

## Chapter 9 **Those that often Toil Unseen**

**Alan Sharp makes a pertinent statement -**

**“Where would we be without water and toilets”? ....**

I suspect that I am one of the few individuals who has been a volunteer at 40 Fieldays without a break! Initially, as a Young Farmers' Club member, then as a Fieldays Society member.

Friday June 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, saw 'my team' catering for an expected attendance for the day of 41,000 people but not before twelve months of planning towards 'an as seamless a delivery of service as possible'.

For some twenty-one consecutive Fieldays, Neil Quinlan and myself have lead a small team of helpers to set up all exhibitor water requests and venue toileting needs for the events, and the big Friday crowds, always expected, at the tent city of Fieldays. Upwards of 2 km of temporary water pipes and connections are laid on; a water tanker is secured and adapted for fire fighting support; our water treatment plant, plus the District Scheme potent water supply are constantly monitored; extra portable toilets are hired; consumables are ordered; contracts are let for the cleaning and servicing crews, and all associated contractors are supervised. No small task for volunteers, and a long way from those humble beginnings during the early 70's at Mystery Creek. But it was those humble beginnings and the practical experience gained along the way that made the role of Water and Toilets Supervisor possible today. A unique training experience for a unique event!

Gone are the days when I could shimmy on my belly under a relocatable house, often loaned by O'Regan's or Warwick Johnson House Removals, to scoop a hole in the sand with a fire shovel and attach a length of 6" aluminium irrigation pipe to the 's pan', so that the ladies inside could have a flushable toilet. That lead over the years to hundreds of 4ft auger holes in the sand, and a length of nova flow, to get rid of a few gallons of demonstration and



*Temporary, relocatable homes were arranged on site to provide accommodation for a variety of exhibitor and public services. At the very least, power and water needed to be laid on, and a few had toilet facilities as well.*

catering waste water, until today, when all waste has to be collected in tanks, for later disposal.

I recall the Fieldays Manager, Vaughan Jones, asking me to give a hand to remove a water-filled cattle trough from the centre of an exhibitor's site, on the morning of the first event at Mystery Creek, in 1971. Also being requested to mole-plough-in an alkathene water pipe to a new toilet block at short notice! Who remembers Laurie Atherfold helping to drag the spring delivery water pipe through the swamp (now the Agricultural Heritage Village Lake) to the new water tank? I also recall Fraser Graham 'almost knocking out some teeth' with a 12" crescent spanner, in an effort to save a life, after some exhibitors discovered that you should not pitch metal pipe into an 11,000 volt, overhead, power supply. More recently I remember Craig Shaw and I allowing a digger operator to get too close to the very same power feed!

After Lloyd had arranged for hand-held radios, I remember "Cookie" (Barry Cook) changing R/T channels to tell the world of volunteers that "Sharpie" was in the 'poo' and to get themselves in motion, with a tractor, and pull his water tanker off the broken septic tank lid.

Who's idea was it to lay the original 1¼" B-Class alkathene water main at the venue? It was no more impervious to damage than regular pipe, but repairs could, supposedly, be made with hot oil heating, and special joiners, something we never had to hand on frosty Fieldays mornings. So improvise we did.

As the exhibition area increased in size so to did the need for more public toilets. A block laying contest at the 1975 NZ Building & Construction Fieldays provided us with the large toilet block at the venue. In 1985 we purchased the first Portacom toilet blocks then hired further temporary Portacom's from 1991. I designed some for purchase in 2005 and then was involved in an 'operational wager' over a decision to



convert a 12 metre Portacom shell, for adding to an existing toilet block, instead of purchasing the 'Sharp design' model!

I do vividly recall frantically trying to unblock the upstairs, Head Quarters toilet during the opening ceremony in ??? with New Zealand's Prime Minister, Helen Clark, due any minute for



*A Blocklaying Competition at the 1975 NZ Building & Construction Fieldays produced a toilet block for future use at Mystery Creek. (See appropriate chapters for details on NZ Building Fieldays activities).*

the official luncheon, and also the incident of an ex-President being instructed not to remove the chair we had placed in front of the toilet door until we gave him permission to do so!

My recollections cover such a long time-frame that so few words can do justice, but who in their right mind is interested in toilet history anyway? All you want to know is that we have planned to meet all needs come next Fieldays, and that delivery will be as seamless as possible.

### **Joan Mears records her memories of being a Fieldays Courtesy Car Driver ....**

In the early 1970's I was overjoyed when Joan Bryant invited me to be a volunteer driver of one of the Fieldays Courtesy Cars. I had just returned to Hamilton after working for a few years in Japan, and I was very much in need of a new experience!

