

July 2020



## VicRoads Association Newsletter No.216



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Dear Members,

Certainly the lockdown - and reactions to it by certain groups - has made me think more deeply about our future, at least in the short term. I am so grateful to be living in Australia where our political leaders have shown faith in science and compassion transcending economic imperatives to save thousands of lives. It is especially important for people like us as we are the most vulnerable group in the country. Imagine if we lived in Brazil (or even America) where the political leaders were prepared to sacrifice the lives of the older generations in order to maintain some semblance of an economy. And even then their economies have suffered chronically.

And thank goodness for our health system. Although there were issues that caught us on the hop - such as the shortage of personal protective equipment - we managed through that and kept the rates of infection to levels that did not overwhelm our infrastructure. No doubt we will learn from this. I think all the nurses, doctors, epidemiologists, paramedics, orderlies and other health workers should get special recognition for the wonderful service they provided to our country.

I would love to see the faith in science and the cooperation between political parties continue in planning for our future but I fear there will be another outbreak - this time of partisanship and misleading ideology - to hamper our recovery. As I write this in mid-May, there are already signs of fracture between the Federal Government and the Victorian State Government about the implementation of the recovery program.

It is interesting to reflect on the roles played by each level of government. The Federal Government has the money to provide relief to citizens most affected by the shutdown. This includes businesses and individuals who have lost their jobs. The Federal Government is also responsible for border control, quarantine and communications at a national level. It provides national guidelines in setting rules for all Australian citizens to follow regardless of which state they live in.

The State Governments are the ones at the front in fighting the pandemic. Each state has slightly different approaches - depending on local circumstances - to implementing the same rules. They use their health infrastructures to test and treat patients as well as communicating their own approach to the community. There are differences between states - size, population, location, socio-economic profiles, exposure to risk, health resources and so on, and it is understandable that some want to ease restrictions faster than others. In fact I feel sorry for people living in remote areas where there is a smaller chance of infection, having to knuckle down to similar rules as the larger cities where risks are higher. But imagine if the virus got into one of these remote settlements. It could devastate the community.

Local Government also has an important role to play - in enforcing rules relating to mass gatherings, beaches, golf courses, parks, camping grounds and workplaces as well as assisting in emergency food relief.

The pandemic has shown that we can never envisage circumstances even 12 months into the future. The only certainty is that we don't know what next year will bring. It will be fascinating to observe what happens over the next few years. Our current Federal Government is conservative about spending but it will have to devise new ways of raising money either through taxes or borrowing (which must be tempting with such low interest rates).

I would like to throw in another issue likely to grab attention. Our greenhouse emissions targets will most likely be achieved, not through good management but through happenstance. However wouldn't it be great if the Government decided to side with the science regarding global warning. With the restructuring of Australia that is needed, there won't be a better chance to build our capability in renewable energy technology.

Or am I just dreamin'?

Now I want to place all this in some perspective – brought about by the completion of my family history. Maybe, after all, we don't have it too bad. Despite the complaints about our situation and the hysteria some people have drummed up about restrictions, let's take a look at my father's lifespan. In a way he was lucky because he was too young to serve in the Great War and too old in the Second World War, even though he enlisted in the latter. Strangely enough, he wasn't discharged until 1947.

He was born in 1904. He was 14 when that war ended resulting in the death of 22 million people (including 63,000 Australians). Immediately after the war the Spanish Flu epidemic erupted and lasted two years. 17,000 people died in Australia and in the two years of its terror, 50 million people died worldwide.

In 1929 the Great Depression began. The unemployment rate in Australia was 30 per cent and the world economy collapsed. This time was a disaster for Dad as he had just bought a farm in Pyramid Hill and the bank foreclosed on him. He was left with nothing. He and Mum were sweethearts by then and he went back to Colac to live with my mother's family. My grandfather was a very considerate man and took him in. And my uncle employed Dad for the rest of his working life.

Thomas Keneally wrote an excellent article in *The Age* (May 8th) about this period. There was no such thing as a government safety net for the unemployed in the 1930s. Men camped in informal settlements up and down the railway lines. The trains used to slow down to enable them to jump aboard without killing themselves so that they could get to towns further along the track in the hope of finding work. He said:

*One of the ironies was that our war debt had been incurred fighting Britain's war in 1914-18 but there was to be no moratorium on paying interest even on that. And, indeed,*

*Australia's position in terms of getting future loans might have been much threatened if we had not continued our payments. But as a result, a generation was traumatised, and thousands of children grew up in "Happy Valleys", informal villages of the disinherited, constructed of corrugated iron, packing cases and hessian.*

Talking about the current pandemic, Keneally went on to say:

*We are as much in the grip of uncertainty and trauma now as those folk were, but the government has at least been able to deploy its means and stratagems in a way (Prime Minister) Scullin could but dream of. There are in all of this, great chances to remake ourselves. What ended the Depression was World War II. God forbid that we get such a solution this time.*

Coming back to my father's chronology, the Second World War erupted in 1939 in which 75 million people perished (including 23,000 Australians). In the meantime, smallpox was endemic until the forties, killing 300 million people during his lifetime. In Australia it decimated aboriginal communities.

In 1950, the Korean War started in which five million people died. For all his life up until his 55th birthday, polio epidemics frequently broke out especially in the summer. I remember this well. In Colac, they suspended Sunday School (not a bad thing) but they closed the cinema (a disaster). One of my classmates contracted it and also one of my aunts. Then came the Vietnam War (four million dead) and it lasted 20 years. During the Cold War, there was a threat of nuclear annihilation. Some think that peace was on a knife edge during the Cuba missile crisis. My father died in 1977 but he was witness to all these events. You can see that life was not really very easy for our parent's generation and yet I never heard them complaining. They had to endure all this while we are now called to stay at home and sit on the couch for a few months.

## Vale

### Betty Allanson

I am saddened to report the recent death of Betty Allanson, Noel's wife, at the age of 92. She and Noel had been married for 69 years. We extend our sincerest sympathies to Noel and family.

## Cricket matches between CRB and PWD Tasmania

Jim Webber sent me the following note:

'Cricket matches between the CRB and the PWD Tasmania started at Ulverstone in 1962. I'm putting together an article on these matches for the Newsletter. I currently have reports and photos on many of the matches up until 1984, mostly supplied by Gary Edwards, George Wittingslow, Bill Saggars, Max Palmer, Alastair Robinson, Graeme Johnson and Howard Ellis. I intend to supplement this information with reports from copies of *Roadlines* and *Interchange* held by the Victorian Government Library Services (VGLS) at Werribee.

