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Fares Please! Retired Transport Workers' Oral History Project

Interview with Dion Convine
Biographical Notes and Timed Summary



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

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Interviewee: Dion Convine

Occupation: Bus Driver, Bus Inspector, Supervisor (Shift Supervisor and Depot Master)

Year of birth: 1938

Name of Interviewer:... Barry York

Number of Minutes: Track 1 is 36:36; track 2 is 33:13; track 3 is 36:36; track 4 is 23:24 (Total duration: 129:49)

Date: 12 and 19 March 2010

Restrictions on Use: None

Biographical summary: Dion Convine was born at Queanbeyan, New South Wales, in 1938, to English parents who had migrated to the Canberra area in 1923. During the war years, when Dion was an infant, the family moved to Canberra from Queanbeyan as his older brother was doing an apprenticeship with the Transport Section, Department of the Interior. Dion applied for a job with Transport as a bus driver in 1965. He progressed over the years from a Bus Driver to Bus Inspector and then Supervisor which covered both Shift Supervisor and Depot Master. He continued up the ranks to Regional Manager Kingston, Belconnen, Tuggeranong. He opened up the Tuggeranong Depot and then proceeded to close down Kingston in 1990. He retired from ACTION in 1991.

Counter (time)	Subject matter
00:00 Track 1	Session of 12 March 2010 Introduction by interviewer; family background; father a fettler on the NSW railways; parents migrated from England around 1923; mother ran the kitchen at Molonglo workers' camp; parents moved to Queanbeyan.
06:47	Father employed at Parliament House as a cleaner after the War; Dion's brother Bill worked at Transport Section; mother applied for a house in Canberra; mother "the backbone of the family"; applied for block of land and built house in Ainslie; moved there around 1948; talks about other family members at this time.
10:42	Father-in-law worked in Transport (started in 1938); bus drivers and Commonwealth car drivers; role of inspectors; schools attended by Dion; ambitions at school.
15:57	First paid job (telegram boy); work as postman 1954-55; work at West Block as messenger for Department of External Affairs; married (Val) in 1961; wife had to leave her public service job because of marriage.
21:20	Father-in-law suggested he work for Transport Section as pay was better (including overtime); main forms of transport for people in Canberra in the 1950s; deliveries in West Lake by horse and cart.
25:29	Recalls first job with Transport as bus driver in 1965; "clippies" (bus conductors); one-man operation in 1965; Stan Rowe; Eddie Carnall; interview for job; Dennis Murphy; Jack Bradley (instructor); recalls training and testing.



31:05	Transfer of offices from Melbourne to Canberra in 1965; shifts and seniority; day and night shifts; over-time work; availability of “car work”; cars handled by Administrative Services around 1978; recalls first day on the job in 1954.
36:36 End of Track 1	End of Track 1 (Session 12 March 2010)
00:00 Track 2	Session of 12 March 2010 More about first day; recollections of characters who worked at Kingston depot; practical jokes; taking buses when he was a child and teenager.
05:14	Changes to the buses over time; old depots and bus routes on north side and south side.
12:58	Cowper Street shelter; humorous anecdote; Parliament House.
17:40	Transport Workers’ Union; good wages; industrial disputes; upgrades of positions and continuity; dispute within the union in 1975.
23:45	More about union dispute; personal commitment to trade unionism; the role of being an inspector; supervisors in the field and at the depot.
28:24	Recalls being depot master for Kingston; title changed in 1978 to district manager; regional manager for north-south Canberra (Old Canberra); formation of the Transport Employees ACT Institute in 1978.
33:13 End of Track 2	End of track 2 (Session of 12 March 2010)
00:00 Track 1	Track 1 (Session 19 March 2010) Begins by commenting on previous session which he had listened to on CD; recalls in detail the lay-out and atmosphere of the old Kingston depot.
06:38	Changes to the depot (Depot Stage 2); more detail.
11:19	Bundy clocks; technological change; cashing in; fare boxes.
18:12	More about technological change; recreational facilities in the Kingston depot; ‘special’ runs; more about ‘cashing in’; changes to planning and routing systems; “frequency running” from 1969.
25:02	Women in the industry; early female bus drivers (c1979/80); “all good drivers”; anecdote about one of the early women drivers; union response to the women; other roles of women in the depot and at Head Office in Civic.
30:29	The authority of the driver on the bus; disruptive passengers; anecdote about a White Russian nicknamed ‘Flower Power’; drunks on the bus; disciplinary action against drivers.
36:36 End of	End of Track 1 (Session 19 March 2010)





Track 1	
00:00 Track 2	Session 19 March 2010 Transgressions that led to disciplinary action; examples of punishments.
06:06	Humorous anecdote about complaint from 'parrot' passenger; change in regulations relating to prams; drivers not to leave vehicle unattended; qualities needed to be a good drive.
11:35	Recalls excellent drivers; responds to question about what he liked best about the job; recalls his feelings on the closure of the Kingston Depot in 1990; takes a 'retirement package'; sent to Kingston to close the depot; process for closing the depot.
16:45	Retirement in 1991; 'farewell'; given a plaque of appreciation; recalls planning of buses for Papal visit in 1986; a closing word.
23:24	End of Track 2 (Session 19 March 2010) END OF INTERVIEW



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