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Fares Please! Retired Transport Workers' Oral History Project

**Interview with Jules de Smet
Biographical Notes and Timed Summary**



HMSS 0367 "Fares, Please!", Retired ACT Transport Employees Club Oral History Project

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Interviewee: Mr. Jules Albert de Smet

Occupation: bus conductor, bus driver, truck driver, school bus driver (Cotter), ministerial car driver (1939-1987)

Year of birth: 1922

Name of Interviewer:... Barry York

Number of Minutes: Track 1 is 36:34; track 2 is 36:36; track 3 is 11:50 (Total duration: 85:00)

Date: 9 January 2010

Restrictions on Use: None

Biographical summary: Jules De Smet was born at Molonglo (settlement) in the Federal Capital Territory in 1922. He joined the Transport Section, Department of Interior, in 1939, as a bus conductor. He served in the Australian Army for four years and four months during World War Two, and returned to the Transport Section after the War. He retired, as a Commonwealth car driver, in 1987.

Counter (time)	Subject matter
00:00 Track 1	Introduction by interviewer; Mr. de Smet talks about family background; great grandfather emigrated from France in 1846; continuous connection with the region by the De Smet family; started work as a bus conductor in 1939; talks about other family members in the Transport Section, including his uncle Eugene who was a supervisor in 1926; talks about his retirement in 1987.
06:00	Reflects on Canberra's small population back then; recalls the bus routes and fares; describes typical day as a bus conductor; different shifts and runs; social life in Canberra back then (Causeway Hall and Albert Hall, etc.).
11:06	Describes bus conductor's ticketing system; conductor's leather bag and tickets; 'cashing in'; rates of pay and hours; recalls how he obtained the job in Transport Section (examination); influence of being Eugene's nephew; police check.
17:00	Recalls the old Ainslie facility in Campbell Street (he started work from there); resided near Kingston depot; recalls Mr. Tormley; recalls the Cowper Street "shed"; no other facilities along the routes back then; describes sections at Kingston depot and numbers of workers in 1939; more about his uncle Eugene; training as a conductor; obtaining licence as a bus driver in 1946; being given a bus run.
23:38	Recalls first "car job" (Commonwealth cars); took Curtin's staffer to the War Memorial when it was opened; drove Robert Menzies to Parliament House; attended opening of Parliament House in 1927 with parents; attended St. Christopher's school (1928-37); wanted to be a bus driver while at school; types of buses back then; colour of the buses; had to clean out the bus and clean the windows; joined the Transport Workers Union; "twenty-three years without a dispute".



30:32	Describes Canberra back then; would know individual passengers and drive them closer to home under certain circumstances; anecdote about driving Commonwealth car; ministerial interstate driving; married in 1949; Cotter-Tidbinbilla school bus run ("camped at the Cotter"); resided at Molonglo until 1928 then parents moved to the Causeway, then moved to Kingston in 1939.
36:34 End of Track 1	End of Track 1
00:00 Track 2	Track 2: Responds to question about morning tea and lunch breaks; dress code; behaviour code; discipline for misconduct (recalls someone being "sent home for a week"); relationship among workers in the Kingston Depot (talks about difference before and after the War; conductors' and drivers' attitude to uniforms).
06:04	Dealing with disruptive passengers; relationship with passengers; nicknamed "Smoky" by passengers (due to bus being a bit smoky); more about disruptive passengers (recalls hotels); "never had much trouble"; school pupils on the bus; responds to question about how well used the buses were back then; responds to question about changes to buses over time.
11:01	Drove Commonwealth cars more than buses; overlap between bus and car drivers (ministerial drivers known as "The Untouchables"); admiration for Al Grassby (whom he drove – "about 140,000 miles" in all with him); "He was a worker"; changes to planning and routing system after the War (recalls new suburbs).
16:06	Women in the industry; comments on the Kingston Depot ("used to be there when I went to school", "the show-piece of Canberra"); recalls the Canberra of his youth; supports preservation of the Depot; recalls growing up in Molonglo settlement; opening of Woolworths; buses very crowded.
21:02	Routes that were favoured and unfavoured by drivers (recalls stops along the routes); recalls schools in Canberra; talks about his mother; father's employment.
26:40	Buses between Canberra and Queanbeyan; train to Goulburn; Quadling Brothers' buses; early forms of transport in Canberra ("There were more bikes than cars"); horses and drays; trucks; horses and drays played vital role in building the roads in Canberra; people would ride horses in early days; deliveries by horse and cart.
31:30	War service (with Engineers in the Army); loaded supply ships on wharves; talks about what he liked most about his career in the transport Section; talks about his wife ("an angel"); responds to question about the qualities needed to be a conductor or driver; thoughts on transport system in the ACT today compared to his day.
36:36 End of Track 2	End of track 2





00:00 Track 3	Track 3: Has hardly been on a bus in Canberra since the 1970s; retirement (1987); involvement in Retired ACT Transport Employees Club; reflects on how sparse Canberra was in the early days; "people were coming in all the time" (refers to Snowy Mountain Hydro Scheme and migrants); closing comments ("would like to see Transport stay there (at the Kingston Depot)"); comments on advent of Self Government in Canberra; thinks Canberra "has gone backwards" (refers to roads and parks, privatisation, "too many governments", bus service, "red tape").
11:50 End of Track 3	End of Track 3 END OF INTERVIEW



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