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Fares Please! Retired Transport Workers' Oral History Project

Interview with John Russell (Jack) Bradley Biographical Notes and Timed Summary

Background

Jack was born in 1920 at Tumut. He was the second youngest child of a family of six. His grandfather, Henry Bradley, was the caretaker of the Yarrangobilly Caves (a job he had taken over from his father-in-law, James Merry). One of Jack's uncles had a dairy at Bombala. His father, Jim Bradley, was a skilled horseman. By the time Jack was born, Jim was earning a living as a miner. He was concerned about the health risks of mining and saw the opening up of construction work in Canberra as a good alternative. Jim arrived in Canberra in 1925, 'just after the big flood' and the family followed in 1926.

Jim Bradley's first work in Canberra was on the Prime Minister's Lodge – 'he dug the foundations with a pick and shovel'. He later got work with the Forestry Department and the family moved from Riverbourne workers camp to the Uriarra Forestry settlement in 1927. They were one of the first families at Uriarra and lived in the Schoolhouse until a house was available. Jim Bradley Avenue at Uriarra honours the family's early settlement there. [see Ann Gugler's research for details of Riverbourne]

Jack's early schooling was affected by the move to Canberra and the difficulty of getting to school from the workers' settlements. He stayed with his older sister in Sydney for a while and went to a 'brother's' school in Waverley. After the move to Uriarra, when he was old enough, he rode his pony to the Cotter and caught the bus to Telopea Park School from there. His later years of schooling at Canberra High School were affected by the Depression of the 1930s and he decided to leave before completing his studies.




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

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During the Second World War Jack worked at a munitions factory in Sydney - Purcells Engineering. He returned to Canberra after the War (1945) and worked for Forestry. He carried out jobs such as pruning pines and survey work. He enjoyed working with the surveyor, Mr Goodwin, and remembers him saying 'If Mr Sheaffe is correct in his calculations, that peg will go here' [Percy Sheaffe was one of the original surveyors of the ACT and Chief Surveyor during the 1940s] In 1949 Jack transferred from Forestry to the Transport Department. He started on 5 September 1949 as a conductor. He also drove government cars during this period. He became a bus driver in about 1960. In 1965 he became a driving instructor and initiated classroom instruction. He was later appointed a supervisor. He retired in March 1985.

One of the highlights of Jack's career in Transport was driving Members of Parliament and their wives to the opening of Tumut Tunnel no. 2 in the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in 1962. Another event was a strike by the Transport Workers Union in 1971 when Jack was Branch Secretary. This involved a dispute with a journalist who accused the Union of stacking the membership for the vote.

Jack married Irene Beaschel in early 1941 at St Mary's Church Bondi. They had two children, Judith Irene and David John. After the War Jack returned to Canberra and the family lived at Uriarra. When he transferred to Transport in 1949 they moved to a government house in Ainslie, 12 Chaffey Crescent. Irene worked in the public service until 1956 when the marriage dissolved and she returned to Sydney. Jack married Audrey Mills, a teacher who came to Australia as a 'ten pound pom' in 1960. They had four children. Audrey was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in the early 1960s and Jack gradually became a full time carer for her and the children while continuing to work full time for Transport. Jack bought the house in Chaffey Crescent in 1971 and he and Audrey lived there until Audrey's death on 18 June 2009. Poultry breeding was a long term interest for Jack and he won a number of prizes for his birds.

Interview summary

Note that Roger Bradely, Jack's son, sat in on all the interviews. The first tracks include some asides between Jack and Roger. In the later ones Roger asks questions based on his own experience of working for ACTION.

28/10/10	0:48:14
Track # 1	24:34
0:00:22	Transfer from to Transport from Forestry. Work as conductor. Bus Driver's Licence. Left school before schooling completed. Purcell Engineering in Sydney during the Second World War.
0:05:00	War work at Purcells. Work for Forestry. Memories of coming to Canberra as a child in 1926. [Lea Collins visits to check recording equipment]. Horses and horse riding. Family matters.
0:11:13	Members of family – siblings and children. Early Canberra and reasons for coming – father wanted to stop mining.
0:15:04	Father's work in Canberra on Prime Minister's Lodge as labourer and for Forestry