I would be very pleased to receive any further information (including photographs) from anyone who played in these matches or had copies of *Roadlines* or *Interchange*.'

Please contact Jim if you can help.



## News from our members

### Lance Midgley

Lance seems to be settling in well at the Royal Talbot but realises that there is still a long road ahead of him. If anyone wishes to send a card or a letter to him, the address is as follows -

Lance Midgley  
Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre  
1 Yarra Boulevard  
KEW, VIC 3101

Royal Talbot is a positive milestone in Lance's recovery process. It's much quieter and spacious than the Austin. The grounds are large and the area full of whistling birds. It's a very peaceful and calming location.

Establishing some new routines will be the next step in developing his independence. There will be more therapies and lots of hard work ahead. For example, he has a wrist/hand strap with a fork and spoon attached which gives him independence at eating times.

Lance and his family give their thanks to all those people who continue to send messages and good wishes.

Lance sent me the following photograph.



Lance and Peter McCulloch

### Jim Webber

Jim responded to the last newsletter on a number of fronts. In the introduction I commented on the song 'We are Australian'. It was Jim who told me that it was written

by Bruce Woodley (The Seekers) and Dobe Newton (Bushwhackers). He went on to say:

'I feel the same way about the song - back in 2007 Jeff Kennett pushed for it to be our National Anthem- I hope it will be one day. The three male Seekers all attended Melbourne High - I was in the same year as Athol Guy and one year ahead of Keith Potger. My closest friend at East Oakleigh Central and Melbourne High was Bob Turnbull who was in the original group with the others - The Escorts. He left the group prior to the formation of The Seekers.'

I also mentioned the USA's undemocratic electoral system in the article about Wuhan. Jim said:

'The following is a note I received last month from a friend in Wisconsin - a swing state that unexpectedly was won by Trump in 2016.

*We are thrilled that Jill Karofsky won (a Democrat competing for a Supreme Court position) - despite the rather obvious Republican strategy to make it as difficult as possible. Madison, a city of just over 200,000 people had 66 polling places. Milwaukee - population 600,000, with a substantial black and Democratic population, had 5!!!!!!!'*

### Bill Collins

Inspired by John Wright's odyssey - and especially John's evocation of Port Moresby - Bill Collins decided to put pen to paper about his own experiences in Papua New Guinea. This is what he wrote:

'My time from 1964 to 1969 overlapped John's so I related to John's experiences which he described in such detail. He obviously has a great memory.

My story starts in 1962 when I was awarded a cadetship by the Commonwealth Department of Works (CDW) to complete my engineering studies at RMIT. The cadetship paid me a salary and guaranteed a job after graduation. For those who don't know or don't remember the CDW provided all the engineering and architectural services required by the Commonwealth Departments such as Defence, Civil Aviation, Postmaster General and Territories. It had a staff of many thousands and had offices in every state and territory as well as Papua New Guinea. Sadly, it was abolished in the last decade of the last century with the work being given to consultants.

I started work in the Victorian Office in 1963. My first task was to complete a crack survey of all the concrete slabs at Essendon Airport, which was then Melbourne's main airport. A most boring task! About this time, I was planning to become engaged to my future wife, Patricia (Trish). We were hoping eventually to marry but as I had very little money this would be difficult in the short term. As it

happened one of the other young engineers, John Dalton, was transferring to the Port Moresby office. He said that the conditions of employment were excellent. These included free accommodation, a zone allowance on top of salary, a tax rate half of that in Australia and 10 weeks holiday every 21 months with air fares back to Australia. So, having consulted Trish as to her feeling about living in a tropical climate, which was very positive, I applied to transfer to Port Moresby. I was accepted so we planned to marry in January 1964 and use our air fare to facilitate our honeymoon.

### Settling into Papua New Guinea

We subsequently married and flew to Port Moresby via Sydney, Brisbane and Surfers Paradise. We had a similar experience to John Dalton when we landed at Port Moresby's Jacksons Airstrip. The humidity was stifling and everything looked strange. We were met by John Dalton who took us to our accommodation. He apologized that the unit we were to live in for the next 12 months was a wartime donga (a portable building), consisting of unlined fibro cement sheeting. The cooling was provided by overhead fans and banks of louvre windows. We actually were very pleased with the accommodation as the unit was situated on Paga Hill and had a million-dollar view encompassing Port Moresby harbour and the Coral Sea. The only downside, as we subsequently found out, were the highly poisonous Papuan Black snakes and the foot-long centipedes that were our neighbours.

Our first year was spent settling into a very different environment than what we left in Melbourne. Within the first week we were invited to dinner at the residence of the Chief Design Engineer, Dave Beverley. Dave was an ex commando who had fought against the Japanese in New Guinea. He introduced us to a number of other engineers and their wives, mainly British migrants, who subsequently became good friends. I settled in to the road design section and began work on the Highlands Highway connecting the coastal town of Lae to the main town in the central highlands, Goroka. Tricia landed a position at the Education Department as an admin officer and subsequently transferred to a teaching position at the native high school.

On the advice of friends who had lived in Port Moresby we employed a house *boi*, Rarun, a local who cleaned the donga and washed and ironed our clothes. This was common practice at the time as it provided employment and a meagre income to villagers who had migrated to town. We were very trusting initially but I started to suspect he was not altogether trustworthy. We locked our bedroom during the day but I discovered that he managed to get into the bedroom while we were at work. One incident that I recall was when we were in bed and I had a feeling that we were being watched. I rolled out of bed and crept outside to find Rarun standing near a window, at 3 o'clock in the morning. He was difficult to see as he had only dark shorts on. I asked him what he was doing and he replied "Master I

chase one fella who peep on you". Of course, this was a lie. Some days later Rarun disappeared and we subsequently found out that he was arrested for peeping on a woman showering in a nearby house. He then spent a month in jail and upon release returned to ask for his job back! Our later experience with house *bois* was much better, particularly with those who were married.

So, life in our first year was most enjoyable. Tennis, dinner parties and sailing on Port Moresby harbour were some of the activities that we enjoyed. In June of that year we joined others to fly to the Trobriand Islands, side saddle, in an old DC3. These islands were made famous by the American anthropologist, Margaret Mead as she observed and wrote about the free and easy sex lives of the islanders. The people were very friendly and treated us to feasts of roast pig, crabs and tropical fruit and turned on a colourful *sing-sing* for our entertainment.