Joan explained the immense potential value of Fieldays to the people of the Waikato, and New Zealand in general, because it was an exhibition of Kiwi ingenuity. Little did I realise that I, also, needed that ingenuity to be confident to drive a shuttle bus holding about 14 passengers, and have to cope with heavy fogs, teeming rain, as well as bumper-to-bumper traffic. And so the challenge began!

I was privileged to be doing my best for Hamilton and the Waikato, and this quite new project which was being held at Mystery Creek.

The Courtesy Cars were donated for the duration of Fieldays by a prominent car firm, and passengers were picked up, usually from Hotels and Motels, etc, along the route to Mystery Creek, free of charge. I usually left home about 6.30 a.m. to transport people who worked for the various exhibiting firms, so they could set up their exhibits before the public arrived. The early start was also necessary to avoid the bumper-to-bumper traffic that had become part of getting to Mystery Creek, with only a one-way entrance and one-way exit road for the thousands of cars and huge buses that kept arriving all day. The traffic seemed never-ending.

Part of my duties was to go to the airport to collect passengers who had arrived from many parts of New Zealand, either on domestic flights, or in their own private planes. I wore a blue sash and carried a placard reading "Fieldays:", and I would stand in the passenger lounge and bellow out an invitation for visitors to use the Courtesy Car to get to Mystery Creek, which was only a short driving distance away.

Each day was just so exciting, and I must have conveyed hundreds of farmers, housewives, office workers, and children to Mystery Creek. Fieldays was where everyone could learn about kiwi ingenuity, new farming inventions and, indeed, everything that concerned the New Zealand farming community. Farmers just love to chat to each other about life on the farm.

Some farmers, no doubt, had come to spend thousands on a brand new "herring-bone" dairy milking shed unit, while others were just there to see the latest farming gadget, or the Alfa Laval exhibit, or the latest topdressing equipment. There was also the Farm Fencing Championships and Gallagher Electric Fencing Competition to admire, while the Guest Nation exhibits and demonstrations, etc, always attracted the visitors.

During my time as a Courtesy Car Driver I soon learned the lingo of the farmers. Fieldays seemed to be one big happy family and each year I looked forward to meeting the same people.

As much as everyone arrived at Mystery Creek at various times of the day, they all wanted to stay until closing time before returning home or to their accommodation, which created bedlam! In the month of June it becomes very dark very early, and we always had to put a call over the loudspeakers at the venue for drivers of private cars to offer to give out-of-town visitors a ride back to Hamilton City, etc, if they had spare room in their cars. The offers of assistance was always overwhelming.

I have fond memories of some eight to ten years of being a Courtesy Car Driver for Fieldays.

### **A recollection from 'An Anonymous Supporter' ....**

I was an ambulance volunteer. All Cambridge Ambulance personnel were volunteers in those days – some 40 years ago. One day my call-pager activated, and my female ambulance 'buddy' and I were told to proceed to a farm accident involving a male and a motor bike. Out we went with red light flashing and located the scene where the farmer was lying down in a gully with his motor bike nearby. We scrambled down, examined him, and knew that further help was needed. How could two females get him up the bank? So we called the Cambridge Fire Brigade who proceeded to the Cambridge Ambulance Hall where they picked up a scoop stretcher and more personnel, six males. Down the hillside they all went, put the injured man on the stretcher, while my mate and I stationed ourselves at the top of the gully, by a power pole which was to help with leverage up the hillside. At the top the patient was made as comfortable as possible, and then transferred to Waikato Hospital. I was in the back of the ambulance so conversed with the patient on the way. He asked, "Have you ever been to Fieldays?" I told him that every time I had visitors staying with me I always took them out to Mystery Creek, to see the Agricultural Museum, and also to see that beautiful bovine creature with its massive horns. The beast always seemed to be penned underneath the Dome building which housed the Farm Show! It was also costing me a fortune, so many times did I travel there and pay the admissions.

The patient, a real gentleman, said he would arrange for me to have a Museum "pass", and he also asked me if I would like to be a volunteer at the facility. I did, and that is what I became.

In those days we did all the cleaning of the Bledisloe Hall (which housed the Clydesdale Museum) when each day was over, and I was one of the regular volunteers who was put to sweeping The Bledisloe floor, a big job, particularly after each Fieldays event. I enjoyed the involvement even though I don't particularly like sweeping! School parties came regularly and they were treated to 'a great-grandma's wash day' demonstration, and then became involved themselves using an old wooden (and one metal) washing board, wooden tubs and a hand-wringer, etc.

The gentleman/patient who suggested that I became involved with the Museum was, I think, Walton Holmes. I spent many happy days at Mystery Creek, but unfortunately the years have now crept up on me.

I would like, very much, to remain anonymous!

- Anonymous