

# The Wayne Ernest Hansen Life Story - Born Warwick 1949

## Categories

# Life summary # *Story-teller's cultural background*: Australian

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## *The early years*

**B**orn in Warwick on the Darling Downs on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1949. My father Norman Hansen was from Killarney and was of Finnish heritage. Mother Lyndall Hoffman was from Emu Vale where her father James Hoffman was the local Head Master of the small school. He was of German descent.

I attended Warwick's *St. Mary's Catholic School* with the nuns and graduated to the Christian Brothers for grades 3, 4 and 5. Famous rugby league coach, Wayne Bennett was a couple of grades below me but I never knew him.

At age 7, my mother persuaded the local Newsagent to give me a job selling the *Warwick News*. My sector was along the main street where there were three hotels. Trespass onto another boy's turf resulted in a fight to protect territory. The hotel patrons were very generous and I made more money from tips than from the sale of papers. The same year, my father brought a new Victor motor mower and I started a business, mowing lawns in the neighbourhood. From that day forward, I was never out of a job until I retired at age 62.

The Christian Brothers, I felt, were very cruel. Some had half-pennies sewn into the six layers of leather of their straps to inflict more pain on students for small misdemeanours. The floor of the classrooms were bare boards and during winter the rooms were freezing. When attempting to do copy book writing with push pens and ink from the ink well, a brother would patrol the aisles with a steel rule or his strap hidden up the inside of his sleeve. Students with bad writing would receive a swift hit across the knuckles with the edge of the rule or strap. We would be shaking from the cold and also the fear of the brother.

In 1960 I was transferred to the state school at East Warwick as this was free education. The Christian Brothers fee was 5 pound per term which was deemed an unwanted expense. Life was grand at the state school – clean toilets, girls, compassionate teachers and wood fires for the cold winter.

In 1961 we moved to Sandgate on Moreton Bay. Celebrity Kerri Anne Kennerley attended the state school there and I was very good friends with her brother. I completed the last year of Scholarship or Year 8 in 1964 and then commenced sub Junior the next year at the *Sandgate High School*. I really enjoyed those years and played hockey and tennis at school. On Sundays I did archery with the *Redcliffe Archery Club*.

## **Work**

On completion of year 12, I started a cadetship in Engineering Surveying with the *Main Roads Department* on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1967. I was transferred from Brisbane to Mackay District and worked with Arthur Lisle, an old surveyor who never held a 1<sup>st</sup> year cadet for the 12 month period. In those days 1<sup>st</sup> year cadets were placed with the toughest surveyors. Cadets were easy to employ and the department did not want to waste time training, if one could not tolerate the harsh treatment and conditions.

All our possessions when rolled into a swag should have been able to pass through the spokes of a wheel of a dray. My possessions were meagre, with the exception of a big bowie knife and a small transistor radio. Study was done after work using correspondence papers sent out from the *Queensland Institute of Technology* in Brisbane. My first camp was in cane cutters quarters at the base of the Sarina Range. The gang consisted of the surveyor, two chainmen, a cook and myself. My pay was \$20 a week and we received 90 cents a night for camp allowance which covered the mess bill.

That year, the majority of surveys were bridge sites and I learnt to use an axe, brush hook and sledge hammer. First-year cadets don't use the instruments and I wasn't allowed to use the chain. Life was very lonely, as the youngest chainman was 42 and an uncontrollable drunk on pay weekend. By Monday, he would be broke and then return to camp for another fortnight. I was placed under his care so the cook did not molest me. My bowie knife was my savour.

For the last six months, I would spend my weekends at Seaforth which was a beautiful seaside village about 30 miles north of Mackay. During the cane harvest, I cut 12 ton of cane with a cane knife to help my girlfriend's father on Saturday morning. We would then fish the waters in his boat from Seaforth to Cape Hillsborough in the afternoon. Mackerel were plentiful.

## **1968**

The chief surveyor sent me to the Gold Coast to work under a much younger surveyor, Phil Brooker, in 1968. The gang consisted of the surveyor, a survey assistant, two cadets, two chainmen and a cook. Life was great and we lived in a construction camp at Coombabah near Nerang. We carried out surveys in the hinterland around Canungra and Tamborine Mountain. The terrain was very rugged and all the equipment and supplies had to be walked into the sites as they were inaccessible by vehicle. This year, construction commenced on the four-lane highway adjacent to present day *Dreamworld*.

I contracted pneumonia while doing a bridge site of Currumbin Creek about mid-year and almost died. I remember hallucinating and floating, looking down on my body which had a very high fever. Thank goodness I survived.