Occasionally I had to overnight trips to inspect projects that I was working on. This was difficult for Tricia as our Donga was somewhat isolated. On one occasion when she was alone and felt that eyes were spying on her she picked up my .22 rifle, which I had purchased on advice of locals soon after arriving, and marched up and down the lounge room so that any unwanted visitor could see that she was armed. Actually, the rifle was unloaded as I had hidden the bullets in a secure part of the donga. Nevertheless, she had no trouble that night.

The access road to our accommodation was narrow and rather tortuous. There was a licensed club half way up the hill which was frequented by the single men that worked in the town. Driving down the hill after a number of South Pacific lager stubbies was a challenge which not all survived as every so often a car would fly over the edge of the road. Fortunately, most of the drivers survived with only minor injuries. They would then be eligible to join the exclusive brotherhood of the "Paga Hill Flyers".

One year later we were transferred to a new house in the suburb of Boroko. Our next-door neighbours were fellow engineers who had migrated from Britain, Ian Brookes and Malcolm Bennett and their wives Liz and Carole. This was convenient when the husbands had to travel overnight as the wives and babies could be easily looked after by the neighbours. We had many riotous cocktail parties over the subsequent three years and have remained friends ever since.

### Appointment to Materials Engineer

1965 saw me transferred to the position of Materials Engineer, which involved managing the testing laboratories in Port Moresby and Lae as well as arranging field labs for various construction projects. One project which took a lot of my time was associated with the decision by the Australian Government to build a new airstrip at Wewak on the north coast of New Guinea. The rationale for this decision was



A local market in PNG

the belief that Indonesia, under the leadership of General Sukarno, was likely to invade New Guinea and incorporate the territory with Indonesian West Irian. My task was to place a technician, Noel Langford, in Wewak with a portable Gemco drill and one of the first models of the Land Cruiser. His task was to explore for materials which could be used to construct an airstrip capable of hosting a squadron of F111A fighter bombers. Noel spent some months exploring the local jungles and eventually found suitable material sources for the project. In the meantime, the design work for the airstrip was completed in Melbourne and the contract went out to tender. Just at that time President Sukarno was overthrown by General Suharto and the political landscape changed for the better so the tender was put on hold.

In the process of his work in the jungles Noel came across remnants of the fierce battles fought around Wewak in 1943/44. These included helmets, rusted shells of various vehicles, bayonets and other remnants of the war. We also discovered a monument at Cape Wom, near Wewak, which commemorated the surrender of the Japanese forces to the Americans in 1945.

As part of the preparation for the possible confrontation with Indonesia I was involved with a survey of the various minor airstrips which were situated in the villages near the West Irian border. I remember flying into one named Telefomin and being greeted by the males of the village wearing only gourds on their penises and strings around their necks supporting the gourds. As they hardly ever saw a white man we were as much an object of curiosity to them as they were to us.

To increase my knowledge and capability as a materials engineer I was sent to Melbourne in October for a month to receive training at the main laboratory in Port Melbourne. This was a good opportunity to catch up with family again.

My third year in Port Moresby was again as Materials Engineer. The two main projects for that year were the reconstruction

of the Port Moresby Airstrip and the construction of an airstrip on Daru Island which was situated off the south west coast of Papua. The Work at Daru was interesting. As there was no suitable local stone, cement stabilized clay was utilized for the pavement construction. My job was to fly to Daru once a week to conduct density tests on the stabilized clay. There was a day labour force of 30 workers who lived in small huts and had a communal dining area with meals provided by a rather dubious cook. The labour force consisted, in the main, of escapees from criminal charges in Australia and elsewhere. The local girls were attracted to these outcasts so there was plenty of activity at night. In the mornings there was a truck allocated to take some of the workers to the local hospital for penicillin injections. It was a rude awakening for me as a "innocent" 24-year-old to life in the raw!

The positive side of my time at Daru was that on each trip I would bring back a 2 kg lobster or a whole barramundi. The Lobster cost 2 shillings, maybe \$2 nowadays. Tricia was always ready with the vinegar and bread when I arrived back home.

### The birth of our daughter

One highlight of 1966 was the birth of our daughter Simone in May. It was quite an experience for me and, of course for Tricia. Tricia decided to go to hospital when she experienced unusual pains. So, I took her to the Port Moresby General Hospital and went to a friend's place to await a call that the birth was imminent. At around midnight I got a call saying that the birth was in its final stages. I raced to the hospital and knocked on the main door. A local nurse let me in and gowned me up and with a face mask as well. I was taken into the delivery room and was greeted by Tricia in pain and desperate to hold my hand. The doctor, who had just come from a cocktail party as it turned out, was in shorts and thongs. Fortunately, everything went well with the birth.

### Other work appointments

At the end of 1966 I was shifted to the "Tar Pot", which was the day labour group which looked after all the maintenance in Port Moresby, including water, roads, sewerage and drainage. This was a big challenge for me as a young and inexperienced engineer. I had three Works Supervisors who were supposed to assist me but instead caused me much strife. One was a Brit, the second was an Irishman and the third was an Australian who married a local woman 30 years ago. They each hated the other two and were always finding reasons to dob in their colleagues. So, my time in that job was very challenging.

In June 1967 I was promoted to a Class 2 position in the Road Design Department and for the next seven months spent my time on large road projects. One memory which sticks in my mind is when I went with my boss at the time, Bert Abbess, to inspect sub divisional roads in south east Papua. We used a "bubble" helicopter to inspect the progress of construction. Because of the lack of shade in



Trish being offered a local delicacy

the machine it became very hot and Bert became nauseous. There were no sick bags so Bert used his sun hat instead. As you can imagine I was very glad to get off the helicopter.

Later that year I was invited to join the Chief Construction Engineer, Tom Crotty, and a colleague in an attempt to climb Mt Albert Edward. Tom was a good friend of mine as we would often spend Sundays sailing on the harbour, smoking and discussing world events. Inevitably we came last in the races, but we enjoyed ourselves. This mountain is the highest in Papua/New Guinea at 13,500 feet (twice as high as Mt Kosciuszko). We flew into Tarpini airstrip, which is somewhat dangerous as it has a 15 degrees slope. So, one lands uphill and departs downhill, avoiding the mountain just at the end of the runway.

