

BMC – Leyland Australia Heritage Group

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEES : Barry Booth & Con Van Wensveen **TAPE NUMBERS :**

INTERVIEWER : Deborah Stomps **BMCLA DS 09 & 10**

INTERVIEW DATE : 22nd November 2002. **NUMBER OF TAPES :** 2.

RESTRICTION ON USE : (as stated in Release Form)

INTERVIEW TAPE LOG

This interview took place at: Con Van Wensveen's home at Cromer, NSW
on 22nd November, 2002.

This log was prepared using a Sony Stereo Cassette-Corder TC-146A recorder by Norman Precott.

This interview is part of the Oral History Project of the BMC – Leyland Australia Heritage Group.

Tape Log Barry Booth & Con Van Wensveen.

Tape : BMCLA : DS 09, Side A		
COUNT	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0	(Correction to TAPE NUMBER – It is DS 09 not DS 08) <i>Note – This is a joint interview and sections are annotated (BTH) and (VW) accordingly.</i> (VW) Born in Holland in 1930. Migrated to Australia in 1950. Motivation was adventure and chose in preference to Canada and USA. First job in Australia with electric motor manufacturer “Glick”(?) in Forest Lodge. Realised need for learning and started at Tech, continued with Uni. of NSW	Dutch migrant.
50	over 10 years studying Production Engineering. Started at Nuffield Aust. in 1955.	University of NSW
100		Nuffield Aust.
150	First job at BMC was transposing product modifications into Standards for Aust. production. Later was moved around all work operations to gain experience. Makes comparison with formal apprenticeship – mentions Alan Kemp. Experience gained on start of new CAB1 operations. Discusses language and communication problems. He spoke English at home and	Modification paperwork. Training experience. Alan Kemp CAB1. Language problem.
200	work. High labour turn-over a minor problem. He experienced no cultural problems or discrimination.	Cultural aspects.
250	(BTH) Born 1935. Started at BMC in 1955. Had done 1 year Civil Engineering at Uni. of NSW. Preferred practical work and started as storeman in warehouse. After 6 months appointed Assistant Purchasing Officer. Describes function. Refers to ethics of dealing with suppliers and existence of bribery. After 3 years, Management decision to increase professionalism and hired Roy Woodward ex Frigidaire NZ and GMH who encouraged him to study accountancy. After 4 years he qualified as a Public and a Cost Accountant at age 29 (1964).	University of NSW Purchasing function. Ethical standards. Roy Woodward. Professional training.
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400	Describes situation of middle managers missing education due to war service. Describes ex-service members of Supply Dept. and camaraderie – example of team helping John Nicol clear home-site. Fond memories. Comments that Company had the best middle management with the worst top management due to many changes of Managing Director.	Supply Dept. John Nicol. Management quality.
450	(VW) Comment on need to start young with an apprenticeship to gain promotion. Outsiders were not encouraged. Many senior managers were from UK. Australians did not have input. (BTH) Moves on to product plans. Prior to P76, UK models were not competitive in Australian market – underpowered and lacked styling. Mini/1100 were exceptions. BMC lacked capital to meet GMH, Ford, Chrysler. (VW) Mini and 1100 were innovational and popular – if continued the Company could have succeeded. Japanese took Austin design (Datsun) and succeeded. (BTH) Suppliers were all saying BMC needed a bigger car.	Promotion obstacles. UK – Australian Staff problems. Product competition. Mini/1100.
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510	End of Tape DS 09, Side A (continued on DS 09, Side B.)	

Tape : BMCLA : DS 09, Side B.		
COUNT	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0 50 100	(BTH) Considers problems originated in the Austin-Morris merger – they never really joined. Refers to informative book entitled “Leyland Story”; also the effects of numerous strikes. British Govt. urged merger with Leyland, which became the dominant management. (VW) Describes rivalries in UK personnel causing divisions. Local staff worked as one Australian Company.	Austin-Morris merger. “Leyland Story” (book). Leyland merger. Management rivalries.
150	(BTH) Refers to lack of investment in Australia until P76 as the first all Australian design. (VW) Describes costs of new models and time pressure on P76 introduction. World oil crisis also affected at the time. (BTH) Stoppages in the P76 program compressed normal 5 year cycle into 2 years. Caused many faults despite winning “Car of the Year” Award. Mini and 1100 had sustained the Company in the 60’s.	P76 development cost pressure. “Car of the Year” Award.
200 250	(BTH) Appointed Purchasing Officer in 1964. On completing Accountancy course was moved to Finance Dept. as Deputy Chief Cost Accountant and a year later to the Chief position. Gained experience with start of computers. Describes cultural changes and slowing of migrant intake. Ease of getting jobs and high labour turn-over. Was later recruited back to Purchasing Dept.	Finance Dept. Cost Accountant. Computers.
300 350 400	(VW) Continues description of gaining varied Production experience. Between 1958-60 he joined Work Study Dept. This involved methods, labour training, and quality in the start-up of CAB1. (BTH) Refers to problem of building 3 – 6 different models on the track. (VW) Describes use of team work to overcome problems. Achieved up to 100 cars/day. Problems coping with lack of skills and absentees. Personality clashes but camaraderie was strong and continued to present day. It was good place to work.	Work Study Function. Production line problems. Camaraderie.
450	(BTH) Comments – there was something special about a motor Company. Excitement of new models caused a lot of satisfaction. Very few days lost to strikes in the plant over his 23 years. Describes as a unique experience. (VW) Closure created a “funeral” atmosphere but reinforced camaraderie. In 1975 he deputised for Boyd Cuddon, Materials Manager (off sick) for 3 months.	Job satisfaction. Emotions. Boyd Cuddon.
490	End of Tape DS 09, Side B. (continued on DS 10, Side A.)	