**Page 3:** Hansen W. E. *The Wayne Hansen Life Story – born Warwick 1949*, v11.(2020). As part of the series, "Stories from the Shed", Mount Gravatt Men's Shed, [www.mtgravattmensshed.org.au](http://www.mtgravattmensshed.org.au)

1969



Typical camp shift

This year, I worked in the far north Cairns District under surveyor Dave Fairbrother. Dave ran a large camp with 2 survey assistants, 2 cadets, 3 chainmen and a cook. Our first job was near *Yarrabah Mission* across the inlet from Cairns. We crowded into small cane-cutter barracks for the duration. Conditions were very hot and wet. Watersheds were required for design and it was incredibly difficult to traverse the ridges with compass and tape. A

watershed is used to calculate the volume of water likely to cross the road in a rain event. Drainage structures are designed from this information. Commencing the traverse with compass and tape, one would have no clue as to where the ridges could lead. At the end of the day, a jacket would be tied to a tree to mark the start of the next day and we would walk back to the truck. Because of the dense jungle, arguments were very common as to which direction the vehicle was. Often, we would have to use the sound of the truck's horn and flashing lights to attract someone who was lost and went their own way. After a couple of days of this hard yakka, cadet John Linkerhof had had enough. He wanted to be excluded from this terrible task. At the end of the day, he cut off a branch from a stinging tree and returning to the truck, and hit his out stretched arm several times with the branch. The pain he endured was excruciating and he was hospitalized for several days. He was successful and was removed from watersheds. Most afternoons we would cool off in the swimming hole of the Johnstone River near Gordonvale. After a few weeks, we discovered this was the home of some large crocodiles hence swimming was abandoned.

In March, the thick tropical jungles surrounding the township of El Arish beckoned. We moved camp to Cowley, just south of Innisfail. Rain fell every day for six weeks. The walls of the huts of the construction camp and everything were covered with mildew. The job site was inaccessible by vehicles so all supplies and equipment were carried in each day along the railway line. I was clearing very thick lantana with a brush hook when I struck a huge wasps' nest in a pandanus tree. The swarm of tropical wasps attacked and I dropped to the ground as I could not escape. Within hours I looked like the elephant man. Fifty years later I am still allergic to wasp sting and am required to take medication to prevent swelling in the throat. The survey was completed just after the first moon landing.

Towards the end of July, we camp shifted to *Gamboola* Station on the Mitchell River. The survey was an investigation for realignment of 60 miles of the beef road between *Wrothan*

*Park* and *Highbury* Stations in Cape York. Camp was set up on a large waterhole and, although 200 miles from the Gulf of Carpentaria, we caught two sawfish just under seven feet in length. Some nights we would take lanterns down onto a sandbank and cool off for a swim. The lights attracted the freshwater crocodiles which were curious but harmless. Their illuminated eyes formed a semicircle a short distance from us. I always felt very uncomfortable by their presence. Work consisted of 12-hour days Monday to Friday and 8 hours on Saturday. Study was done at night by gas lantern. Dave Fairbrother had a separate camp as his wife, three young children and his parents were there for the six-month duration. He and his wife, Jan would plot the investigation plans from our field books at night. This was paid at a varying rate depending on the topography. As a third-year cadet with all the overtime and camp allowance of \$2.10 per night, I was clearing \$300 a month. Each man had his own 12-foot-by-12-foot tent with dirt floor, a steel stretcher with fibre mattress and pillow, a small table with stool and a gas lantern. During our stay at *Gamboola* no rain fell so the cattle became very weak. Water was scarce and in their poor condition some would become bogged in the mud on the edge of our waterhole. The carcasses were contaminating our only source of water. The water hole was a couple of hundred metres long and amazingly nobody became sick. The water was not even boiled to purify it. A truck was sent to Chillagoe each fortnight for groceries and tobacco and the alternate fortnight the mail plane brought supplies to *Wrotham Park* airstrip. We returned to Cairns about every six weeks to kick our heels up and run wild.

The alignment of the investigation survey followed the high ground of the sandridges and were projected onto aerial photos for traversing on the ground. Thousand-foot-long sections of levels were observed either side of the alignment to ensure the highest terrain was found. The staff man paced out the distances taking a staff reading every 100 feet and he was then retrieved by vehicle to save time walking back. Very quickly, a competition developed to determine who could drive out and back in the quickest time. The drive out was cautious, winding through the trees, but with a set of tracks to follow on return the speed was much faster. The game finished when the tray on the back of the vehicle was torn off by a slight miscalculation as the vehicle sped through a tight gap between two trees. We discovered that the very large magnetic termite mounds in the area tended to be built on the very highest part of the sandridge. This was very remarkable as the fall either side was very minimal, perhaps one in a thousand.

Water bags were trapped to the bull bars of each vehicle and a 12-gallon steel water drum was bolted to the floor of the tray for our daily supply. The drums were exposed to the sun and during the day the water was too hot to drink. I cannot believe the drums were not covered. The camp was in the middle of the 60-mile survey corridor. Travelling to the job site each day was an adventure. The station manager told us to kill as many wild pigs and dingoes as possible. The pigs destroyed the cattle troughs and the dingoes preyed on the

young calves. Everyone was on the lookout. When a mob would be spotted, the chase was on. We hung on for grim death as the truck hurtled through the bush at high speed. Any pigs knocked over by the vehicle were quickly killed with brush hooks or axes. We spent hours sharpening these weapons and they were lethal. The heads were removed and left on large fence posts for the crows and ants to feast on. With the flesh removed, it was easy to extract the tucks which were then mounted as trophies. Often during these wild chases, the water bags would be torn loose and we would arrive at the job site with only the water in the steel drum. During the heat of the day, the water, being too hot to drink, would be allowed to drip slowly into a pint pannikin. This cooled it considerably. It would take a long time to fill the vessel and every native bee and wasp in the vicinity would congregate on and in the mug to have a drink. The water was shared amongst the team of sometimes up to six thirsty guys. The mouthful was downed between clenched teeth so as not to swallow an insect. I would suck a pebble which created saliva which was a big help for most of the day. Never in the 6-month period, did we ever remove the water bags from the front to ensure their safety. We were young and stupid!