The mountain entailed a very arduous climb, but fortunately I had trained hard in anticipation. I was surprised to see Tom struggling on the climb as I had always considered him as being very fit. A few years later Tom died of a heart attack playing squash. Apparently, He had a hereditary heart condition. I miss him very much! We did not make it to the top as the clouds came down and it became very cold with snow drifts, but we got close.

### Birth of our second daughter and son

In November that year we had our second daughter, Nicole. The birth was not without some drama. After the birth Tricia started to bleed profusely and the Doctor was more interested in discussing his latest golf round with a colleague than attending to the birth. Eventually the native nurse plucked up courage to interrupt the doctor's monologue and then all hell broke loose. Many bags of blood later she survived. A close call!

1968, my fourth year in the Territory saw me transferred to the Contracts Section. My job was to supervise all the contracts let in that office. It was a good learning experience as there were some dodgy contractors. We had moved into a new house that year which had an extra bedroom but was not as pleasant as our previous house. We started to think

about moving back to Melbourne. In Easter that year we came to Melbourne and while there bought a block of land in Mentone for \$7600. Then we organized a house to be built. We returned to Port Moresby and I applied for a transfer back to Melbourne. Eventually the transfer was approved but I had to accept a demotion to a Class 1 position. We had another baby, a son, in January 1969 and left for Melbourne in March, in time to move into our new house.

### Return to Melbourne

My work in the Victorian office of the CDW was somewhat boring, mainly post-office site works and other simple tasks. The one challenging job that I enjoyed in that year was to fly into Swan Island in Bass Straight and survey and design an unsealed airstrip to enable the lighthouse keeper and his assistant to be provisioned by air rather than by sea. I enjoyed the two weeks of relative solitude!

In October 1969 I was walking down Collins Street and accidentally met Geoff Smith, a colleague from my first year working in the Victorian Office of the CDW. Geoff was now working for the Highways Branch of the MMBW. He mentioned that his office was recruiting engineers, so I applied and was successful in being appointed to a Class 2 engineering position in road design

### Joining the MMBW

The design office was just commencing work on the design of the Eastern Freeway between Collingwood and Bulleen, which was a welcome contrast to designing post office forecourts. This design, under the direction of Tom Dobson, was undertaken in the days before Environment Effects Statements so as designers we had plenty of scope to use our imagination. Some of the elements of the design which were incorporated into the construction were:

The allowance for a heavy gauge railway to be built in the median of the freeway. This was subsequently abandoned but the median remains.

- The design for ten freeway lanes through the Yarra Bend Park.
- The realignment of the Yarra River through the Latrobe Golf Course.
- The redesign and rebuilding of the Latrobe, Kew and Camberwell Golf Courses to accommodate the freeway.
- The design of 40m high lighting poles to provide continuous lighting along the freeway.
- The high embankments through the Yarra flood plane were designed for 1 in 100-year floods.
- The design of sound mounds and barriers, which was a first for freeways in Victoria.

The bridges were unusual for that time with aesthetics playing a big part in the final designs.

(Editor's Note: In August 2019 the Victorian Government proposed that the section of the Eastern Freeway from Hoddle St to Bulleen Rd be added to the Victorian Heritage Register because of the quality of the bridges. The application was supported by the National Trust. In December 2019 the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria recommended to the Heritage Council that this section of Freeway be added to the Register. Public submissions have been received but the Registration Hearing has been delayed due to COVID-19)

The design teams were managed by Tom Dobson who was the driving force in getting the design finished in record time. This was just as well as a week after the designs went to tender the Collingwood Council passed a resolution opposing the works in its municipality. The Government decided, that with the documents now out to tender, it would override the Council's objection. I hate to think what access to the Eastern suburbs would be like today without the freeway!

### **Amalgamation of the CRB and the MMBW**

In 1974 the Victorian Government decided to amalgamate the Highways Branch of the MMBW with the Country Roads Board. We had a visit from the Chairman of the CRB, R.E.V. Donaldson, who assured us that we would be well treated in the "takeover". So, it came to pass that on 1 July 1974 we were physically transferred to Denmark Street.

I was assigned to the Plans and Surveys Section as a Class 3 engineer and was introduced to colleagues including Bob Morrison, Kerry Burke and Ivor Preston. Fortunately, this was the time when the federal government had started to provide funds for the National Highways network so there

## **From the archives**

Richard Williams wrote to me about the photo in Newsletter 214 as follows:

'I have been looking at that old photo trying to add further names. Between the passage of time, shadows in the photo, my memory and of course the youthful men in that photo I may have two more, but I cannot guarantee I am correct.

The person between yourself and Alastair might be Peter Vaile, a technical officer, and the person between John Diamante and David Jones might be Peter Atamian, another technical officer. Both would have been in Plans and Surveys at that time or the work group may have been called Road Design — depending on the year. It would not have been an Induction Course in my view but probably a road design course or possibly a management course.'



was plenty of work. My first task was to oversee the design of a section of the Hume freeway starting from Seymour running north. One year later I was promoted to a Class 4 position as David Berry, the incumbent, was transferred to another department. Over the next seven years I managed the design tasks on the Hume freeway from south of Seymour to Glenrowan and also on the Princes Freeway from Drouin to Morwell. I was then promoted to manage the Traffic Engineering Division. In 1992 I was back in design as the Manager Design which included road, bridge, traffic and landscape design sections and the IT systems used for design. This is where I remained until the year 2000 when the Chief Executive, Colin Jordan, asked me to take on the position of General Manager Human Resources. An interesting position for an engineer!

In 2001, as I had turned 60 and had some health issues, I resigned. I thought that I would then enjoy a leisurely retirement, but it was not to be! I was approached by a former VicRoads engineer, Roy McCartney, to join him at the City of Greater Dandenong to assist in managing the interface between the Council and the East Link project, which was in full swing over the next six years. This suited me very well as it was a job with flexible hours and interesting but not stressful work. I was able to take time off every so often to travel overseas and, of course, the pay helped to fund these extravagances.

In summary, I am grateful for the opportunities given to me over the course of my career. My five years in Papua do stand out as the highlight of my professional and personal experiences. However, I must say that I got to know many great engineers in my time at the CRB and VicRoads and I still count them as friends.'

