

**The Institution of Engineers, Australia; Sydney Division  
Engineering Heritage Committee**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PROPER NAMES</b>
	diligence impressed the more junior students	
<b>625-693</b>	At the end of his second year he decided to specialise in Engineering Technology because of his interest in chemistry. Notes that 20-25 other students also specialised in Engineering Technology. Describes the course as taught by Professor Eastor.	<b>Specialisation, Engineering Technology</b>  <b>Professor Eastor</b>
<b>693-704</b>	He graduated in 1947	
<b>704-768</b>	He spent the first 9 months after graduation recovering from a motor bike accident. During this time he tutored high school students.	
<b>768-905</b>	At the end of this time he approached James Hardie Industries for a job. His work involved the manufacture of asbestos cement products. Notes the casual attitude to working with asbestos at the time, describes conditions of manufacturing the products.	<b>James Hardie Industries</b>
<b>905-1070</b>	Describes one of his jobs with James Hardie- setting up a trial plant to shred asbestos into fibres.	
<b>1070-1177</b>	Left James Hardie Industries for a job with the NSW Public Works Department. His first job involved working on water treatment problems. Then in 1951 he was sent to Adaminaby Dam as a Materials Engineer. Notes his efforts at getting up to speed in this field of Engineering prior to arriving at Adaminaby.	<b>NSW Public Works Department</b>  <b>Adaminaby Dam</b>
<b>1177-1245</b>	Describes the PWD's role in designing Adaminaby Dam and notes that the Water Resources Department had responsibility	<b>Department of Water Resources</b>

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	for Blowering Dam. Notes that PWD approached the Dam project by first building a village to accommodate the workers.	<b>Blowering Dam</b>
<b>1245-1340</b>	Notes that his first year at Adaminaby was spent doing the electrical engineering for the village with the assistance of many migrant linesmen and Denis Campion of the Government Architects Office.	<b>Denis Campion, Government Architect's Office</b>
<b>1340-1400</b>	His work on the Dam site was as a Materials Engineer, testing soils etc and he was greatly assisted by Mr Hoskings, Denis and Campbell Allen of the Snowy Mountains Authority and Ted Davis of Sydney University.	<b>Mr Hoskings Denis and Campbell Allen, Ted Davis</b>
<b>1400-1460</b>	Describes the influence of American Engineering methods on the design and construction of the dam and elaborates on his work preparing the dam site and diverting the Eucumbene River.	<b>Eucumbene River</b>
<b>1460-1500</b>	Notes that those working on the Dam were young and gained their professional maturity on the job.	
<b>1500-1577</b>	Recalls that he arrived in Adaminaby at the beginning of 1952 and was married later that year. Comments on the experience of being newly wed and living at Adaminaby. Two of his children were born there in 1952 and 1953.	
<b>1577-1633</b>	Describes the social life in the village. Notes that they were in Adaminaby until 1956 when he decided to look around for work that would provide professional	



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	development.	
<b>Tape 40 Side B</b>		
<b>0-20</b>	Tape Identification	
<b>20-185</b>	Decided to seek work in Canada to broaden his experience in Materials Engineering.	<b>Move to Canada</b>
<b>185-270</b>	He won a position as Resident Engineer on the Terzaghi Dam with BC Engineering and started arrangements for his family to follow him to Canada.	<b>Resident Engineer on the Terzaghi Dam British Columbia Engineering</b>
<b>270-491</b>	Describes going up to the dam site and comments on the conditions of the camp- isolated and cold, so much so that he made a quick decision to reject this job offer because he felt his family could not live there. Fortunately he won another position as assistant to the Materials Engineer with the High Ways Department on Vancouver Island. Set up house in Victoria and his family arrived.	
<b>491-640</b>	He stayed in that position until 1958 when he left to join Reg Thurber in his private Materials Engineering practise. They won contracts with Pacific Eastern Railways and he describes the projects, particularly the work done on landslides.	<b>Reg Thurber Pacific Eastern Railways</b>
<b>640-814</b>	Describes the geology of British Columbia and notes the failure of the Peace River Bridge and their involvement in its repair.	<b>Peace river Bridge</b>
<b>814-867</b>	Towards the end of 1958 he and his family decided to return to Australia.	<b>1958, return to Australia</b>

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<b>867-930</b>	On returning to Sydney in 1958 he set up a practise as a consultant in Geotechnical Engineering.	<b>Private consultancy in Geotechnical Engineering</b>
<b>930-1216</b>	Describes difficulties faced and the early resistance of the Engineering fraternity to Geotechnical Engineering.	
<b>1216-1328</b>	Describes the development of Coffey International Ltd during the 1960s noting that much of his early work was obtained in Canberra eg Canberra Lakes Scheme. Began the consultancy at home and then in the early 1960's they bought premises in Artarmon. They moved to North Ryde in 1970.	<b>Coffey International Ltd</b>  <b>Canberra Lakes Scheme</b>
<b>1328-1422</b>	Speaks of the various mining projects they were involved in during the 1960's with special reference to the Hamersley Project and their Geotechnical work on the railway line between Dampier and Mt Tom Price and later the extension between Mt Tom Price and Paraburdoo.	<b>Hamersley Project</b>
<b>1422-1495</b>	Notes as the major challenge of this work was handling the aridity of the country and his company's innovative technique for compacting embankments dry.	
<b>1495-1545</b>	Notes that during the late 1960s Dames and Moore (US) and Golder became his competitors in Australia and assisted in establishing Geotechnical Engineering as a legitimate discipline.	<b>Dames and Moore</b> <b>Golder Associates Pty Ltd</b>
<b>1545-1600</b>	Discusses the Australian Aid Agency work his company was involved in the 1970s, noting that much of this work was done in	<b>Australian Aid Agency work</b>



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<b>Tape 41 Side A</b>	Burma.	
<b>0-50</b>	Tape Identification.	
<b>50-228</b>	The work done in Burma in the 1970s involved designing a water supply system for villages and cities. They provided training for Burmese Engineers, Emphasises that ADAB work was based on training indigenous counterparts and facilitating the work.	<b>Work in Burma</b>
<b>228-314</b>	Other Asian projects included work on the Ok-tedi mine in PNG, work in the Indonesian Islands on oil developments and work in Africa.	<b>Ok-tedi mine</b>
<b>314-370</b>	Notes that his role in the company had by this time become that of commercial manager.	
<b>370-485</b>	Notes that now Coffey International is a publicly listed company.	
<b>485-670</b>	Describes how the company developed over the years. -one man band until about 1970 when it developed its corporate structure. In 1975 he relinquished position as Chief Executive to become Chairman of the Company. Bruce Barman was employed as Chief Executive.	<b>Bruce Barman</b>
<b>670-856</b>	In 1984 he retired from the Board. He turned his hand to farming his property on the Bell river but found it hard going. The farm is now worked by one of his sons. Another son also farms in Western Australia.	

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<b>856-1245</b>	Discusses his proposal to divert the Clarence River.	<b>Clarence River</b>
<b>1245-1452</b>	Speaks of his involvement in Arbitration- 1991 member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Describes his role and the work of the Tribunal.	<b>Administrative Appeals Tribunal</b>
<b>1452-1530</b>	Speaks of his love of flying and various experiences.	
<b>1530-1551</b>	Closing comments	