Sundays were for washing and shooting. After the clothes were hung, we would head along the river searching for dingoes and pigs which were plentiful. They were very difficult to stop with anything less powerful than a .303 rifle.



Sunday Bloody Sunday

Because the survey was in a predominantly east-west direction, the azimuth was adjusted every 10 miles for the earth's curvature. Sun and star observations were carried out to calculate the small variations required. Time of the observations was very important. Watches were set using the electronic time signals broadcast via radio waves and the Star Almanac aided with the long and evolved calculations using 8 figure log tables. The Star Almanac provided the positions of the sun and bright stars at any given time. Very seldom was the calculation correct on the first attempt. This work helped enormously with my studies. My subjects that year were Astronomy, Spherical Trigonometry, Computations III and Geology. I received the highest results in the state for survey cadets studying by correspondence with QIT in 1969.

In October the camp was moved to the outskirts of Kuranda, a town at the top of the range overlooking Cairns and surrounding coastal townships and sugar cane fields. Beautiful scenery but terribly difficult to work in. Because of the damp conditions in the dense rainforest, scrub-itch was rife. These mites were so small they could not be seen with the naked eye. They thrived in areas of the body like armpits, groin and in particular the top of the boots where the bowyangs sat. These were material covers with an elastic top to fit snugly around the ankles. They prevented rubbish falling into the boots. The mites buried under the skin and the area became incredibly itchy and irritating. Each afternoon on returning to camp, we would remove our boots and clothing and scratch until the skin was red raw then apply methylated spirits. Wow, the pain would be intense but it gave some relief from this annoying bug.

We remained in this camp till just after Xmas. I took one of the chainmen, Jeffery Smith, back to Brisbane with me as he had never travelled south of El Arish. On the morning of departure, I discovered that my *Austin Freeway* had no brakes, but we were so eager to head south that I drove from Cairns to Brisbane without them. Another very stupid decision as the brakes only needed to be bled.

## 1970

I was transferred to Mackay and camped on the banks of Sandy Creek with surveyor Ian Allen and his gang. We worked on the Mackay - Sarina Road until Easter then moved to Nambour District. Before leaving I purchased a block of land at Haliday Bay overlooking the



The beautiful country of Nambour District

water and islands. The bay was a beautiful deep inlet just north of *Cape Hillsborough National Park*. The cost was a bargain, three months *Gamboola* wages, \$900 for 16 perches.

Our first survey was on Buderim Hill on the Sunshine Coast and during this, I was seconded to take over a crew on Mt. Tamborine. The new camp was a seven-level house in Eagle Heights. From my bedroom, the

view was spectacular overlooking the entire Gold Coast. We surveyed a new alignment for the goat track between Tamborine and Canungra. The chainmen were three of the most experienced guys I ever worked with Howard Duke, Neil Moorhead and Jack Van Damm. The terrain was very steep and ropes were used to negotiate the slopes.

From Tamborine I was transferred to Bundaberg District with surveyor Bob Bennett. His crew were keen dart players. After work, I would be required to finish the day's field notes then study my correspondence subjects while the rest of the crew would be having a great time with their favourite pastime. The sound of laughter and the thud of darts was very distracting. We were camped in the Head Master's school house at Apple Tree Creek just north of Childers.

From there we moved to an abandoned farmhouse on an orange orchard near Gayndah in the West Burnett. I was bunked in a room of the western side of the house. It wasn't lined and there were gaps in the weatherboards. The westerly winter winds howled through at night and even with several coats on and long pants and all the blankets I owned, I still froze. It was a relief to have breakfast in the kitchen with the wood stove burning. That was probably the coldest conditions I ever experienced surveying.

After a couple of months, I returned to Nambour and then shifted camp to a farmhouse on the Mary River outside Gunalda, north of Gympie. We surveyed the bypass around the small community. The country was open grassland gently undulating and easy to work in. The survey finished halfway up the Gunalda Range and obviously, this steep section was very difficult.

## 1971

My studies were completed, and I led a party of 2 cadets and a shearers' cook to *Bodella* Station which was between Quilpie and Windorah in south western Queensland. The *Main Page 8*: Hansen W. E. *The Wayne Hansen Life Story – born Warwick 1949*, v11.(2020). As part of the series, "Stories from the Shed", Mount Gravatt Men's Shed, [www.mtgravattmensshed.org.au](http://www.mtgravattmensshed.org.au)

*Roads Department* had built a raised section of roadway along the northern boundary of the sheep station. This formed a barrier which prevented the natural flow of flood waters during the wet season. The neighbouring property was lush and green after a flood while *Bodella* was dry. We camped in the shearers' quarters next to the homestead. I showed 1<sup>st</sup> year cadet Graeme Taege how to sharpen an axe with a file. Always push the file away from the edge of the blade. A couple of minutes later, he had sliced his hand along the length of his thumb line. It was about a three-inch-long cut. The *Quilpie Hospital* was a 70-mile drive so I sent him over to the homestead for treatment. The old lady there said it was just a scratch. Someone kicked in the head by a horse was what she was used to. Surprisingly all the time we spent working in remote areas, there was never any First Aid Training provided. There were many serious injuries over time, but it was more good luck than good management that nobody died.

