

### *Friday 17<sup>th</sup>*

Woke early and decided to camp at Canberra tonight so got on the road by 2am. I'd driven this road before so didn't need to see the scenery again. Pulled up in the Jindabyne shopping centre about 3am and was sitting in the passenger's seat doing emails and stuff as it was the first time I'd got phone access for a couple of days, when there was knocking on the driver's window. There was a young lady telling me there would be trucks arriving shortly and where I was would impede them. I moved the car and within 5 minutes a semi-trailer backed in.

I was in Cooma by about 4am and found an all-night car wash and used it. Drove into Cotter's camp ground before 9am and camped. This is to the west of Canberra on the road to Tidbinbilla Space Tracking, a nice camp ground I have used many times in the past. In fact I have a couple of special memories from here.

The camping area is high above the river level and in the late evenings you can look down on the river and see little 'Vs' on the river where Platypus are swimming. I went down early one morning and lay on the river bank, where the river was about 60cm below the bank. There was a fallen branch lying in the water and it had trapped a huge pile of pine needles against it. A Platypus swam over to it – no more than 2 metres from me and wrapped its tail around some pine needles and obviously took them off to her nesting burrow. I had never heard of a Platypus using its tail to carry things like that. Apparently during the summer and autumn it stores a lot of fat in its tail to live on over winter and come spring time it is all used and the tail is now thin and flexible to wrap around things to carry them. It was a unique experience.





The other occasion I remember vividly was when the rangers were there early one morning to clean the amenities block, as they do every morning. They had taken their jackets off and didn't look like rangers – just ordinary workers. Camping fees in this camp ground exclude children under 6. A little girl wandered over near one of the rangers and he asked her what her name was. "Alice"

"And how old are you?"

"I'm 6 and a half, but I'm only 5 when the rangers come round.

The ranger with a very straight face said "I don't think you should be telling me that." We were camped close enough to hear it all and it really broke us up.

I sat in the sun reading for quite a while. There is no mobile phone service here. Later I bought some firewood from the rangers and didn't go to bed till after 9pm. But it was a cold night, as Canberra is at this time of the year.

### ***Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>***

The forecast was for wet and windy conditions so I decided against another day here and packed up and headed for Berry (south of Wollongong) to stay with friends till Tuesday, when I am due to fly to Hawaii for a month. It is very handy to be able to leave the car here as there is an excellent train service to the International airport at Sydney.

I hadn't seen Bob or Sue for some years so it was good to catch up with them again. Bob lived in Wolfeboro New Hampshire USA where Elli lived and he actually came out to Dodges Ferry to help Elli and I when we were building our

house. He arrived to assist in putting the top story on, and had to sleep in my car-top tent for the few days he was there. Bob also has done a wee bit of paddling.



Sue is an Ozzie and has a large property in Berry.

So camped here for a few days.



I'm not taking my laptop to Hawaii so there may not be any more updates till I arrive back in Australia on October 2, (after 10 days in Russia on a boat cruise from Moscow to St Petersburg.).