### **C.R.B. Travelogue**

Eddie Schubert sent me a wonderful film made by the C.R.B. in about 1948. I saw an FX Holden in it. But it shows travelling on some of Victoria's roads and will evoke many memories of the times. For those of you connected to the internet, it can be found on [youtube.com/watch?v=EJBtElrbdtw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJBtElrbdtw)

## **New member**

I would like to welcome Max Palmer to the fold. Max started work at the Exhibition Building in 1957 and worked in Materials Research, Bridge, Asphalt and Major Projects Divisions before he left in 1976. Max played in the C.R.B.'s cricket team which used to play regularly against P.W.D. Tasmania. In fact he has the distinction of being the only person to play for both teams. He now lives in Queensland.



Construction of the railway overpass at the level crossing.



Lifting the bridge beams into place.



Completion of the grade separation after opening to traffic

## News from Major Transport Infrastructure Authority

### Toorak Road Level Crossing Removal

The elimination of the level crossing at Toorak Road was completed in April eliminating the bottlenecks that occurred with the boom gate delays. Trains are now travelling over the new rail bridge.

The crossing was removed more than six months ahead of schedule following a nine-day construction blitz. Crews worked around the clock to remove the boom gates, lay 900 metres of new track, install overhead wiring and signals and connect the new rail bridge to the Glen Waverley line.

The Toorak Road - Monash Freeway interchange is one of the most congested intersections in Melbourne.

Prior to its removal, the level crossing was a major bottleneck with boom gates down for 35 per cent of the morning peak, causing delays for the 37,000 vehicles travelling through the crossing each day.

The new rail bridge was largely constructed through February and March, with 40 locally manufactured L-beams forming the bridge, each up to 31 metres long and weighing up to 128 tonnes.

With the boom gates gone, construction will now focus on improving pedestrian and cycling connections, new open space and landscaping works. These works will continue until 2021 with more than 23,000 trees, plants and grasses to be planted.

### Work Place Protocols to address Coronavirus Pandemic

Strict protocols are in place on all Major Transport Infrastructure Authority worksites to protect the health and safety of construction workers and the community, and are consistent with the advice from the Chief Health Officer.

This includes modifying construction activities to allow social distancing and providing extra protection for workers who need to work in proximity for short periods of time. There are also enhanced industrial cleaning and additional hygiene measures in place.



# News from Regional Roads Victoria

## Remedial Works on the Great Ocean Road

The Great Ocean Road Resilience Project – valued at \$53 million - will safeguard against geotechnical risks. As part of this investment, Regional Roads Victoria carried out complex rock removal works on the cliff face east of Cumberland River in 2019. This involved crews abseiling down the cliff face, manually removing smaller loose rocks which were trapped behind a container wall barrier beside the road at the base of the cliff. Larger rocks were progressively removed by using drilling equipment, expanding grout, airbags and crowbars. These rocks weighed between a few kilograms to one or two tonnes. Some of the rock removed from the cliff was accepted by Parks Victoria to assist them in installing steps for pathways within National Parks.

During the removal of the larger rocks road traffic was temporarily stopped to allow the workers to safely dislodge the loose rocks. These delays were typically five to ten minutes.

In early 2018, drone surveillance identified a high-risk geotechnical site above the Great Ocean Road, east of Cumberland River. The investigations revealed a section of the cliff face which has become more susceptible to rock falls over time. To immediately mitigate risks and improve safety, traffic barriers were installed in September 2018, closing 100m of the Torquay-bound lane, therefore reducing this section of the road to one lane.

In December 2018, a container wall barrier (17 containers long, 2 containers high) was installed along this section of the road to protect vehicles from loose rockfall and to allow two lanes to be operational again, under traffic management.

The bottom layer of containers were filled with water bladders to provide extra strength and stability. The containers were also anchored to the cliff via 2-4 steel posts drilled into the rock.

Geotechnical investigations were then completed to identify those rocks that needed to be removed from the cliff face and a methodology to safely dislodge them.

The workmen were harnessed to fixing points above the cliff. They used pneumatic drills to drill vertical holes in a line on top of the rocks. They then used two methods to fracture the rock along the drill lines. The first involved filling the holes with an expanding grout and waiting for about 24 hours for the cracking to occur. The second method involved the insertion of airbag jacks into the holes and the jacks were then expanded to form the cracks.



Workers dislodging rocks with the container wall barrier below.



Installing the container wall barrier.

Once the rock was cracked to a sufficient size, it was manually dislodged using crow bars and allowed to fall to the ground behind the container wall. The road was always temporarily closed to traffic while this occurred.

The cliff will be constantly monitored by Regional Roads Victoria's geotechnical engineers and if necessary, other geotechnical treatments such as rock netting will be considered.

## Moggs Creek Bridge on the Great Ocean Road

Valerie Dripps contacted me to say that the reconstruction of the Moggs Creek bridge on the Great Ocean Road is now complete. The old bridge had reached the end of its service life and it was too narrow to accommodate the larger vehicles – such as tourist buses – that now use the road. Furthermore, there was no provision for pedestrians wanting to access the beach and a free standing timber pedestrian bridge had been previously erected alongside it for this purpose.

Although this might be considered a minor project in the overall scheme of things it required a lot of consideration in the design and construction of the bridge. It had to take account of the impact on the adjacent sand dune, minimise the impact on the creek itself, maintain the foreshore parking, avoid light impacts at night, and ensure that emergency services had access through the site at all times. Small bollard lighting triggered by pedestrians at the crossing of the Great Ocean Road will protect the view of the night sky.

Work commenced on construction after the peak summer holiday season when traffic is lighter and has just been completed. To reduce the impact on traffic much of the work was carried out at night time. The new bridge is on the same alignment as the one it replaced so temporary diversion of traffic was required.