Surveyor Dennis Sheard arrived back from holidays after a month and took charge. I was delegated to plot the plans from our survey with a push pen and coloured inks. The light above the dining table was a 60-watt bulb attached to a 12-foot ceiling, not ideal for plotting. Not surprising, our survey proved what was common sense; that the roadway obstructed the water's flow. As compensation, the cocky was granted another huge parcel of land 90 mile by air west of *Bodella*. He was expecting the road to be dropped to the natural surface level. He was very happy and purchased a light plane to commute. During our time there, the heavens opened. The country was inundated with water. On Saturday, we always went into town to stock up on groceries and have a few beers. The country was covered with a sea of water.

One Saturday driving in from the mailbox, Dennis misjudged where the wheel tracks were and the *Ford F100* ute slid into the quagmire. After struggling for several hours to free the vehicle, I decided to walk to the homestead and borrow a 4x4 jeep. The track from the mailbox in was almost 12 miles and we were about 7 miles away from the homestead. On returning, I went to tow it out backwards, thus remaining on the gravel formation with the jeep. Oh no, this may damage the borrowed jeep and I was told to turn it around. Naturally the jeep became bogged to the floorboards. Now we had two vehicles seriously bogged. It took 6 hours to move them onto the formed track by levering with trees and much back-breaking work. Lucky the axes were still in the *Ford* and there was an abundance of *gidgea* trees. It was my birthday and what a way to celebrate. We arrived back at camp just in time to have a shower and watch a movie at the homestead. The family had a projector and hired movies which were delivered by the mailman each month.

When the road between Winton and Cloncurry opened after the wet season, we headed north for the winter program in the Gulf Country. The highway north of Winton was through black-soil plains and trucks had churned through the mud before our convoy. The wheel tracks were very deep, and we were travelling in our private sedans. The only way forward

was to negotiate the high sections, but we still got dry bogged. Accommodation for the night had been booked at the *Blue Heeler Hotel* in Kynuna. Being the first travellers through after the wet created an air of excitement among the town folk. The beer was flowing freely when the publican's young sons entered the bar with bull whips. They were of primary school age. Tops were placed on empty stubbies and they were lined up along the bar. The boys proceeded to use their whips to knock these tops off. The bar cleared very quickly, and the patrons watched the spectacle from the verandah.

That night a young, well-dressed couple entered the bar and asked if it was possible to have dinner. The dining room was closed but the indigenous barmaid offered to make them corn beef sandwiches. The man asked if they could have pickles as well. *"Of course, Sir,"* was the reply. A couple of minutes later the publican entered the bar. He was an ex-shearer dressed in a Jackie Howe singlet and thin but very fit. *"Who ordered the corn beef and pickle sandwiches?"* The young man put his hand up and he was beckoned over to the bar. The publican grabbed him by his tie and slammed his chin on to the bar. *"You want trouble, don't you? Coming in here ordering pickles. You just want to upset me and now you're gunna cop it."* The young fellow was terrified, and his girlfriend was screaming and begged to be



Jack the barber - Nardoo

allowed to leave. *"It's too late for that. I'm gunna teach this prick a lesson."* Amidst all the commotion the publican's wife entered and after a few harsh words the man was released. The couple disappeared into the night distressed and relieved. Apparently with the lack of travellers over the past weeks, the publican was 'toey' and wanted a bit of a blue to let off steam. There was a caricature on the wall of him wearing a large set of boxing gloves. He was an ex-champion and loved to get into the ring when *Fred Brophy's Boxing Tent* came to town.

Our first camp was on the banks of Corella Creek just north of Cloncurry. After about a month, we finished the set out of the Quamby road for the construction crew and moved camp to *Nardoo Station* on the Leichhardt River, 150 miles NW of Cloncurry. The gang consisted of the surveyor, 5 cadets and the shearers' cook, Jack Bussell. No chainmen were

employed as it was difficult to retain them living in such difficult and remote conditions. There are too many incidents that occurred during our northern adventure to publish. We

also worked in Mt. Isa, Bourketown, Karumba , Julia Creek and Normanton. While working away from the camp we were accommodated in hotels. Needless to say, we enjoyed the cold beer. Jack was always left to caretake the camp. During these periods of isolation, he seemed to go a bit troppo.

In the camp one morning, the temperature at 8:00 am was 100° Fahrenheit in the office tent under a fly. The conditions out in the field with very little shade made working extremely difficult. The survey had to be completed before the cadets returned to Brisbane to sit for exams.

Having a shearers' cook, the only meat on the menu was mutton. We decided to vary the Sunday lunch with boiled plain-turkey, also known as the Australian bustard. Sunday morning, one of gang would be selected to shoot a turkey, and this gave the shooter one dollar off their mess bill which was calculated weekly. Even boiled, the meat was still tough but at least we had variety.

The plain turkey is a big bird with a long neck similar in appearance to a small ostrich but can fly. Some stood over five foot high. In those days, the fine for killing a turkey was \$200. They were plentiful and we were very isolated.

