

Leonard Charles Price

In my early childhood, I lived on a farm, west of Pingelly with my parents and sisters. We drove in a horse and cart to attend a one room, one teacher school until I was twelve years of age, when the family then moved to live in Ravensthorpe, W.A. in 1926, then to Lake Grace, W.A. in 1927. On completion of my schooling in 1928, I was presented with a 9 ct. gold medal for being 'Champion Scholar' for that year.

1929, was the start of the 'Great Depression', so things were very tough. I secured a position as night duty attendant to manually operate the telephone switchboard at the Lake Grace Post Office. During the daytime, I worked with a 'plumber sheet metal worker' until 1932 when the family moved to Meekatharra, W.A., where I built up my own plumbing and sheet metal working business until December 1936, when I moved to Norseman, W.A. and secured a position on the mine at my trade.

I married a young lady from Ravensthorpe in 1939 and continued to live in Norseman where I joined the local 'Home Guard' unit. In March 1942, our unit was merged into the Army, so my wife and baby daughter returned to Ravensthorpe to live with my wife's parents. We were fitted out with equipment whilst at Norseman, then as a unit we moved to Esperance, doing guard duty at various points along the coast. I was with a group guarding the Esperance Aerodrome, where there were sheds full of bombs and stacks of 44 gallon drums of aviation fuel.

After a while, I thought I could do better for the war effort, working at my trade, particularly in sheet metal work, so I applied for a transfer into the Engineers. My application for a transfer was approved and I was sent to Perth to be 'trade' tested. Upon gaining satisfactory testing results, I was sent into a unit. I spent three months there, operating a very busy telephone switch board in the camp, then to Northam Army Camp for some basic army training, then drafted into a fully mobile engineering unit – 'The 62nd Field Park', - comprising all trades plus transport. As a unit, we moved to, and set up camp at Baker's Hill, doing all sorts of repair work, plus making up panel constructioned buildings, transported to, and erected at various other army camps around the State.

About eighteen months later, our complete unit moved to the Army Engineering Base at Karrakatta. For the latter 8 months of my time there, I was in charge of the workshop until discharged in October 1945.

Upon discharge, I went back to Ravensthorpe. Why go to such a small isolated town? Firstly, my wife and daughter were there, also my parents and sisters, and my wife's parents and family members. I felt the need, and wanted to do something to help that district, and in so doing, to help my family. Over the years, I built up my own business, operating a school bus for 8 years, 1948-1952, along with my service station, fuel depot and machinery dealership etc.

In all, I lived in Ravensthorpe for fifty years. Whilst residing there, I was a member of the Ravensthorpe Road Board for 11 years – Chairman for 6 years – A member of the Ravensthorpe Hospital Board for 18 years – Chairman for 13 years – A member of the Parent's and Citizens Association for many years – A member of St Johns Ambulance – Ravensthorpe Sub Centre and was appointed Honorary Life Member of this Sub Centre. I carried out the duties of Justice of the Peace for fifty years and was appointed an Honorary Freeman of the Ravensthorpe Shire in 1989.

Now 91 years of age, I am living 'quietly' in a retirement village in Esperance, W.A.