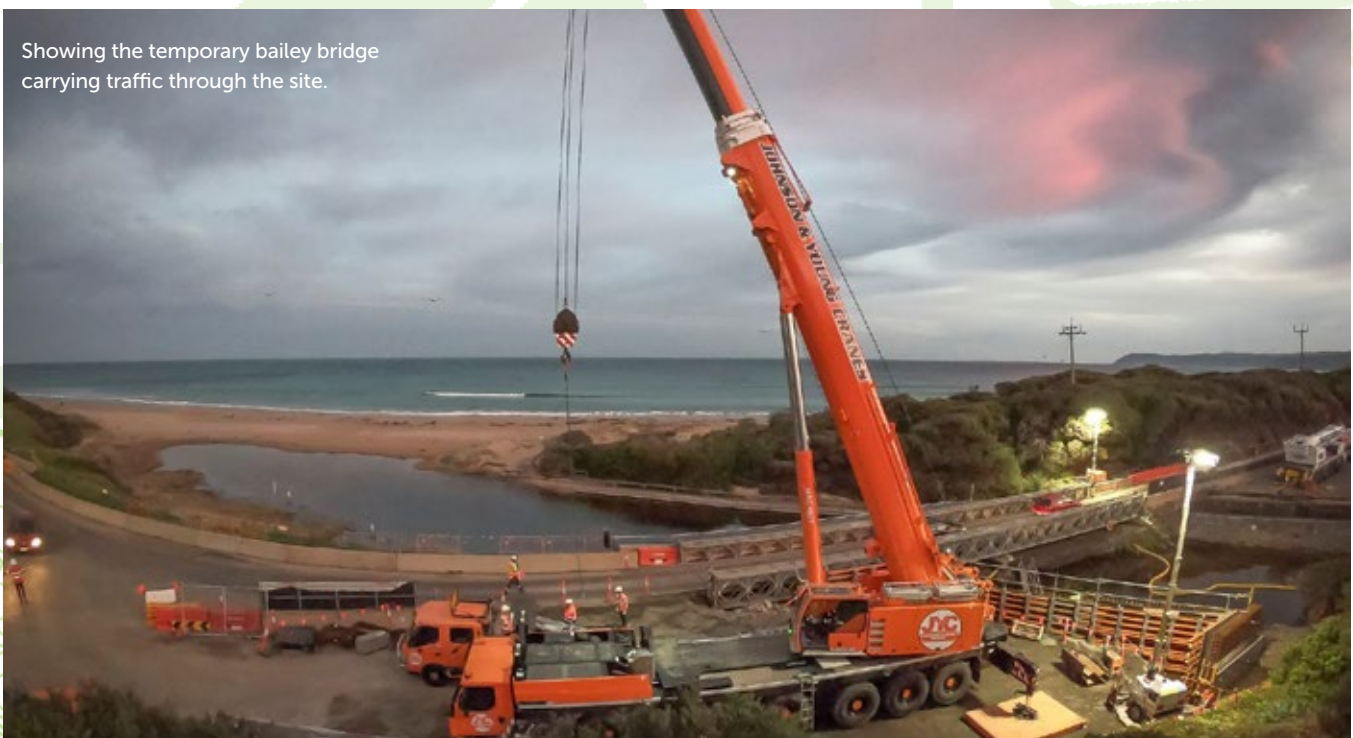
The total cost of the project was \$3.9 Million.



The old bridge with the timber pedestrian bridge alongside.

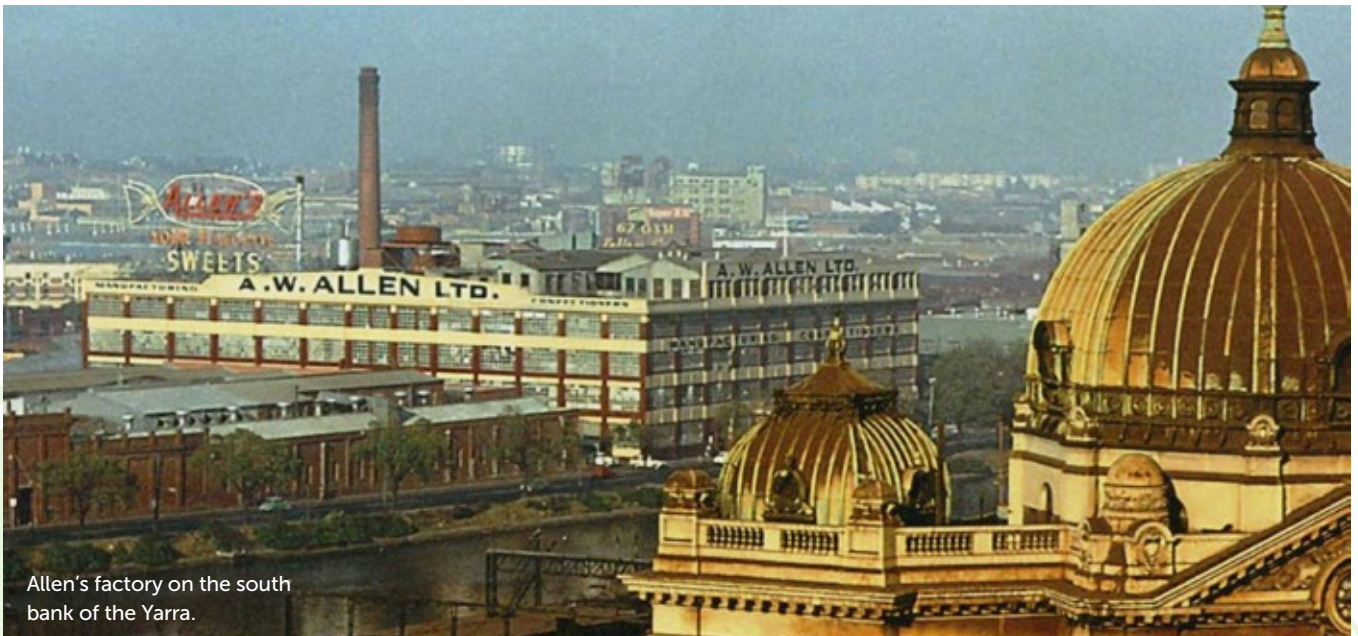


Showing the temporary bailey bridge carrying traffic through the site.





## Trivia and didactic whimsies



Allen's factory on the south bank of the Yarra.

### Snakes, mint leaves and jelly babies

We've all enjoyed eating a snake or a mint leaf or a jelly baby now and then but I bet none of you have ever given thought to how they were created.

Allen's was founded by Alfred Weaver Allen, a Melbourne confectioner. Originally employed by MacRobertson's, he commenced production in the 1890s at his Fitzroy confectionery shop. By 1909, Allen's was the third largest confectionery business in Melbourne, after those of Sir Macpherson Robertson and Abel Hoadley. It launched as a public company in 1922 and erected a vast factory to the design of prominent Melbourne architect Joseph Plottel in South Melbourne on the banks of the Yarra River, where its animated neon sign was a local landmark up to its demise in the 1980s.

