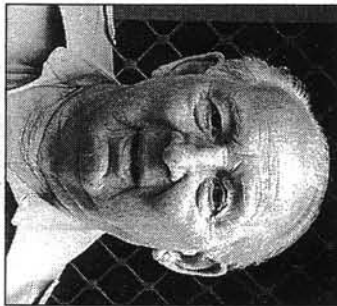
Lance and Rale wed in 1954 at the Holy Trinity Church of England, Oakleigh.

In November 1956, with a police escort, he drove the Russian Olympic team to Portsea for the day.

Grenda's Bus Service bought its first tour coach in 1958. Because of its large headlights employees christened it *Sabrina*, after the busy British singer and actor of the 1950s.

At weekends Lance continued to drive groups, including Scouts, Guides, marching girls and brass bands all over Victoria.

After intense lobbying at the Education Department he began doing school trips to the snow.



Lance Grenda

In 1962 he made his first trip on dirt roads through the Outback to central Australia. By this time long distance driving was becoming a major part of his life.

When Lance wasn't driving he was helping to service and repair the buses.

Over the years, as well as raising five children with Rale, Lance served a term as chamber of commerce president, was involved with tennis bowling, spent 15 years with the Jaycees and was a member of Rotary.

In 1967 Grenda's ditched *Sabrina* for a more modern and technologically advanced coach for long distance travel.

Lance's pioneering travels as a long distance driver in this coach included Cairns, Perth, Oodnadatta, 1011km north of Adelaide, Innamincka, 1065km north east of Adelaide on the Strzelecki Track, Mt Kosciuszko, the Bhdsville Track (Queensland), the Ta-

namal Track (from north of Alice Springs to Halls Creek in the Kimberley) and the Gunbarrel Highway, which links Western Australia with the Red Centre.

On his pioneering trails Lance became close to many outback organisations such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service. In 1975 Grenda's sold their coach business to AAT Tours.

Lance wanted to continue with his existing lifestyle so he bought a new coach to run his own business.

In return, Lance, with his new business, Lananda Tours, instructed AAT's drivers on far flung destinations and how to cope with conditions in the Outback.

Lance drove on safari and other tours for more than 30 years.

He deliberately avoided expanding his business because it would have meant moving to a desk job.

Around Australia Lananda Tours raised the bar for coach tours. In the late 1980s Lance sold his stake in the Grenda Bus Service family business.

However, he continued to drive long distances regularly, including to the Outback, for Lananda Tours.

As he got older Lance reduced his driving to spend more time in his garden at Mt Eliza and with his hobby, woodworking, in his Carrum Downs factory.

But he helped take his wife's china painting groups to country Victoria and interstate.

He kept his coach, which still operates on a subcontract, and his family plans to donate it to the Transport Hall of Fame in Alice Springs.

Lance, 76, died at Frankston Hospital.

Survivors include Rale, five children, 12 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, a brother and a sister.

50 years on Curtin Springs – November 2006

In November the Severin family celebrate 50 years on Curtin Springs. This historic milestone should evoke memories in all of us who travelled the red corrugated dusty strip of track, then known as the Petermann Highway to Ayers Rock. There were many a time Peter & later on Ashley's skills at welding repairs or towing got the wheels moving again, through all kinds of mishap & weather. Family legend has it that when Dawn arrived with her husband Peter & baby son Ashley in 1956 Dawn took one horrified look at the new home the Bough with iron lean-to's for bathroom & toilet and said "I've got news for you and it's all bad". That's history now. Dawn passed away many years ago, but the memories of our morning & afternoon tea stops with scones & jam & cream will remain forever. The kitchen remains, as it was then, with warm welcoming aromas of cooking & sparkling benches & stovetop. The Bough shed, the same design that was the original home is still the meeting place at the close of day.

Today, Curtin Springs, along with the cattle is a busy roadhouse & tourism enterprise with many visitors taking advantage of station tours with 'Uncle Barker' & the camping at 'Uncles' bush camp & climbing Mt. Connor.

A bitumen highway now transports tourists in comfort & with ease. They have missed a lot of fun & comradeship of a bygone era.

So upon discovery of an open invitation for a celebration at Curtin Springs, on a recent holiday, how could you not take the opportunity to share the moment. Peter travelled many miles to join us at ALDECC. A phone call was made to the boss 'Kevin B' & the news was put in such a way as to leave no doubt that he was going to a party.