	as an axeman. Early life in Canberra and living at Uriarra in the old schoolhouse. Getting to school at Telopea Park. Riverbourne workers' camp. Closure of Hotel Canberra [where older brother worked] during the Depression. Living in Sydney at various times with sister, Jean – school and War work.
0:21:03	Memories of going to opening of Parliament House in 1927. Memories of driving Miss Bell to Chifley's funeral [1951]. Changes in Transport Department over time. Events as car driver. Decision to remain as conductor rather than become bus driver during 1950s because it required more varied shift work.
End:	24:34
Track #2	7:27
0:0:00	First day at Transport. Reasons for leaving forestry. First work as conductor on Kingston bus route. Experience of his first driver. Importance of day shift with two children. Move to Chaffey Crescent. Stephens Street Transport Depot at Ainslie. Daily routine. The bullying Inspector. [telephone]
End:	7:27
Track #3	16:13
0:0:00	Managing difficult work situations. Decision to stay at Transport despite first experiences. Memories of the surveyor he worked with in Forestry. Jobs as a conductor. Length of shifts. Double shifts. Bus drivers' shifts. Learning to drive on the job – Bill Beadman.
0:04:48	Meeting Audrey. Audrey's work as a teacher. Bus driving. Opening of Snowy Mountains Tunnel [08:51] – backing down the tunnel and practise for this. People on the bus. [note date is 1962]
0:11:07	Menzies inauguration ceremony [attended as car driver]. Friends – Bill Hall best man at Jack's wedding. Medical checks. Rules and regulations. Dismissals for drunkenness. Incidents with passengers. Characters [talking with Roger]
End:	16:13
29/10/10	1:08:45
Track #1	8:11
0:00:00	Union membership. Involvement in Transport Union; accusation of stacking and three week strike that resulted in loss of conditions for higher wages
0:05:31	Driving a bus to Parliament House on the occasion of Gough Whitlam's sacking. Attendance at Parliament House when Menzies became Prime Minister. First days of bus driving
End:	8:11 [interruption]
Track #2	26:24 Roger Bradley, Jack's son, also asks questions
0:00:00	One man buses [1969]. Characters. Driving on the university run. Other routes. Bus make and number. 'Set-right' ticket machine on one man buses.
0:04:16	First bus driving lesson at Kingston shops. Ainslie Depot. Chaffey Crescent. Story about Mr Simpson?

0:08:20	Work as driving instructor and issues. Classroom teaching. Instructor's rates. Characters.
0:13:13	Ticket machines and fares. Story of instructor in early days of conducting. Workforce at Kingston depot. 'Sickies' and issue of drunk workers. Story about Morrie Martin's family.
0:18:26	'Spares' [check buses or drivers] Issues for employees. Work as supervisor. Visit from chief of Transport – Mr Turner. Different nationalities in workforce
0:22:24	First female bus driver. Work issues. Smoking restrictions – lack of. Family story.
0:26:24	End
Track #3	34:10 Roger Bradley, Jack's son, also asks questions
0:00:00	People – Morrie Martin, Bill Hall, Denis Murphy, Lou Pene. George Sykes – driver who picked up bricks that fell from the backs of trucks (later a brick carter). Friends at the pub.
0:04:53	Work culture – meeting at the 'new' hotel on Northbourne Avenue [Canberra Rex]. Family. Driver training. Fights at work.
0:09:20	Work during the war [at Purcells]; dangers of machinery, injury, secrecy about the work, death of another worker, clocking on and clocking off. Bundy clock used to register workers at Transport.
0:13:31	Retirement party – driven there in the Prime Minister's car. Prime Ministers Holt and McMahon – drivers and car requirements.
0:17:24	Changes in Transport Department over time including changes in buses. Injury from mechanical hand indicator. Issue of complex forms for reporting injuries. Never took sick leave – 'there wasn't one day that I didn't want to go to work'.
0:20:07	Changes in Canberra – new suburbs. Bill Beadman – the Cotter bus driver who took Jack to school in the early days. Changes in Ainslie. Bus depots in Ainslie. The old building maintenance depot in Ainslie. Chaffey Crescent rent and wage as conductor. Vegetable garden.
0:24:56	Canberra's growth with transfer of people from Melbourne. Involvement in rugby union at Canberra High School. Staying with various people while going to Canberra High [distance from Uriarra].
0:28:22	Poultry breeding and prizes. Issue of roosters in neighbourhood and managing large number of chooks in backyard.
0:32:16	Summary of experience of working for Transport
0:34:10	End