
"OPERATION PROTECTION"

AT OLYMPIC DAM — A standard of excellence

The following are extracts from a report that was prepared regarding "Operation Protection" by the St. John Contingent Commander, Lloyd Rogers, (Assistant Superintendent — Country Operations).

The deployment of the St. John contingent to Olympic Dam for eleven days was the largest field operation ever undertaken by regular staff in the St. John organisation. Additionally, this was the first time that a composite group of metropolitan and country regular ambulance officers were

deployed together for an extended operation.

At times when the protesters were very active, usually afternoon and night shift, the whole St. John contingent was recalled to duty. All personnel responded when required, and it is appropriate that I record my sincere appreciation for their support and dedication to duty. Every man did more than would normally be expected of him.

It is appropriate to document the outstanding success and standard of excellence achieved by the St. John contingent during "Operation Protection".

How it really was *by PETER MACE, A.O., STIRLING*

The purpose of this exercise was to maintain a temporary ambulance facility at Olympic Dam for the duration of the protests against uranium mining. This, to date, has been the largest St. John unit required to respond and maintain duties in a remote area, requiring ten personnel and five vehicles.

Geography — Flat to slightly undulating red sandhills, saltbush and barren country, with limited water available. (Water comes from Woomera daily by road-train to storage tanks.) The makeshift town comprises single men's quarters, a shop, large mess area, caravan park, and various sporting facilities, as well as a small medical centre.

The group finally selected to go

Lloyd Rogers: Commander/Dark Leader (the police had their own codes)

Wayne Jackson: Second-in-Command/Tourist/Church Services (blessed the road when he took a wrong turn and arrived via Andamooka)

Frank Richardson: Communications/Windwatcher/Periscope Operator (always watching the radio mast in windy conditions)

Geoff Roberts: Legal Adviser/Entertainment (disputes and laughing therapy)

Peter Coombe: Woodcutter/Dunny Budgie Killer (snoring and naval jokes)

Tony Willis: Security of Sleeping Quarters (always seen around the tent)

Rob Turner: Station Cat (always there but not obvious)

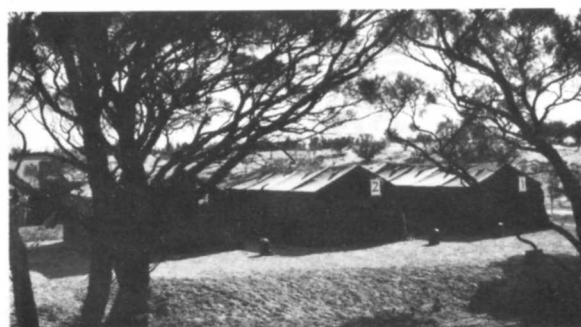
David Jaensch: F-100 Tour Guide/Honeymooner (only married a short time)

John Burton: Consultations/Foot-in-Mouth Problems (brunt of MANY jokes)

Peter Mace: Gofor/House Calls (called to policewomen's quarters at 0400)



Vehicles on operational standby during one of the numerous demonstrations.



"The Olympic Dam Hilton" (St. John sleeping quarters).



A policeman receives an eye wash.

On arrival — The trip began at 0715 a.m. on the 26th August from Bolivar, and two convoys of vehicles headed off, reaching Olympic Dam at 1600 the same day. Our task then was to establish a first aid tent, communications caravan and mast, and ambulance service, and operate these facilities 24 hours a day. Much groundwork and preparation was required beforehand because of our isolation, and obviously any items that were forgotten could not be easily obtained. Fortunately, the people involved in the early preparation were most competent: Mr. Rogers — visit and assessment of terrain and conditions, production of standing orders, etc.; Mr. Jackson — first aid supplies and stores; Mr. Roberts — rosters and ambulance stores; Mr. Richardson — communications; and many other people who did jobs I am not aware of.

On a lighter note, a game called "Have you got?" developed between the senior ranks. Everything from first aid equipment to sunglass wingscrews were supplied by Wayne — the only thing not available was a light dimmer. All requests were met with, "You mean one of these?"

Bush conditions — Two major problems had to be overcome. The continual red dust found its way into everything and made inside vehicle cleanliness nearly impossible. Sleep also became a problem as canvas was hard to sleep under during the warm to hot days; and police activities going all night, and shift changes and vehicle movements at all times, did not ease the situation. The temperatures ranged from about 29°C by day to 2°C at night.

The adopted call-out procedure of a continual police siren roused even the heaviest of sleepers for recall. No matter what shift you were on, everyone responded immediately when required.

First Aid in the wild — Eye washes were the order of the day, with numbers varying from 15 to 55 per day, but unfortunately most occurred when the police were stood down and then the rush was on. At one stage there were 35 people in line for eye washes, which, due to the often windy conditions, seemed a never-ending process.

The number of people treated in our first aid tent (which looked like a chemist shop, with everything from Anusol to Zinc Cream) was 315 patients, with problems ranging from eye washes to blistered feet, which were all treated promptly. Seven patients were transported to Woomera Hospital, 95 kilometres away via dirt road infested with kangaroos, which at night were a menace (ask the police mechanics). Fortunately vehicle problems were only of a minor nature.

