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Fares Please! Retired Transport Workers' Oral History Project

Interview with Leo Morrissey Biographical Notes and Timed Summary

Background

Leo was born 1/2/1934 at Harden. He grew up in Yass and went to school at St Patrick's in Goulburn. He left school after finishing his Intermediate year (year 10). After leaving school he found work in the office at Burrinjuck Dam where he worked in payroll.

Football was a major part of Leo's life in his early years. He started a football team at Burrinjuck Dam and played First Grade for Yass. When changes in his job at Burrinjuck in 1956 meant moving to Deniliquin he looked for a job that would enable him to continue playing League in the region. An uncle helped him get a job working for War Service Homes in Canberra. After some months he transferred to the Department of Interior where he worked as Assistant Paymaster from 1956-1960.

In 1960 Leo transferred to the Department of Transport where he worked as Paymaster at Kingston until 1973. At this time changes in payroll management as a result of the introduction of computers had a serious impact on Leo's position, particularly because of his lack of school qualifications. As he said, 'the bloke I taught became my boss'. He was moved into other positions – costing and timetabling – and had to physically move to the Transport, now ACTION office in Civic. He also studied for and obtained his Leaving Certificate but was disappointed to find that by the time he had it, the qualification rules for public service positions had changed again, and it was no longer necessary to have it for the work that he preferred. In 1983 he left ACTION and took up a position in the ACT Education Department. He was the Administrator at Melrose High School and later at Erindale College. He retired in 1998 after 50 years in the workforce.




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

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When he first came to Canberra, Leo lived in hostels and guesthouses. After he married in 1963 he and Jeanette moved into a house in the new suburb of Lyons. They have two children.

Leo's work as paymaster in the Transport Department began at a time when much of the work of payroll was manual. Departments such as Treasury had more sophisticated technical equipment but Transport had only the Burroughs adding machines. Leo didn't have a calculator until 1963. In addition workers were paid in cash. This meant counting out the money for each pay envelope. Pays were collected at the pay office or delivered to work sections by the Paymaster. All the paper work for the end of the financial year was done by hand. The move to decimal currency in 1966 made the work of payroll easier but computers revolutionised it. Leo's memories of working as Paymaster for Transport and the Department of Interior provide the detail of skilled work that is no longer part working life. Leo also played a part in significant initiatives at Transport including the Transport Workers Sick Fund and the Transport Credit Union.

Leo has written his memoirs, including his early years of living in hostels in Canberra.

Interview Summary

05/01/2011	1:15:30
Track 1 (CD 1)	0:09:09
0:00:00	Introduction to interview. Early background and work before Canberra. Schooling. Reasons for coming to Canberra.
0:04:27	Getting the job in War Service Homes in Canberra. Location of work. Move to payroll in Department of Interior at Acton. Living in Canberra – hostels and leisure time.
0:09:09	END
Track 2 (CD 1)	0:14:33
0:00:00	Transfer to payroll in Transport 1960. Characteristics of Transport Department at the time. Story of dummy pay envelopes. Issue of qualifications for different public service classifications and Leo's lack of qualifications meant that he was classified as Acting Paymaster. The Union's support of his position.
0:04:31	How the pay office worked and the various positions in the office. How pays were calculated. Use of Burroughs machine. Number of pays. Shift lengths. Different components of Transport. Importance of office staff.
0:08:02	Other office jobs. Office layout Distributing pays. Pay envelopes and written pay slips. Burroughs machine operators and functions.
0:10:10	Manual preparation and presentation of group certificates. Automation of other offices. Memorable people at Transport. Alma de Smet (the 'matriarch' of Transport) who worked in accounts. John Sullivan's job as

	checker of driver's takings and later career. [move away from microphone]
0:14:33	END
Track 3 (CD1)	0:25:19
0:00:00	John Sullivan
0:00:14	Daily routine. Building conditions – possums in the roof. Work as bookmaker at Acton racecourse. 'Coining' the pays. Story of clash of payweek and Melbourne Cup Day.
0:08:37	Own union membership. Working with Transport Workers Union on pay issues. Jack Wilkinson's role in Union and work as ministerial car driver. Other payroll issues; pay rates, increments, overtime. Shifts always incurred overtime.
0:13:16	1970s flood. Story of car driver who was caught in it. Own memories. Years at Kingston. Issues of moving the office. Story of the rusty safe. Changes from manual to more technical over time; calculator 1963, decimal currency 1966; computer in early 1970s. Leo's exclusion from working with computers because not qualified for public service 'third division'. Managing change to computers. Move to Civic.
0:17:55	Impact of change on Leo's working life. Return to school. Work in costing and timetabling 1973-83. Disappointment with new position. End of old pay section. End of cash pay. Description of packing pay envelopes.
0: 21:14	Story of managing complaint by public servant outside Transport. The camaraderie. Missing that in new position. Women in the office. Story of the snake in the typing pool at Department of Interior
0:25:19	END
Track 4 (CD 2 Track 1)	0:18:16
0:00:00	1970s strike. Impact on drivers. Initiation of Transport Sick Fund. Leo's work with Union (Jack Wilkinson) on this. Involved in starting Transport Credit Union with Bill [need surname]. Story of Bill Beadman rescuing man from lake. Relationship between office workers and drivers.
0:03:33	Impact of changes in Canberra on Transport Department; reorganisation in response to expansion including loss of cars [to Commonwealth Cars] and trucks. Different nationalities of employees. Relationship with workmates.
0:07:58	Highlights of career in Transport; end of financial year when manual management. Invention of a system for tax calculation during manual period which was sanctioned by Leo's boss and acknowledged as brilliant by Commonwealth audit. Used the system for 15 years until audited and



	as it was strictly illegal had to stop using.
0:12:52	Changes in Canberra from 1956. New suburb of Lyons. Changes in work culture over years of service. Issue of not getting High School Certificate.
0:18:16	END
Track 5 (CD 2 Track 2)	0:08:53
0:00:00	Reflections on Canberra and 50 years in the workforce. People at Transport and work culture. Stories of working at Transport
0:05:40	Football coaching from 1959. Retirement years. Nicknames for fellow workers at Transport.
0:08:53	END



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