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Brown, Warren - Redistribution SA - Submission on the proposed South Australian redistribution

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Submission on the proposed South Australian redistribution details

Category: Names and Boundaries

Details: I say city residents do not appreciate the lifestyles and challenges that most regional people live with (and under). To conflate the two will further erode the independence of regional people. People who live in hi rise housing will likely never understand the dedication required to grow vegetables and other foods.

Growing up in the country.

My Dad was a sharefarmer at Oberon. Mainly, he grew potatoes and peas. When I was very young, Dad farmed with draught horses. I clearly remember one incident, it was early morning and he was trying to harness this big dapple grey horse and it wasn't cooperating at all. Dad yelling at him didn't seem to help matters and eventually, thoroughly enraged, Dad gave this recalcitrant horse a terrific uppercut to the jaw ! The bridle went on then without further trouble.

Around 1944, Dad bought a new Farmall tractor, a model H. It was a row crop tractor, the two front wheels were together under the front of the engine and the two rear wheels were large in diameter but only 10" wide, the tyre size being 10" x 38". It was a nice shiny red colour and had a belt pulley. It was started on petrol, with a crank handle and when the engine had heated up, the power kerosene was turned on and the petrol was turned off. Power kerosene was cheaper than petrol.

There was only one seat and I used to sit in Dad's lap as he drove along. These tractors were made to cultivate crops grown in rows, things like corn, potatoes, peas, carrots etc and required the large diameter wheels to lift above the growing crops, especially corn, whilst they were being cultivated. The front wheels fitted in one row and the back wheels were adjustable, by sliding them on the axles you could make them fit any crop. Due to the high centre of gravity and the tricycle wheel arrangement, they were somewhat unstable on hillsides and fairly easy to tip over.

At every chance I got, I went with Dad to be part of being a man and see the wider world. One day Dad was plowing across a hillside and I was playing in the dirt, nearby. I suddenly heard Dad calling me and when I looked up, I saw that the tractor had capsized and Dad was caught under one of the rear wheels. I ran over as fast as my little four year old legs would carry me. Naturally enough, I was scared stiff, Dad was thrown clear and not injured but his hand was caught under the side of the tyre of the rear wheel and he couldn't free himself. I was instructed to push the little switch that killed the ignition and then run to the farmhouse which was out of sight, over the hill and probably half a kilometre away. I cannot recall events after that but Dad was rescued, the tractor righted and life continued.

Dad used the vacant block next door to our house to park his ex Army Ford truck, the Farmall tractor and the rest of his machinery. With all this wondrous machinery was a big pail of chassis grease with which Dad filled his grease gun to grease the machinery. Inside the pail (a 45 lb tin with removable lid) was a piece of wooden tomato case about 2" wide. Being of a mechanical bent, I decided that I needed greasing, just like the disc harrows ! I lathered myself up pretty good with this "spatula" and I covered myself with a really good coating of this nice Golden Syrup coloured grease. Then I went off to show my Mum what a good boy I was. Again (conveniently), I don't remember the outcome but I probably got a spanking!

Brown Trout.

Dad was share farming out toward Shooters Hill. The road home crossed a couple creeks. In those days, there were very few culverts and even less bridges. When you came to a watercourse, you drove across the "crossing". If you couldn't see the bottom, it was prudent to wade across the "crossing" to see how deep it was and if it was safe. The only 4wd's were ex Army Blitz trucks and Jeeps and there were very few of them around.

Dad drove a cream coloured Chevrolet utility and behind the seat, he carried a three piece cane fishing rod. He mostly wore a green coloured beret and his beret carried a few trout flies.

There was one place where the road went thru a shallow creek. It was only about a foot deep, you could see the stony bottom all over it. It was about 20' across, not big. Dad always arrived at this crossing just before sundown.

Dad would park on the side of the road, take out his cane rod and assemble it. With thoughtful care, he'd select a suitable fly from his beret and tie it on the end of the line. Absolute quietness is required apparently to catch the wily trout and I was bidden to silence and not allowed to skip flat stones across the surface of the water because this would frighten the fish !

Numerous times I saw Dad cast out once, and then again, right across the water. Usually, on the third or fourth cast, Bang ! A trout would take the fly and then run for safety. It might take some time but eventually, he reeled in the fish. It is considered very poor form to just reel them in with brute strength, you must "play" your catch until he is worn out or surrenders. The trout line is very fine and usually has a breaking strain of much less than the weight of the fish so much care and cunning is required to actually land a trout.