Saturday night in camp was card-night. We would have a few drinks and play cards in the mess-van as it had lights from the generator. The water-trailer was hooked up so also had running water. One night, discussion turned to UFO's and extra-terrestrial life forms. A fierce argument ensued with the cook adamant that it was not probable. After much disagreement we went to bed and left Jack to lament by himself. We could hear him arguing with parliament on the radio while having a few more 'needles' of over proof rum. He referred to a 5oz glass as a needle. I decided to have some fun and put a two-way radio under the stretcher in his tent and waited. A couple of mates joined me in a tent furthest from Jack's. Eventually he staggered over and disappeared into darkness of his home away from home. As soon as the snoring began, "*Earthling! Earthling! Take me to your leader,*" sounded over the radio. "*What the f#^#!*" then back to sleep. This continued a few more times until, "*You bastards! You bastards!*" Jack raced into the mess van and came out with a huge carving knife in each hand and wearing only his white jocks. It was hilarious watching him prancing around in the moonlight searching for the culprits. We had no doubt if he had caught us that blood would have flowed. This was a cartoon that I always wanted to add to my collection but never got around to drawing it.

After a very eventful winter program, we completed the survey and returned to Brisbane in October for the cadets to sit for their annual exams. As my return was not urgent, I was delegated the task to return Jack to his home in Roma. I had purchased some *No Doze* from the chemist as I knew it was to be a long trip. We left Cloncurry about 9:00am so arrived at *Walkabout Creek Hotel* at McKinlay just on opening time. Jack got a dozen stabbies for the

road. He got another dozen in Barcaldine. I had never taken *No Doze* before so with each stubbie I drank, I took a tablet. A dozen stubbies, a dozen *No Doze*. Very early in the morning, I finally got Jack out of the car in Roma and lay down on the front seat to have a nap. I couldn't even blink my eyes. I drove into the morning sun to Toowoomba where I had relatives. I didn't sleep till late that night and have never touched *No Doze* again. Those were the days before breathalysers but still, a very irresponsible thing to do. In those days, there were very few cars on the outback roads and not too much bitumen.

### **1972 - 1975**

I was appointed an Engineering Surveyor II in February 1972. I worked in Brisbane auditing contractor's work on the South East Freeway from Stanley Street to Juliette Street. The survey camps were in a couple of houses along Birdwood Road at Wellers Hill. These houses were resumed for the future freeway and accommodated many crews. I continued to work on construction and carried out preliminary surveys for the extension of the SE Freeway and also work for the proposed North-West and North-East Freeways. These freeways were never constructed. In 1974 I set out the alignment for the Nyanda Overpass on Beaudesert Road at Salisbury. It is the bridge over the railway line. *Hornibrook* won the contract to build the bridge and approaches and I remained on site almost till completion.

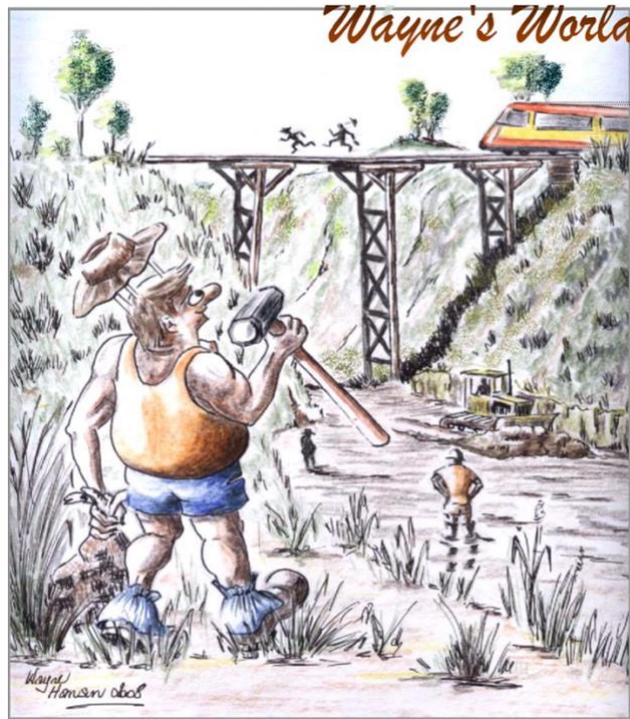
During these years, I enjoyed the night life of Fortitude Valley. It was a wild time and I was lucky not to be in the *Whisky A Go-Go* Nightclub when it was firebombed. Somehow, I survived that era unscathed.

### **1975 – 1985**

In 1975 a bridge was to be constructed over Bakers Creek just south of Mackay and I was required to set it out. It was a very difficult project with horizontal and vertical curves for the control and raked and multi directional piles in the pile caps. Bakers Creek was subjected to six metre tidal surges which added to the difficulty. During my ten-year period in Mackay District, I worked from Proserpine in the north to Marlborough in the south. I also did many surveys around the coalfields in the Bowen Basin.

In 1978, I took 3 months long service leave and built a four-bedroom brick house on the land at Haliday Bay. My brother-in-law was a builder and came up to help. I had been helping him for years as an off-sider in Brisbane so he returned the favour. The house was completed, and it was my intention to retire there when I was thirty-years-old and become a full-time artist and fisherman. I had a half-share investment in two blocks of flats in Sandgate and thought I could live off my share of the rent. That is another story.

