

The Lions Club of Toodyay T Cup Charity Run was the brainchild of Lion Alan Rose who offered up four of his Model T Fords in order to fundraise for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Carolyn Rose says that it's all very well for Alan to get these crazy ideas but what she cannot understand is how he gets 13 fools to follow him.

After months of planning and several trial runs, 14 fools packed long johns and swags to drive from Toodyay to Adelaide in five Model T Fords accompanied by two support vehicles. Their mission: to raise funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The logistics and fundraising were taken on by the Lions Club of Toodyay while the cars were provided, prepared and maintained by Toodyay Classic Cars. As this is the centenary year of the Model T Ford these cars (dating from 1913 to 1926) were chosen as a novel and interesting way of crossing the Nullabor.

On the beautiful morning of Saturday 6th September 2008 the Run's major sponsors, the Toodyay & Districts Community Bank ® Branch, hosted the T Cup's send-off. Steven Stanbrook, Chairman of the Bank's Directors acted as MC. The Lions Club of Toodyay President, Nuala Ennis, in thanking the Toodyay community for their support of this fundraiser emphasized the service component of the two groups, the Lions whose motto is "We Serve" and the Toodyay & Districts Community Bank ® Branch whose profits benefit the community.

Cheques from the Toodyay & Districts Community Bank ® Branch & Bendigo Perth were presented to RFDS representative, Fiona Davey. She also accepted a cheque from the Toodyay Shire, represented by Shire President, Charlie Wroth. The T-Cup drivers were presented with Bendigo Bank hats, RFDS hats and badges, and Lion bannerettes and badges by Lions International WA-W1 201 District Governor, Rob Meney. But more importantly, the people of Toodyay came to share the leave taking and wish the travelers well.

When Steve Stanbrook waved the starter flag (a checkered tea towel in keeping with the T-Cup theme), the T's were off.

By Kellerberrin the Team had already lost one horn, a Bendigo Bank sponsorship magnet and most of their nerves.

The send-off by the Toodyay & Districts Community Bank ® Branch set the tone for the hospitality experienced en route. Marin & Jenny Maricic of the Kellerberrin Motor Hotel welcomed the T-Cuppers with lunch. The Shire of Westonia accommodated the Team in their Recreation Complex. This shire of 250 souls also hosted a BBQ attended by the Lions Club of Merredin. Both Westonia's Shire President, Louis Geier, and Merredin Lions President, Geoff Brown, presented generous donations on behalf of their respective communities.

Clay Poletti of The Norseman Hotel provided accommodation and a secure yard for the cars. His generosity did not end there with his refusal to accept payment for the delicious roast meal devoured. The rejuvenating Lions Club of Norseman had also spent several weekends fundraising in anticipation of T-Cup's arrival. If that venture is any indication of what they can do this club has a successful future.

The first days calmed the driver's jitters, drivers and cars bonded, and the trip settled into a routine. The schedule was tight, aiming for Adelaide and a Civic Reception on the following Saturday, 13th September. T Cup's Logistic Officer, Bruce Prior, set a grueling daily average of 400km to get there. Pit stops every 120kms were functional to refuel Ts and Team, change drivers and push on. An isolated treat of an ice cream at Widgemooltha Roadhouse is remembered with affection.

So the trip was no Sunday drive (except on the Sunday). For safety reasons the T Cuppers aimed to be off the road before dark. The day's work didn't end there. The Model Ts had to be maintained and readied for another early start. After Westonia and Norseman campsites had to be set up and 14 hungry fools fed.

Also, driving a Model T is very different to driving a modern car. Even though there are three pedals on the floor like a manual transmission car, none of the three pedals is an accelerator. The right pedal is the brake. The middle is reverse. The left pedal shifts the gears from low to high speed, a sort of clutch but, instead of depressing it to the floor when stopping you bring it back up halfway into neutral transmission.

To make the Model T move you release the big parking brake on your right, depress the left pedal halfway to the floor, feed a little throttle with the left steering column stalk and step all the way down on the left pedal. Once moving, lift your foot all the way off the left lever and increase the throttle. To slow down you have to remember to hit the brake (right) pedal halfway in. To stop, push the left floor pedal halfway in before stopping, preventing a stall.

There, easy when you know how! Alan Rose and his mechanic, Bruce Sharman, were extremely patient with the Team's amateur driving and mechanical abilities.

The kilometers travelled were not always easy on the cars. By Norseman an oil feeder pipe in Cream T forced The Team to perform mechanics on the main street while the cars were on display. The decision as to whether Cream T should continue or not was made in her favour. She did not let the side down, valiantly making it all the way despite minor (radiator and fan belt) and a major scare. A right front wheel bearing nearly caused a major upset. But driver, Vince Iozzi, was quick to respond to the vibration and eased his charge off the road to safety from where the support vehicle and mechanics got her back on the road again.