Many times we arrived home with two or three trout about a foot long in a canvas haversack. Mum would fill the sink with water and the trout would be dumped into it whereupon they'd usually recover and swim around. Sometimes there were rainbow trout but mostly they were brown trout. Come tea time, the frying pan would be warming, Dad would take the fish out of the water and stab them in the eye to kill them and then scale and gut them. Then the whole fish would go into the pan. The eyes would turn white and pop out, I remember these eyes were good eating.

I recall trout as being very, very dry to eat, they required lots of lemon and salt. You also had to eat very carefully indeed as they have hundreds of very fine bones that come away from the spine with the meat. Chocking on a fish bone is no joke ! Eating trout is not at all like eating saltwater fish, not at all !

Rabbit and 'Roo skins.

In the late 1940's in Oberon we were in the grip of a rabbit plague, the rabbits were everywhere and were eating everything in sight. You modern youngsters have probably seen grasshopper and mice plagues on the TV news, the ground is just moving with them. The rabbit plague was much the same only the rabbits were much bigger. Everyone in those days wore some sort of felt hat. Not only here in Australia but in America and Europe as well. Rabbit skins provide excellent fur for making felt hats ! I got my first Meccano kit from the sale of rabbit skins. I had a pile of skins, all dried out and when I sold them to the skin buyer in Oberon I received ten shillings and sixpence. To a small boy this was a fortune !

We weren't well off and rabbit was on the menu fairly often. Rabbit pie, accompanied by spud, swede turnip, pumpkin, parsnips etc, real country tucker ! Today, I think I'd pass on rabbit tucker in any shape or form !

(Much later, when we moved to the farm at Glen Innes, I again made a few bob out of rabbit skins and I came to appreciate how destructive rabbits could be to the farmer. Sometimes, I also made good money out of kangaroo skins and occasionally, we had small joeys for pets.)

Possum Interviewing.

When we later lived at Bathurst and Dad had become a Bulldozing Contractor, I used to go with him on Saturdays. He was always working out in the bush, clearing the farms. One day he pushed over a dead, hollow tree and when it hit the ground, a large ring tailed possum ran out of it, thoroughly startled, dazed and blinking in the sunlight. I suppose the possum

was rudely awakened as they are normally of nocturnal habits. Anyway, this possum is on the ground, about 20' in front of me and facing me. Dad got off the bulldozer and sneaks up behind it. As Dad approached from behind, the possum suddenly decided it was time to go and he lit out like a Bondi tram and ran straight between my legs. Fortunately for me, I was standing somewhat spread legged otherwise I may have had the possum for a hat !

I was just a small boy of about 10 years of age at the time and had never really seen a wild possum at close quarters. Well, I tell you, when this possum shot between my legs at high speed, I near dirtied my underpants !

It gave me a hell of a fright ! Dad of course thought this was a great joke and had a great laugh at my expense !

Spiders and Scorpions.

One must always be watchful for spiders as most of them can and will bite you if you tangle with them. I remember one morning at the farm, "Greystanes", (Glen Innes) I had a good lesson in spider awareness. I would have been about 14 at the time. There were all sorts of spiders to be found on the farm and shutting the doors won't stop them from getting inside. This particular morning, I awoke and swung my legs out of bed onto the floor and got dressed. I had been told by both Mum and Dad to always tap my boots on the floor and then shake them out- just in case some spider had decided to hide in there. So I tapped the side of the sole of my boot on the floor and then turned it upside down and a bloody big, hairy Trapdoor spider landed on the floor and sat up with his fangs poised ready to attack me.

I tell you, surprises like this makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand out in fright ! Had I put my foot into the boot I would have received a very nasty bite !

It may not have killed me but I reckon I'd have been one very sick teenager !

Tipping out my shoes or boots is a good habit that I still practice.

Many years later my family and I found ourselves at Mt Gunson, out in the South Australian Desert, up new Woomera. It is a very dry area, rainfall averages only 7" a year. Red Back spiders thrive in these dry conditions, any stone, bit of dry timber, any sort of cover affording protection from the sun and weather was infested with Red Back spiders. Now Red Back spiders are found all over Australia but at Mt Gunson, they seemed to grow quite a bit larger than the average Red Back.

The toilet block at the Mine Workshop was just a wooden frame clad with corrugated iron. So there you'd be, perched on one of the three thrones with an excellent view of these large, magnificent Red Backs lining the rafters and the top plate of the wall. I discovered however, that like most animals and critters, if you don't annoy them, they won't annoy you - but it pays to be ever watchful.

We discovered also whilst at Mt Gunson, come dark, the sandhills are the home of many small, poisonous scorpions ! The kids (Peter and Tracey) used to go with the other kids at Gunson and camp out in the sand dunes !