The coastal road between Marlborough and Sarina was constructed during this period. I set out many of the bridges for this 190-kilometre section. A large culvert was designed to traverse a gully south of Koumala. I set it out for the construction crew by pegging the culvert and road centrelines. Machine operators use survey pegs as targets so, as a precaution, I extended the culvert centreline onto the adjacent railway bridge to the east. To the west, I placed a nail in a blazed tree. Sure enough, on our return all the pegs were destroyed. Wanting to show the 1<sup>st</sup> year graduate Scott how resourceful surveyors were, I told him to get the theodolite out but not the legs. He looked



at me stupidly but said nothing. He followed me up onto the railway bridge and watched fascinated as I set the instrument up on the nail in the railway sleeper. The line of sight just cleared the rail. It wasn't possible to use the non-adjustable legs with the gaps in the sleepers. The bridge deck was about 10 metres above the stream bed and unusually had no side platforms where maintenance crews sought shelter when trains passed. I lay down between the rails and sighted to the nail in the tree ready to peg the centreline. I believed in this position, I would feel and hear an approaching train from a long, long distance. "The Sunlander's coming!" Scott yelled. I ignored him as I thought he was joking. "The Sunlander's coming!" Scott yelled again and started to run. I looked up as the huge engine thundered towards us. I grabbed the jigger and high-tailed across the sleepers to the stream bank. Another close shave as it was very difficult not to fall through the gaps. Nowadays, Queensland Rail provide spotters for every construction site working close to railway lines. Timetables are provided and train drivers slow to crawling speed. The job is required to pay the wages of the spotter.

In 1981, I married Flordeliza who worked in the Mackay St. Vincent de Paul Home caring for the elderly. I had sold the house at the bay and built a new one on Bridge Road, Mackay close to Far Beach. I was still travelling most weeks and spent a lot of time in hotels and motels.

### 1986 – 1989

In December 1985 I transferred to Barcaldine District as District Surveyor. On my first day, the District Engineer advised me to think differently. "Out here, we build a fire where the

road is to end and the machines build a raised formation towards the smoke.” Surveying wasn’t quite so simple, but I quickly learnt what was required. The huge district extended from Camooweal in the north to Birdsville and east to Alpha. We moved into a new *Main Roads* house, fully air conditioned in Barcaldine. The district allowance covered the cost of the rent which was a big incentive to stay.



Royal Hotel Bedourie

My first job was to discover a flood free route through Lake Machattie, south of Bedourie which was 1060 kilometres from the office. When the lake flooded, the manager of a huge cattle property, *Glengyle* station, ‘Pee Wee’ Clarke and family would boat across Eyre Creek and drive a four-wheel drive along the sandhills to town. The vehicle was left in the hills before the rains. The District Engineer wanted to investigate the possibility of using this

route for a new deviation between Bedourie and Birdsville. This was a much cheaper option than building a bridge over the Cuttaburra Crossing at Eyre Creek. The bridge was eventually built years later as it was the only sensible solution.

We left Barcaldine and headed for Bedourie, 1000 kilometres out into the Simpson Desert. Rumours were that Bedourie was the coldest place in the desert after winter rains. The sandhills surrounding the town would be saturated and with the westerlies blowing, the town was like an icebox. We certainly did not experience temperatures remotely cool. We arrived in Bedourie for the first time in the middle of a fierce dust storm. We were late but our meal was still served. The old owner of the hotel, Jean Smith, had a reputation in the outback for someone to be feared. She ran the town with an iron fist. The pub also acted as the post office and had the only fuel. Her goats roamed wild through the small community. Everything ran on pub time so no fuel before 10:00 am.

The chainmen said the *Toyota Cruiser* had plenty of fuel for work the next day, so I slept peacefully. After breakfast, we prepared to leave for Lake Machattie. “We don’t have enough fuel,” the chainman Dale said. I said a few choice words and went out the back to sweet talk the young girl who was the cook. On the uneven stone floor of the verandah was a bed with five dogs sleeping on a dirty blanket. I crept quietly past as I didn’t want to disturb the dogs. The sound of barking would surely wake the old publican. As I passed, a corner of the blanket lifted and a voice shouted, “*Whad’ya want?*” The dogs scattered as Mrs. Smith leapt from the bed. I apologized and said we’d wait till 10:00 for the bowser to

open. She calmed down and I promised this would never happen again. We were there for maybe months and needed to get on her good side. We returned home every fortnight and alternate weekends trapped dingoes and fished in Eyre Creek. We gave Mrs. Smith the dingo pelts and yellow-belly fish for the kitchen. She was extremely happy as the dingoes killed many of her goats. I would always pick up any supplies she wanted when we passed through Boulia. We became the best of mates.

She hated tourists and whenever a bus load would pull up outside the pub she'd say, "*Are your boys right for a drink? I've just got to check on my goats,*" and disappear out the back. When the bus was due to leave, she would wander back in and act surprised to find all these people waiting to be served. They always left thirsty.

Years later, the local shire foreman won *Lotto* and built a service-station and motel in town so her strangle hold of fear on the community was broken.

Foremen-schools were held regularly by the department in Barcaldine to teach the local Shire foremen and supervisors, skills they required for set-out and road construction. The teaching was carried out at the airconditioned *Barcaldine Golf Clubhouse* and the local ladies prepared the meals and morning teas. At night, the bar did a roaring trade. The times were good financially for the club.