It was with much sadness in the weeks before, that we were to lose two of our long-term members of ALDECC & much travelled colleagues – Val Mack & Lance Grenda. Amazing how many things you can do in a short space of time. After farewelling them both Kevin & I hit the road on Friday 3rd November at 4pm & 26 hours later arrived at Curtin Springs in time for the formal bit with speeches, presentations etc... and many group photo's of family and friends, before sitting down to enjoy an amazing BBQ & Beer. Yes I had a well-deserved drink or two!

The familiar faces of Higgs & Lyn, Lorraine & Dieter, & Paul Beams joined in the festivities.

During the speeches tributes flowed from all sectors of the community, either through business associates, tourism, meteorology (for 50 years of weather recording). Transport or from just ordinary folks brushing shoulders with a man & his family under the Bough Shed.

Each evening, slide shows were running, and a photo display, over the years was set up in the infamous Bough Shed. The music started up after dinner adding to the constant chatter & laughter. A better idea of things will be got from photos and a video.

Kevin ended up making an impromptu speech, after all these years, 35 to be exact, he still had in the garage at home a Curtin Springs repaired track rod – rusted & ready for the museum – which he thought would be a good idea for Peter to have as a memento – it was presented with much hilarity & disbelief that it had come back to haunt him.

The next day, Sunday after breakfast, vehicles were loaded with tables & chairs, refrigerated truck packed with food and transport arranged in a Coaster bus for those not taking their cars to have a BBQ lunch at 'Uncles' bush camp on the eastern side of Mt. Connor. about 22kms away. A well set up open shed, another Bough Shelter, bush toilets & excellent BBQ area complete with curved stonewall for wind protection. By 2pm it was time to pack up & return to Curtin Springs. Final farewells were made & we departed about 4pm to be back at work Tuesday morning. Well worth the effort & rekindled fond memories of another time & era.

Much credit must go to Lyndee Matthews, Ashley's partner, for organising such a gathering. Many flew direct to the station others drove from near & far.

One quirky little happening on the drive home occurred about 3.30-4. in the morning coming into Kaniva. Radio going, Music happening, Lo & behold its John Williamson, turn up the volume, "Kev that's Grenda's song 'Raining on the Rock'" What?Who? he says. "Grenda you dickhead! "Raining on the rock" He must have come with us for the ride"....I have never heard that song on the radio before...Stranger things have happened.

See you at ALDECC.

Alison Coop.

Where are They Now



Hello to you all – I think I've been 'named and shamed' In the September issue ALDECC newsletter and I've responded accordingly!

Who am I?

In the late 70's and early 80's I was a cook, firstly with APT mainly working alongside of Roos Brooks and then with Capo Tours working with that 'cranky ol bugger' Ray (Higgs) Higginson.

During 1982 – I decided to go back into the "real" world, earn big \$\$\$'s, build my beach shack and then return to 'on the road'.

Instead..... Met a bloke from the west – fell in love – bought an old 'Turn of the Century' limestone cottage in Fremantle WA and got married!

Today..... Still doing restoration work on cottage, love the lifestyle here, close to beach and river, potter in the garden and generally we lead a fairly quiet life, we are both in good health.

I enjoy receiving the newsletter; many names are familiar (those that are ill – my thoughts are with you). On the positive side, the newsletter brings back wonderful memories: - start studded nights, tall stories, early mornings, long stretches of desert and dunes, the many vibrant colours of the outback, gentle islands of the East Board, the many wonderful people and colourful characters!

Thank you to all who compile the Newsletter and organise the re-unions etc.. you do a wonderful job. *(thanks -ed)*

Congratulations to the Severin family on their 50th Anniversary!

Keep up the good work

Fondest memories

Andrea Coker (nee Dickson), originally from Melbourne.

Committee

President: Kevin Gough

Secretary: Ruth Carmichael

Committee...

Reen Hillman
John Gullock
Graeme Hayes
Sue Grant
Colin Stubbs
Mary Purtill
Wendy Morrison
Julie Keatley
Carmel McCartin



Birthday Greetings

Reen Hillman on December 23 the big 50! and doesn't look a day past 49!!!

ALDECC inc.

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