Tape Log

Tape : BMCLA : DS 10, Side A		
COUNT	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0	(Correction to TAPE NUMBER – It is DS 10 not DS 09) <i>Note – This is a joint interview and sections are annotated (BTH) and (VW) accordingly.</i> (BTH) Describes feelings as loyalty to people rather than Company, but BMC was unique. Describes labour conditions generally. After 2 years as Cost Accountant he returned to Purchasing Dept. in 1971 responsible for Mechanical items.	Labour conditions.
50	Describes Dept. organisation.	Purchasing function.
100	(VW) Describes range of skills in motor industry. Moves on to social contacts and mutual respect.	Skills.
150		Relationships.
200	(BTH) At closure he served on retrenchment committee. Some 500 employees were retained out of 7200. The terms were good and caused 300 to prefer retrenchment to offered jobs. As a result there was also a need to recruit. Phasing down of production took 6 months. This facilitated arrangements for alternative job interviews by Personnel Dept. Booth continued in Purchasing, moving initially to Bondi Junction and then to Enfield where he covered Cars, Trucks, Land-Rovers, and Buses. Negotiated new Supplier contracts.	Plant closure. Retrenchments.
250		Bondi Junction. Enfield. Purchasing.
300	(BTH) Remarks on appeal of P76 and regret that 2-door version did not materialise. This model could have saved the Company.	P76 2-door version.
350	(VW) Many people gained good experience at BMC and most got jobs within 6 months after closure. (BTH) Describes pressure of moving production lines and need to meet deadlines. Created skills. Compares this with his later job in Paint industry.	Experience gained. Pressure on deadlines.
400	(VW) Company recognised importance of health by providing medical checks by Company Doctor. Also emphasised Welfare provisions. There was great reliance on middle management. (BTH) Describes delegation of authority in Company structure – not found elsewhere. Supply director, Bob Gillingham, applied this helpfully.	Health and Welfare. Delegation. Bob Gillingham.
450	(VW) Staff were not clock-watchers. No paid overtime. It was appreciated by management, but there were no bonuses paid. It was a satisfying work place. Expresses criticism of Superannuation scheme – some did not join. Not clarified for people who left before age 65.	Motivation. Superannuation scheme.
500	(BTH) Scheme was selective to staff. (VW) Describes big meeting in Works Canteen for a new model launch. Question raised on Japanese competition was shrugged off. Describes factory visit by Japanese delegation.	Japanese.
510	End of Tape DS 10, Side A. (continued on DS 10, Side B.)	

Tape : BMCLA : DS 10, Side B.		
COUNT	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0	(VW) Continues on Japanese visit to Plant at time of Bill Abbott as MD. Took photos and information that assisted their competitiveness,	Japanese visit. Bill Abbott
50	(BTH) Expenditure on P76 enabled BMC to achieve over 95%, the highest local content in Australia. The Govt. Plan stipulated 85%. This arose because P76 was unique to Australia and caused a high cost to Company. Special tooling and set-up costs were the same irrespective of volume. Also the number of changes in top management affected the continuity of the program. Peter North, MD, was too late.	Local content – effects.
100		Peter North.
150	(VW) Describes North’s up-to-date management techniques. Van Wensveen remained for 18 months after closure to finalise commitments to Suppliers amounting to some \$20 million. Team reduced this to \$9 million. Worked at Bondi Junction and Enfield – relieving Boyd Cuddon- before departure from Company about 1976. Had no regrets on time at BMC other than financial.	Supply effects from closure.
200		
250	(BTH) Comments that he enjoyed earlier years but would have gained more financially if he had moved on. Disappointed with Superannuation scheme. Subsequent employer – a major paint Company – did not have same philosophy as the BMC of the “good old days”.	Final thoughts.
300	(VW) Comments that there were no longer life-time jobs and the attitude to work is harder. At BMC the job and loyalty was the priority. He is now happily retired with hobby of model-making.	
350	(BTH) Regrets not achieving a mechanical engineering training to assist his career. Describes his father’s example and involvement with race cars at the old Maroubra Speedway.	Maroubra Speedway.
390	End of Tape DS 10, Side B / End of Interview	