All shires were struggling to retain grader operators as the mines were paying huge salaries to experienced drivers. I developed a system of longitudinal stringlines, a maximum of kilometre long to control the graders for the inexperienced operators. These lines followed the design longitudinal-grade line and were set 600mm above the crown centreline. We welded pointers to the grader blade and a cross-fall device easily providing the operator with complete control. The pointer would follow the line and the results attained were amazing. Rideability of the road surface improved dramatically and road maintenance costs were reduced as pavement layers were the correct thickness. All the shires within the district adopted this method.

I received an instruction to investigate and peg a new realignment of the existing track leading into the small township of Betoota. It was roughly halfway between Birdsville and Windorah and had a population of one, the publican, Zigmund Remenko. I needed to book a room for the crew which was an involved process. I contacted the *Flying Doctor Service* in Charleville who then radioed *Mt. Leonard Station* which was across the Teeta Waterhole from the hotel. The station then sent a stockman to let Zigmund know the details of our stay. He would order more supplies via the mail truck. Zigmund had a radio and would listen to the gossip every afternoon, but he never had the courage press the button and talk on the airwaves.

The country had recent rains, so mosquitoes were rife. Zigmund spoilt us by giving us a room with a pedestal fan to provide some comfort from the oppressive heat and the

swarms of mossies. The walls of the hotel were over a foot thick of mud brick painted white. At 10:30pm I heard the generator chug to a stop and the fan came to a standstill. The mossies attacked in droves. Two of us retreated to the cab of the ute and sat there all night with the windows closed. The other chainman lay in the back under the tonneau cover. It was one of the worst nights I have ever experienced.

I was having a drink after work and chatting to Zigmund when a couple of travellers stopped for fuel and a cold beer. They were on the way to Birdsville and ordered a carton of stubbies for the rest of the journey. "That'll be \$50," the publican said.

"How can that be? The stubbies are \$2.00 each so twenty four is \$48.00 What is the extra two bucks for?" was their reply. The old barman said, "What are you going to carry them in?" They paid \$2.00 for the cardboard carton and left complaining bitterly. Zigmund hated tourists and the Birdsville Race weekend was his worst nightmare. He would raise the price of fuel to \$1.00 per litre and then round the fuel up to the next litre, as he carried very little change. This was 1987.

In 1988, the *Stockman's Hall of Fame* was opened in Longreach by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I did five pencil drawings depicting the outback and had them printed. Over a four-year period, in excess of 22 000 were sold at the *HOF* and local tourist shops. Good pocket money!

Another more important event that year was the birth of our daughter, Kristyll Rose, at the Barcardine Hospital. The children of the town of 1600 population had free reign. The townsfolk knew them all and kept them out of trouble and danger. Because the high number of itinerant workers, the town community was very welcoming to strangers, unlike Longreach which treated outsiders with suspicion.

It was always very difficult to return to Barcy after the Xmas break each year. We would be welcomed by 40 plus degree heat and that we were there for another 12 months. Although we enjoyed the outback experience, it was fantastic to move back to the bright lights, greenery and cool air of the east coast. I was transferred to the Gold Coast and moved into our new home on Australia Day 1989.

### **1989 – 1997**

Expo had finished and property prices were record highs. We searched areas on the coast and anything that we could afford was too small and we were forced to look further north. We settled on a house in Shailer Park, 40 kilometres north of the Nerang Office. A short walk down the road was the new *Hyperdome Shopping Centre* which opened in August 1989. Now the nearest *K-Mart* was 200 metres away. In Barcy, the nearest *K-Mart* was in Emerald 300 kilometres east. My wife was very happy.

Working in the west was like being in a technology vacuum. Computers had been introduced and the methods of surveying had completely changed. Field work was captured using *Total Stations* and terrain features strung and features were given special codes. Luckily my chainman was familiar with the new methods and taught me quickly and well. At the end of each day, the pickup was downloaded from a data recorder and processed by a computer. My first big job was a feature and terrain survey of the four lane section of the Pacific Highway from Pimpama to *Dreamworld*. What a change from the isolation and serenity of the outback. The corridor extended 100 metres either side of the north and south carriageways. The pavement was captured at night using traffic control because of the high traffic volumes.

Much of the land not developed on the coast is swamp and the mountains of the hinterland are rugged and steep. This topography really challenges the surveyor. All the major arterial roads have very high traffic volumes thus WH&S was a prime factor in all our work.

We did surveys for the Eastern Corridor between Logan and the Coast and even built two bridges on the new alignment to the east of the existing M1. Premier Wayne Goss stopped the entire project because it may have affected the koala habitat in Daisy Hill.

I worked on the eight-laning of the Pacific Highway and thousands of control marks were placed either side of the pavement from Nerang to the Logan River at Beenleigh. These were coordinated using GPS and levelled with digital levels. The pavement was flown at a height of 90 metres and stereo photos taken with very high accuracy using a helicopter. Photogrammetrists used our control marks to orientate their stereo pairs of photos to provide a 3 dimensional model of the carriageways. The digital model of the pavement surface was accurate to plus or minus 10 mm. The helicopter was especially flown from England for this specific purpose. This method proved much more economical and safer than using survey crews on night rates with traffic control.