Speedster suffered coil problems, again fixed on the side of the road. Annabel, the T Cup's Nullabor Queen 1914 2-seater Tourer, survived two punctures but, having already helped us fundraise on two separate trips to the Dowerin Agricultural Field Day and Kalgoorlie, retired with dignity at Kimba with transmission problems.

Rob Cooper's 1923 Huxter, "Black T", had her ignition rebuilt in an all-night marathon at Kimba but there was nothing could be done about a big end bearing 10kms west of Port Wakefield, just 100kms shy of our destination. Black T made it to Adelaide - but on the car trailer.

On the last run into Adelaide Maroon T's oil filter pipe broke but Bruce Sharman was quickly onto it.

So, the fact that all five Model Ts made it so far and three made it all the way is a credit, not only to Alan Rose and Bruce Sharman, but to the enthusiasm of the whole Team. Each and every team member contributed something special, over and above the everyday driving.

Tolerant and good humoured Expedition Leader, Alan Rose, led by example. When his ride "Annabel" died Alan refused to take over another driver's place for the Grand Parade into Adelaide.

While Henry Ford never intended the Model T to travel these distances, he never allowed for the likes of Bruce Sharman who supervised the motley crew of amateur mechanics with calm authority.

For Sean Fitzgerald a new career opportunity opened up. There are auto mechanics and auto electricians. Sean has added auto plumbing to his list of plumbing and gas fitting credentials.

If they were the gambling type the T-Cuppers could have doubled or trebled the money raised in Norseman. But they're a responsible mob and, besides, they didn't know until that night that Gerald Attrill is a pool shark. Quietly and methodically he destroyed Norseman's opposition.

The Team survived to tell the staff of the Freemason's Hotel that their boss, John Pearce, T-Cup's Catering Officer, can cook. Watch out for Nullabor Tucker on the hotel menu! Thanks to the generosity of Toodyay IGA's Dean Carter, the trip was well provisioned. On the day for quarantine checkpoint the crew was down to the minimum of vegetables and the last fruit was distributed that morning. Enough apples were eaten to keep the Royal Flying Doctor away.

The early, cold morning starts gave all a powerful appetite. New Australian, Tom Mitchell, ate for Australia. One misty morning Tom worked on an assembly line of sandwiches. With Tom about to crown his carefully crafted masterpieces, picture the scene when Sean Fitz approached the opposite side of the table and, in clearing a space for his own feeding bag, pushed Tom's efforts into the dirt. But Tom was a pioneer, quietly re-attending to the task as he did to anything asked of him.

Mr. Dependable, Gary Oliver, packed all the little extras that everyone else forgot. The only item he couldn't manufacture from his kit bag is a closely guarded secret between himself and Nuala. Ollie's driving partner, Vince Iozzi, craved a decent coffee by journey's end and appointed himself the team's official photographer, taking over 1,000 photographs of which only a sample are shown here. Vince pretended to have an aversion to getting his hands dirty but other team photographers caught him in the act.

It is a tradition at Lions meetings to fine members for minor indiscretions. The practice, known as Tail Twisting, is a gentle and fun form of fundraising within clubs. As T Cup's Official Recorder, Nuala Ennis filled two little black books, enough to fuel fine session for years to come. There are thirteen worried men out there and Nuala reports that she is open to bribery and corruption – only in support of the RFDS, of course!

With car detailer, Phil Wallace, on board the car's brass gleamed before leaving Toodyay and Phil kept his hand in throughout the trip. Phil also managed to quietly achieve what no other driver did: Phil was the only driver to make the entire trip in a Model T Ford. All other drivers did a stint in one or other support vehicle. Any boasting on Phil's part will, of course, lead to a heavy fine.

Rob "Coops" Cooper brought his own car, Black T - the slowest car - on the trip. Rob and his son-in-law, Richard "Shorty" Lyne, brought up the rear with great good humour in view of the abuse they got every day for their tardiness. Shorty's assets as an electrician also paid dividends with him always ready to improvise in any repair work.

But, in truth, it was Jim Silvester who brought up the rear. His job in charge of the rear support vehicle was, The Team agreed, the hardest. Plodding along behind Black T, Jim restrained himself from gently nudging her along. As T-Cup Treasurer, Jim also kept a tight rein on the purse strings. Jim's Ute was the source of much sustenance for weary and wind-swept drivers with a constant supply of nuts and lollies.

Last, but by no means last or least, was the T-Cup's Logistic Officer, Bruce Prior, who led the expedition all the way. Months of plotting the route resulted in a well-executed trip. Almost stumped on the Bunda Cliffs by the closure of campsite after campsite due to erosion, Bruce soldiered on regardless and came up with the goods.

