

ACT Heritage Library Manuscript Collection

Interview with Mick Ozerskis - Timed Summary

MICK OZERSKIS - TOPICS	TIMELINE (END)
Introduction – job at Powerhouse – knowledge of steam married – refugee camp – first job at Powerhouse – feeding coal into hopper – sweeping coal -	5:00
Learning more English – sit for exam fireman – checking boiler – six months shift work – 3 boilers owned by ACT – 2 boiler by NSW Electricity Commission – hotter in engine room – pipes not insulated – 700F -	8:00
Promotion to work in engine room – “greaser” –	9:27
Talk of starting a diesel power station – 1956 – quick building – six months building – steam crane to build the diesel station – did not work on diesel – sitting exam for steam ticket – Bellose and Morcomb engines -	12:27
Starting the Bellose and Morcomb engines – easy to start – how to start – very quiet – also worked on BTH engines – characteristics of engines – hear whistle as far as Queanbeyan – (14:54) – special clock – synchronised manually at the ANU by him – need for whistle to blow after power station closed – keep the Canberra workforce to time	16:41
Coal consumption – 24 hrs – 50 tonnes – Lithgow coal best – Bulli worst – hard to keep alight – some from Berrima loaded by truck – two trips a day – 10 tonne truck only -	19:24
Ashes – taken to Canberra Racecourse and Duntroon -	20:16
Relation to NSW Electricity Commission – not enough electricity being generated to follow Canberra’s growth – 1944 – NSW boilers brought in “BL” boilers – 4 boilers – one in reserve – three in action – orders from Goulburn – often shut down at 23:00 hrs – on line at 05:00 hrs -	22:45
Living in two room garage in Queanbeyan and travelling to work by bicycle – started in Westridge – moved to Queanbeyan – good friends with George Sein (Saint?) – lot of friends jealous of his relationship with George Sein (Saint?) -	24:35

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Question on discrimination because he was Latvian – not really – wanted fitters’ ticket – for small maintenance – agreed to go for test – Government refused – NSW Trades and Labor Council would not let him because he did not have technical college – very disappointed – made a mistake saying Latvia was occupied by Communists	26:46
Other people – Ron Hourigan (fireman) – Ron Wood (fireman) – relation with Italians – not much – he spoke Polish – Latvian – German – English – not Italian – joined Queanbeyan “Good Neighbour Council” – tried to integrate into community – nominated to become a Justice of the Peace (JP) by local member (1963) – became Australian citizen in 1958	30:09
Rates of pay – holiday pay loading – overtime – 73p / hr -	33:05
Small steam engine called “Rovi Hall”? – no – other small engines – safety? – accidents – had an accident with 2 cylinder steam shunting locomotive he was driving – man crushed between two trucks and killed – the man was not an employee at Power Station but a railway linesman – Ozerskis had to face Canberra Court – did not answer questions - no interpreter? – he was not charged – that was a terrible time – he had been moving some empty trucks to position a loaded one – bumped some empty trucks – the man was between the trucks	36:02
Hardest part of job –scraping paint boilers – hot and dusty – asbestos on lung – once a year – mop out water tubes – check with mirror -	38:30
Industrial disputes – none – overtime was key to happiness – but unrest started when overtime was being cut back 1957 – first showers at work – unions demanded dining and amenity and showers and toilets – but closed shortly after that – amenities room was added as a hut from Fairbairn – 12ftx12ft times two huts put together – near the entrance to workshops – before that lunched in the boiler room or outside if fine weather – engine room was so noisy you had to lip read -	42:06
Socialising amongst workers – Kingston Hotel was the gathering point – lunching at hostels at Eastlake Hostel – later hostel at Capital Hillside – had to lunch at where you lived – could get sandwiches – but if in engine room – could not leave premises for lunch – good tucker – Christmas parties at linesman’s building next to Power House – 200 people – Federal treasurer – lobster prawns chicken – Melbourne Cup do – could not understand the quick race caller	46:08
Swimming in Molonglo River below the Power House – swam himself – not too many people – afraid of chemicals in water – “norisen” – to clean the brass condenser tubes – residue washed into Molonglo – community views of workers and power house – many workers stayed only very short time – too dirty – too noisy – but good pay – so he stayed on – managed to pay tradesmen to build his house in Queanbeyan	49:24
Feelings about power house closing down – very sad – offered job at Tallawarra Power Station – NSW Electricity Commission – offered house there – beside Lake Illawarra –	52:02

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looked at on hot day – but wife wanted to stay in beautiful house in Q – then ACT Electricity Authority offered job on lines driving post hole borer – C class licence to drive big truck – also drove 10 tonne forklift -	
Hand making welding transformers at Power House – handyman – made a welding set – got bare wire – insulation tape – wound a coil – to make welding set – taught himself how to weld – made more welding transformers – lasted for 10 years at Power House	54:44
Years born - 1921 – wife’s first name Elna – passed away in 1989	55:21
Lightning strikes the Power House – Turbines caught fire – so frightened he soiled his trousers – afraid boilers would blow up – smoke everywhere – chimney fans – induced fan pushing – suction fans – supposed to put smoke through to chimney – power stopped so Power Station filled with smoke – smoke like “in hell” - could not see – did not know what to do – then thought to start aux motor – at least got lights going – then started bigger pumps – aux not big enough to do much – but steam aux motor could drive big fan – “work around” solution – got smoke out of building – midnight – bosses decided entire station had to be cleaned – had to supply power after midnight – cleaned insulators in sub-station – new earth sticks – something went wrong – blew up the sub-station – lot of black-outs in Canberra in those days	60:37
Closing of Power Station – Snowy Scheme – did not need the Power House – 132 KV lines – fond memories – (emotional – composes himself) [INTERVIEW ENDS]	62:33