Again I worked on many projects during this period. The bridge over the Logan River and approaches at Waterford was my last project before transferring to Brisbane. This was perfectly located, as it was a 10 minute drive from home. At last I was lucky.

## **1997 - 2005**

I was appointed Supervising Surveyor at the Nathan depot near Upper Mt. Gravatt overseeing 5-survey parties in 1997. WH&S really came to the fore and although it made things a lot safer, the cost of surveys catapulted. Premier Peter Beattie commercialized many sections of government departments. We operated under the *RoadTek* banner and were told that if we weren't financially viable, the survey section would be dismantled. The construction of the 8-lane Pacific Motorway commenced between Logan River and Nerang

and I was responsible for managing the delivery all the digital terrain models and underground services required for design. Many of the surveys had been completed prior and when these were joined all the sections without information required field work. These had never been collated into one model as the number of points of data was too large for existing software packages to process. The model was in excess of 1M points and the Main Roads trialled a new software processing package *4D* developed in Sydney. Two computers were set up to process the model. The global package *MOSS* was to be compared to the Aussie *4D*. Both computers started processing the 1M point model. *4D* won easily and that was its introduction to the world.

*4D* progressed to *12D* and I realized its potential to change the way we surveyed. Over time I developed a process called *Fieldbook 2000* which revolutionized the way surveyors operated. To change methodologies which had been used for many years drew much criticism and ridicule. Results indicated big cost savings and delivered a far superior product. I was awarded a *Technology Productivity Silver Award* in Canberra in 2000 and *Fieldbook 2000* was adopted state-wide. Statisticians predicted that this had the potential to save the department \$7.5M annually. The system is still being used to this day in 2020.

I managed up to 12 survey parties for the M1 project and was responsible for conducting all the auditing of the six separate sections of this major construction.

On completion of the motorway project, I realized that all the new innovations we had developed were not going to be used on future works. With the digital design models provided, we were able to streamline our practices and produce reports in a matter of seconds compared to several days using conventional methods and paper plans. I presented our learnings at every opportunity to many groups and eventually was invited to address the departmental power brokers. A positive response gave me access to the resources I needed to overhaul the entire design system to produce clean digital design models for construction.

Again, there was much resistance and fear of the unknown. Designers would lose their jobs and I received calls of concern from around the state. It was a big learning curve but within a short timeframe, the designers were delivering what industry required. When these models were uploaded into the machine guidance systems of the construction machinery, huge cost and time savings were realized. Construction costs were being reduced by up to a third. The *Port of Brisbane* project was the first real trail of the system and it was opened well below cost and ahead of the projected completion date. In the coal mines, haul roads built using this method witnessed a downturn in maintenance of the huge haul trucks as the road surface was smooth and did not shake them to bits. This was a saving the mine managers never expected.

When the *Busways* project from the Brisbane CBD to Logan was announced, I approached the project engineers and asked them to consider using the processes we developed on the M1 project. “We’ll do it our way,” was the response and the project ran out of funds and time. It terminated at Springwood well short of the projected Loganholme terminus.

## **2005 – 2010**

I was appointed Supervising Surveyor in South Coast Hinterland District in 2005. This era was the most satisfying of my career. I was left to run the survey section without outside interference. The survey group were young, very conscientious and motivated to learn. We delivered high quality work on time and below budget. I was granted permission to work with the construction crews to drag them out of the dark ages and demonstrate the new technologies available. It was easy for their Engineers to see the savings and very soon all teams were provided with the latest *Total Stations* loaded with digital design models for set out.

When the *Light Rail Project* commenced, again I was responsible for coordinating survey teams to deliver the feature and terrain models from the *University Hospital* to Broadbeach, a distance of 13 kilometres. The underground service location work was also my responsibility. These were very stressful times. The Project team consisted of experts gathered from around the world. Most of them had huge egos and little concept of the task at hand. It was at the completion of the delivery of the project corridor that I decided to retire and concentrate on my family.

### **My Family:**

Married to Flordeliza and we have a son Mark, and three daughters, Kristyll Rose, Melissa Jayne and Cassandra Laura. Flor still works at the *Australia Post* Facility at Redbank. She enjoys the camaraderie of her workmates and the financial independence the job provides.

Mark has a son, Jett Joey, 9-years old with wife Kacy. He works for *Earthmoving Equipment Australia* and is very involved with machine guidance and digital models.

The girls all have graduated with double degrees in Music and Education. They all play the piano and many of the stringed instruments. Since they were 12, 10 and 8 respectively they have been performing in coffee houses and for private functions in particular weddings. They have been very successful and perform under name of the *Hansen Trio*. Cassandra performed for several years with the string group *Maske*. She travelled the world and performed on the luxury cruise lines. The three girls are all music teachers in the private school sector around Brisbane and the Gold Coast. They find it hard to believe that they are making a very good living from something that they love. They all have their own residential properties and live close to the family home.

I am relishing retirement and may it continue for a long time to come. We purchased a caravan and love to travel. We have been on nine cruises but now have decided that because of the concentration of people, the ships are a breeding place for disease. We will caravan instead of cruising. I occupy my time painting portraits and sketching, golf and doing maintenance on the family houses. I still enjoy a couple of beers in the evening before dinner to relax unlike the boozy days of the 70's.

*8825 words – Wayne Hansen (MGMS member number 676)*