I want to tell the story of a very dear friend of ours who was once the creative artist for Allen's Sweets. Her name is Judy Dowling. She and Pam went through Art College and Teachers College together and Pam was her bridesmaid. During the late 1970s and early 1980s Judy was the ceramic designer at Allen's Sweets which stood on what is now Southbank next to where the Concert Hall is.

At that time, Allen's had a staff of 1,100 people. She made the original models for the sweets in clay using dentist's tools. They had to be made to quite exacting specifications. Using the original models huge trays of moulds were made. She recalled once that she had to reduce the proportions of some jelly beans, raspberries and mint leaves to prevent an increase in price.



These are the lollies and some of Judy's models.

## London's Underground

In 1964, Pam and I went to England aboard the 'Oriana'. This was its second voyage from Australia and it was, along with 'Canberra', the pride of the P and O Line. It was like a five star hotel on the water – or at least that's what we thought. We sailed via Perth, Colombo, Aden, Cairo, Naples and Gibraltar to Southampton. It was very exciting being the first time we had left Australia's shores and we loved the shipboard life – although Pam suffered from seasickness for the first few days. We made friendships on that voyage that we still retain today. I could write another book about it.

I had been awarded a Federation of British Industry (later the Confederation of British Industry) scholarship to work in the UK. Lest you think I was a clever fellow, I would like to point out that there were others from the C.R.B. who were also awarded the same scholarship. These were Raleigh Robinson, Jim Webber, Brian Head and Laurie Watson. There may have been more so forgive me if I have left anyone out. Better still, let me know. It could be a good basis for a story in a future newsletter.

At any rate Pam and I settled down to life in London and we loved it. Still do! But while I was there, someone suggested I write a story about London and I submitted the following one about the London Underground. It was published in the first edition of Roadlines magazine in 1965. It was fairly long – as are most of my stories – so I have abridged it, slightly!

I called the story *How I Learned to Respect and Even Love London's Underground*. This is what I said.

"Public transport plays an immense role in maintaining an essential lifeline in any large city. Is it any wonder then, that I should come to respect and even love London's underground?"

Let me go back to 10 January 1863, when the first sub-surface railway was opened in London. Nearly four miles in length, it ran between Paddington and Farringdon Street and it was the birth of the present Metropolitan Line - with its total length of 66½ miles. It was the idea of Charles Pearson, a London city solicitor, who foresaw the possibility of underground travel to relieve the congestion of streets choked with horse-drawn vehicles. It was the forerunner of a sub-surface enterprise which was to become one of the largest electric underground railways of the world.

These first lines were built using a cut-and cover method, whereby a deep trench is excavated from ground level and then covered over. Progress was slow. The cut-and-cover method restricted the location of the lines, but in 1870, when the world's first bored tube railway was opened - running under the Thames River between Tower Hill and Bermondsey - the rate of expansion of the network increased rapidly.

This first tube railway operated for only a few months, carrying passengers by cable-operated cars but these were subsequently withdrawn, and the subway was used by foot passengers until 1896 when Tower Bridge was opened.

Now, the system as a whole radiates from Central London serving most parts of the metropolis and covers such a wide area that when the outskirts are reached, it comes up to the surface and operates as an ordinary surface railway, in some cases operating on mainline tracks.

There are six lines - the Metropolitan, the District, the Northern (which includes the longest continuous railway tunnel in the world - 17 ½ miles), the Bakerloo, the Central and the Piccadilly Lines. A seventh line, the Circle, is mainly



Some London Underground posters – circa 1965



The London Underground in 1965

a combination of sections of the Metropolitan and District Lines. It connects most of London's Main Line railway termini including Paddington, King's Cross, Liverpool Street and Victoria Stations. The Victoria Line is under construction.

Trains operate daily from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m. and it is only during the intervening four hours that maintenance of the tracks and signals in the tunnels can be carried out. In this comparatively short time every yard of tunnel is inspected. Air is changed every quarter of an hour, thus maintaining an underground temperature between 69 and 73 degrees Fahrenheit all the year round.

There are two sizes of underground railway trains - for surface lines and tubes. The first includes stock on the Metropolitan, District and Circle lines and it is larger than the stock on the tube lines.

The length of trains vary between two and eight cars and each car seats an average of 40 passengers with room for 100 or more to stand. In the peak hours, so intense is the service that trains run at intervals as short as 90 seconds in the central area and the average length of time of a station stop is only 20 to 25 seconds.

During the blitz in London in World War II, tube stations were used as shelters and it is on record that no fewer than 170,000 people sheltered in the tubes on September 27, 1940. However, this figure dwindled and stabilised itself at about 60,000 nightly. Special facilities had to be provided in the tubes - kitchens for food catering, medical centres, extra toilets and bunks to accommodate over 22,000 people.

Now work has started on the construction of the first new tube line across Central London for 55 years— the 10½ mile long Victoria Line, running from Victoria Station across the West End and out to densely populated Tottenham and Walthamstow. This new tube will cost £56 million which includes the construction of the stations (and connections with existing stations) as well as the supply of all rolling stock and equipment.

The most complex engineering problems on the new line are those at King's Cross and Oxford Circus. There are already three lines intersecting at the former, discounting British Railways, two tubes and one sub-surface line; when the Victoria Line opens in 1968 there will be four.

At Oxford Circus where the new line will interchange with the Bakerloo and Central tube





Lines available access to the complex works is severely restricted. At the two places just mentioned and also at Euston and Green Park, considerable reconstruction of the existing stations is required to make it suitable for handling the anticipated increase in traffic. So considering the line as a whole these stations alone will cost roughly 40 per cent of the total £56 million.

The services of London Transport are publicised through the media of pocket-maps, time tables, guide-books, leaflets and posters. Pocket folder maps (free to the public) cover all services and various leaflets are published from time to time to help visitors to find their way about London and to places of interest beyond London via the Green Line buses or the surface rail. The Underground pioneered poster advertising in England during the early years of this century and indeed the high standard of London Transport posters is world famous.

On average, over 1¾ million passenger journeys are made every day on the network, and although services are increased with demand, travel during rush hours can be sufficient to uncurl any British "stiff upper lip." The number of people crammed into carriages during these periods is unbelievable as well as uncomfortable.