Thanks to Mr. Richardson's foresight and planning, our communications system was excellent. The only problem was raising or lowering the radio mast in strong winds, which required six people.

The vehicles taken were: F-100, Transit, Clinic Car, Toyota 4.W.D. and mobile communications mast, Commodore and first aid caravan. At times it looked like two ambulances may not have been enough, but multiple loading seemed to overcome our problem. (Two ambulances owned and operated by Roxby Management Services were also available as a back-up facility if required.)



The 60ft. pump-up St. John temporary radio mast.

It was not all work and no play though, but due to security reasons we were unable to move from our area, which at times caused slight boredom.

The blockade ended rather abruptly with bad weather forecast, and the protesters not really achieving their objective of stopping the miners going to work. Luckily for us, after the blockade ended, we decided to stock-take and pack our gear. Just after completing this task we were engulfed in a dust storm with tremendous winds and visibility of approximately ten feet (if you were game to open your eyes!). This was followed by a deluge of rain lasting two hours. Our first aid post was blown down with Geoff and Lloyd hanging on to the poles (of the tent). Our sleeping tent split open, resulting in bedding and personal gear being covered in mud. After the clean-up things were re-organised. The next problem was to find out if the road was still usable. Luckily it was.

We head for civilisation — By 0730 on the 5th September camp was broken and we were on our way home. The road was very slippery and after a few close moments with the caravan we arrived at Woomera. A shattered Frank stood looking at his radio mast (which he polished every day) buried in mud behind the Toyota. The caravan was almost unrecognisable, and the Falcon left a bit to the imagination. The rest of the trip on bitumen road was a joy to behold. At Port Augusta it was all hands to the caravan and Falcon. After an hour and a wheelbarrow (I kid you not!) of mud, Wayne left us for Port Pirie, and at various points near Adelaide, the group went its own way. Dave, Rob and I spent nearly one and a half hours trying to clean the F-100, and then they departed for their respective homes.

In spite of the very difficult conditions, we all came away feeling we had achieved a job well done, and glad there were no serious mishaps.

Continued next page.

"OPERATION PROTECTION" Continued

"A Day in the Life of the Roxby Ambulance Service"

by DAVID JAENSCH, A.O., MURRAY BRIDGE

SCENE: IN THE ALL RANKS' WET MESS UNDER THE LIGHT OF THE WAYNE-ING MOON

0300 HOURS ANY PARTICULAR DAY

We were all sipping on Coke and watching DA-VIDeo when the police siren hee-hawed its way through the still night air.

"We had better TURN-ER off (the video that is) and get up to the tent on standby" I said. So, as the crowd slowly began to PETER out, the till was shut so that nobody would ROB it. "WILL-IS on his way" somebody cried (Will was on duty) as we made our way to what was affectionately known as LLOYDS' tent. "He's just got to COOMBE his hair".

0303 HOURS

Within minutes the duty crew was on the road, and soon after the boss appeared from the communications van. "Is BURT-ON his way, we will need him for a second crew."

"Why do we need a second crew?" somebody asked.

"Because the duty crew have taken RICHARDS-ON to Woomera" replied the boss.

"And is GEOFF-FRY? We will need him on the second crew also" continued the boss.

0315 HOURS

"The second crew reports for duty, looking ship-shape as usual.

"What's the problem?" they enquired.

"I'll be FRANK with you fellas, JACKS-SON ROB-ERTS"

"Is it bad?" asks the ever inquisitive astute crew.

"Yes it is" replied the boss, "Rob kicked RICH-ARDer than he thought he would, and made a real MACE of his leg!"

"What exactly did he hurt?" The crew were pressing for more details.

"Well, he hurt his TO-NY and ankle" replied the boss.

"ROGER" said the crew as they mobilized to the scene.

Due to the strict confidentiality maintained throughout the course of the operation, further details will not be made public!

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*Don Jellis, Clem Schultz, Reg Higgs, Mayor Margaret Evans.
(Photo courtesy Jan Chew)*

The Mayor of Berri, Margaret Evans, and Mr. Don Jellis joined with Board members, ambulance staff and wives to attend a celebration dinner commemorating 20 years of Ambulance service to the district. Mayor Evans presented Honorary Life Membership certificates to two founder members, Clem Schultz and Reg Higgs.

AUTHORITIES CONVENTION

The Australian Ambulance Authorities Convention was held in Brisbane on 10th and 11th November. Our South Australian representatives were General Manager, Don Jellis, and Finance & Administration Manager, John Rawes.

The Convention is held annually and is attended by Senior Ambulance Service Officers from every State.



AWARD FOR ST. JOHN CADET

Michelle Dohnt, Cadet with the Kadina Division, received her 200 Hour Badge from Divisional Surgeon, Dr. T. Wood, recently. Michelle has been a cadet for six years and has worked very hard to achieve her award. Most of the 200 hours were from duties at local functions (trotting, basketball, etc.) and helping with patient care at Wallaroo Hospital.