The kitchen team looked like celebrity chefs with the ocean backdrop. The "wow" effect was noticeable on the drivers. As they unfolded themselves from the Model Ts the view acted like a magnet. For one evening refueling, maintenance and even a cuppa took second place as the team soaked in one of the most spectacular sights in this great land. Unfortunately, despite the season and what John Pearce was led to believe, no whales were spotted.

Some great partnerships were forged on the trip. Although the least said about the relationship between Sean and Vince the better!

Gary and Vince threatened mutiny by collaborating on separately bending Alan's ear over how they wouldn't get back into "that car" (Cream T) with "that man" (each other) again. Thankfully, they, as with all pairings, got on famously. Just as well because, to be honest, nobody else could have put up either Gary or Vince.

John Pearce and Sean Fitz were famous for having too much fun. In the open Speedster they looked and acted like heroes. Imitating the yank of a truck's horn they drew responsive toots from the real thing. Arms outstretched and flapping one day they worried the rear support vehicle. "Oh, no, what's wrong with Speedster?" But Speedster flew on, didn't slow, and didn't pull over. In response to "What the hell was that all about?" they *were* flying – along one of the RFDS Emergency Landing Strips!

To add to their infamy Speedster was the only vehicle to run afoul of the law. What the Team wanted was a speeding ticket (hard to get at an average speed of 50 kames an hour). What they got was an infringement notice for running a red light in Port Augusta. Speedster and crew fled the scene like a couple of gangsters – they have the photographic evidence to prove it.

Whenever shower facilities beckoned on the horizon Alan and Rob raced each other, dueling with towel and toothpaste.

The support vehicle drivers, Bruce Prior and Jim Silvester, made an odd couple. Who put the two deafest blokes in charge of communication? The best communication this pair did was late at night over a bottle of whiskey.

Bruce Prior paid a vital role in communicating with the truckies. Safety was uppermost in the T-Cup mind but the differences in speed and size was a major concern before setting out. Although they certainly took a few years off some truck drivers lives and the T-Cup apologizes profusely for doing so, the T-Cuppers needn't have worried; the truckies were the least of their worries. True Gentlemen of the Road the truck drivers looked out for each other and the little Model Ts amongst them. Inquisitive and hugely supportive they added an extra dimension to the run, assisting by providing up-dates when distance (let alone deafness) hindered communication between Bruce P and Jim's Ute. Some of the truckies passed us, not once but twice and even three times on their own grueling schedules. Jim's Ute was greeted with a laconic "I see you're still coming last" comment over the two-way. It took Jim two minutes to recover himself and explain that, thank goodness, it wasn't a race.

One truckie was entitled to his comment about "morons in old cars". His own colleagues were quick to defend a Lion project in aid of the RFDS. The T-Cup Run salute and thank you all.

The T-Cuppers never lost sight of the fact that they were only out there for the RFDS. Everybody's response was positive in support. "As long as its for the RFDS" was usual. Communities praised not only the emergency service provided but also the routine clinics where no other medical service is available. T-Cuppers heard individual stories of assistance received from the RFDS. Too many crosses mark roadside fatalities to remind the Team of their mission. In SA blue crosses mark the injured who survive due to the intervention of the RFDS and remind all Australians that we need to keep this vital service in the air.

As with any project there are those who stay at home to keep the home fires burning and the wheels of industry turning. The T-Cup Charity Run was a True Blue Home-and-Away experience. Those who went could not have gone without the support of partners, families, work colleagues and employers. They contributed as much, if not more, than those directly involved in the honour and glory. Families gave up Father's Day with Dads and GrandDads. Thanks to the Attrill family whose Father's Day gift of Maltesers helped sustain Annabel's crew when she broke down on her solo voyage to Lock.

Three T Cup Charity Run Model Ts made it to Adelaide on Saturday 13th September according to schedule. Met on the outskirts of Adelaide by the Model T Ford Club of Australia, Toodyay's Model Ts were escorted into Victoria Square in a cavalcade of Model Ts for a Civic Reception. There to welcome them were Cr Francis Wong, representing the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, The City of Adelaide Lions Club, the Model T Ford Clubs of Australia and NSW, Veteran Car Clubs of Victoria and Charlie Paterson of the RFDS.

And so, the T Cup Run ended as it began – with a sausage sizzle! Speeches were given, presentations made between Lion Clubs, between the Shire of Toodyay and the City of Adelaide, and between the car clubs. Toodyay's sunshine followed through to the fair city

of Adelaide and the people of Adelaide came out to welcome and show their appreciation of the T Cup Run and the RFDS.

It took a good week for the T Cuppers to catch up on sleep. They still can't wipe the grins off their faces. But there is still work to be done. Thank you presentations and letters have to be prepared and sent out. The website updated with photographs and stories. Money is still being collected. So if you want to donate to this venture go to the website www.toodyaylions.org.au and follow the links. Or see any member of the Toodyay Lions who are always happy to relieve people of their money for a worthy cause.

And a last word from the 14 fools: they'd do it all again - in a heartbeat!