It was during one of these peak hour crushes that an English friend boarded the train with me. People were leaning against each other, standing on toes, pushing elbows into stomachs, many carrying shopping baskets (and more uncomfortably, umbrellas), when my friend whispered to me, "I'll soon clear them away". There he stood resolute, his hand tightly clenching the strap which descended from the ceiling. In a very loud, crisp English voice he said: "I'm being interfered with" and immediately he found himself standing in the centre of a circle of passengers the nearest of which was about five feet away.

Another humorous anecdote, although lengthy, is worth relating. An Australian friend Ken, a graduate in Chemical Engineering from Monash, received one morning a letter from his university, but because he was running late decided to read it on the tube on the way to work. He ran to the station and finding a large queue at the ticket office decided to board the train without a ticket and pay his fare at the other end.

He finally opened his letter and read: "Dear Sir, Unless the crockery, cutlery and sugar that you unlawfully took from the cafeteria of Monash University are returned immediately, the Registrar of this university will be forced to sell your degree by public auction, the resultant proceeds being used to replace the purloined items." It was signed by a friend of Ken's who worked at the university and who had access to the letterhead of that establishment.

Ken smiled at the joke and stuffed the letter back into his pocket without putting it back in the envelope. By this time, the train had arrived at his destination and he alighted. As he approached the ticket collector at the gate an evil thought sprung to his mind. "Why should I pay 2/6 from Golder's Green when I can pay much less if I say I came from a closer station?" And so, when asked where he had come from, he confidently said, "Chalk Farm," a station much closer along his route.

The officer said that the fare was sixpence and Ken handed the money over. Then a very polite voice behind him asked; "May I have a word with you, sir?" Ken obliged.

The gentleman said. "Did you come down the stairs or the escalator at Chalk Farm?"

Ken had never been to Chalk Farm but he thought the stairs was the safest bet. "The stairs" he hazarded.

"Do you live near that station?"

"No-I-er-stayed the evening with some friends who live near there."



“Very well, sir, I will be honest with you. There are no stairs at Chalk Farm Station. I am a ticket inspector and in a short time I am going to ask you the name and address of the friends with whom you lodged”.

Ken, by now a repentant sinner told him the truth and he had to provide his name and address. The inspector then asked him if he had any papers on him which would confirm his details. Ken did not have an English driver’s licence so he searched his pockets and his hand alighted on the letter and envelope from Monash University stuffed in his pocket. By this stage Ken was so shamed by his dishonesty he wasn’t thinking clearly. He thrust these towards the inspector who opened the letter and started to read “Dear Sir, Unless you .....”

Ken said he could only describe the expression on the face of the inspector as one of “disgust and horror”.

He was subsequently fined £5 and is now the most honest underground traveler in London.”

That’s how I saw it in 1965. In the next newsletter, I will write about London Underground today. It is now 250 miles long (402 Km) and the fifth largest in the world behind Seoul, Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou.



The graphic designer for this newsletter is Gordon Southgate. When Gordon sent me the first proof of the newsletter for me to edit he said:

“There is bit of space to fill on the last two pages. In the London Underground article I have resisted the impulse to include a picture of Southgate tube station, a beautiful piece of 1930s architecture, and my local station where I was born.”

Gordon and the VicRoads Studio do such a wonderful job for us in preparing the newsletter, I thought what better way was there to fill the space than to introduce you to Gordon and show you his beloved Southgate station?

Designed by Charles Holden (who also designed the University of London Library), it is now a Grade II listed building, with original brass uplighting still in place (inset).



## Home schooling

My son, Dugald, put the following message on Facebook. I know that it won't affect too many of us but I thought it was interesting.

'Today I hit the wall on the home schooling. It's sapped every bit of life force from my body. I am a shell of a man. Many have said to me I'd "make a great school teacher". I beg to differ. Schoolteachers make great schoolteachers.

My blessings and admiration to them all.'

He got the following response from one of his friends.

'Dugald, you are doing great. What the schools are asking is too much. Here is a post from a few weeks back but it's still relevant. Hug your boys, play with them, read books under a blanket. That is more important than worksheets. Folks, I've got about 20 years in education and I'm a school principal. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for parents to NOT replicate the school environment, daily routine or curriculum instruction at home.

Don't make up work sheets or download a curriculum guide to follow at home. Don't set recess breaks and don't reconfigure your house to include a classroom area. You are not being asked to home school your kids. We are in the early days of a system shutdown ... your kids are probably still digesting the fact that they might not get to see their friends and teachers for the foreseeable future, not to mention we are in the middle of a global health crisis. Little Suzie is not in any position to learn a new maths concept today.

Modern education isn't what we experienced as kids. The best thing that you can do (and the closest to their educational reality) is to do things with them. Play a board game. Do the dishes and sing a song. Have them help you to do the laundry, bake biscuits, DANCE in the kitchen. Go sliding, have a barbecue in the backyard, and have them sweep the driveway.

Also, give them alone time, screen time, and ask them to tell you a story. Be with them and show them that everything will be OK. You are their parents and family members, NOT their teachers. Whatever happens, we will make sure your child has the tools needed to succeed in school when the time comes. For now, be a family.'

## Small World

A Polish immigrant turned up at VicRoads to apply for a driver's licence. He had to undertake an eye test with an optician.

The optician showed him a card with the letters C Z W I X N O S T A C Z.

"Can you read this?" the optician asked.

"Read it?" the Polish man replied, "Heck, I know the guy."

## The psychiatrist and the bartender

Ever since I was a child, I'd always had a fear of someone under my bed at night so I went to a psychiatrist and told him about my problem.

"Every time I go to bed I think there's somebody under it. I'm scared. I think I'm going crazy."

The psychiatrist said "Just put yourself in my hands for one year. Come talk to me three times a week and we should be able to get rid of those fears."

I asked, "How much do you charge?"

"One hundred fifty dollars per visit," replied the doctor.

"I'll sleep on it," I said.

Six months later the doctor met me on the street.

"Why didn't you come to see me about those fears you were having?" he asked.

"Well, \$150 a visit, three times a week for a year, is \$23,400.00. A bartender cured me for \$10.00. I was so happy to have saved all that money that I went and bought myself a new car."

"Is that so?" he said, "and how, may I ask, did a bartender cure you?"

"He told me to cut the legs off the bed. There's no one under there now."

## Medical matters

The doctor walks in and sees a man on the operating table.

"Relax, David, it's just a small surgery. Don't panic."

"But, doctor — my name isn't David!"

"I know — I am David."