

THE GREAT TREK INTO THE NORTH WEST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Don't smirk when you read the title. It felt like a trek by the time we finished.

I have always found that photograph albums are quite boring if you do not know the subject you are looking at. For this reason, I resolved to include some notes to accompany the photographs. It serves a number of purposes, the least of which is to remind Sandra and I about our visit to the area and to also introduce others to our experiences.

We took this holiday with Leslie and Pat Smith who brought their caravan and 4WD. We took our own 4WD and the caravan provided the accommodation we needed for the trip. We started from Perth with Broome the final destination before heading back to Perth. The intention was to travel up the coast and then come back through the centre of Western Australia.

Ken wanted to test the economy of the 4WD using gas and petrol. This would be the first occasion both of us have used the 4WD for recreational purposes. Neither of us have done a 4WD-driving course so it was a case of learn as you go.

Fun and games when we filled the petrol tank on 11 July 2000 at Ampol, Gosnells. The petrol gauge showed half full but we could not get any more petrol into the tank. Ken started to worry because it was a new tank. Sandra felt that we should start the trip using petrol and see how far we could travel. Ken was quite apprehensive.

Our holiday started on 12 July 2000 and our first night was spent at Jurien, some 266 kms North of Perth. That night was very stormy and windy. Did not get much sleep – suffered from cramp in the calf muscles, which became a real problem when we arrived in Exmouth. The Caravan Park is grotty and I would not look forward to staying there again. There is not much to see. Jurien is a logical place to stay if a visit to the 'Pinnacles' is contemplated. When we filled the petrol tank at Jurien, we found the 4WD travelled 277 kms and used 38.51 litres per km, a return of 7.19 kms per litre – quite economical travelling at between 80-90

kms per hour, the same speed as the caravan. This confirmed that the gauge was faulty, however, we would have to travel using the odometer to determine the distance using petrol.

We switched to gas and our next night was at Port Denison, which is just outside Dongara, south of Geraldton. Very nice Caravan Park set in much the same style as the 'Bushlands' park in Esperance. The sand on the beach is very compact – easy to walk on. Lots of council works in Dongara – caused the water to be turned off during the day. Took the opportunity of visiting the 'Priory' in Dongara. This used to be a convent that is now being renovated as a place of accommodation. Sandra and I stayed at the Priory in 1997 on our way to Exmouth.

On leaving Dongara, we travelled through Geraldton and continued up the coast in the direction of Port Gregory. We passed the ruins of a convict depot called 'LYNTON'. The nights of 14 – 16 July 2000 were spent at Kalbarri at the Red Bluff Caravan Park. We were able to put up the annexe for the first time. It was good to have the extra room. Phoned Bill and Audrey Bailey and arranged to meet them the next day for morning tea. Went to Finlay's fresh fish bar-b-cue for tea. Very good meal. Terrific concept. Lots of people use this as a means of meeting socially. Visited one of the gorges. Had trouble with a mud flap on the 4WD – unable to locate the scraping noise – went back into Kalbarri – the RAC fixed the problem. Gave us some good news though – the rear shock absorbers needed to be changed – the angle of the 4WD was wrong – he offered to change them but we would have to stay an extra night in Kalbarri while the shocks were shipped up from Perth overnight. I took the option of having the shocks changed in Exmouth. Visited 'Rainbow Jungle' – hundreds of birds – we were able to walk amongst them for hours. Very good value. Pictures are in this album. Visited the gorges the next day. Views and walking fabulous. Took lots of pictures. Discovered how good the walking boots were.

17 - 18 July nights saw us in Carnarvon at the Norwesta Caravan Park. This is a good park and I would be happy to stay there again. The drive from Kalbarri seemed to be quite long. No scraping noise from the 4WD. Gas economy starting to improve. Listened to one of the tapes

by Jeffery Archer. Very wet in Carnarvon. Ken continued to suffer from cramps in his calf muscles. Optus mobile is available in Carnarvon. Visited Mark and Claire Parry who own and work (just the two of them) their banana plantation. They want to start extension to their home soon and have asked Sandra to do a leadlight window for them. Oh well! Another job. Also visited the blowholes, some 75 kms out of Carnarvon. The power of the sea is amazing. Also visited a caravan camping site near by occupied by up to 50 caravans. These people were doing it rough. No water or power.

We travelled up to Coral Bay for 2 nights on 19 – 20 July 2000 and stayed at the Bayview Caravan Park. This place is overrated. There is very little to see if you snorkel. Anyway, the weather was too cold to permit swimming. Managed to get some snorkeling in. The worst part about staying at Coral Bay is the ‘sandflies’, which not only drove us from the beach but also managed to bite all of us. Each person looked like we had a bad case of ‘chickenpox’ after the sandflies finished with us. Had to use ‘RID’ to stop the itching sensation.

We arrived in Exmouth on 21 July 2000 for a long stay at the Ningaloo Caravan Park. Ken had a terrible first night with the cramps, which were exacerbated by him taking 2 anti-histamine tablets and finding that he had panic attacks and could not breathe properly when lying down. Seems he spent the whole night either sitting on the edge of the bed or walking around the Caravan Park.

Visited the Exmouth hospital the next day – surprise – there is no doctor on the weekend. Visited a private doctor who diagnosed Ken’s condition as ‘NOCTURNAL CRAMPS’ – prescribed tablets – quinine based - which fixed the problem. Ordered new rear shock absorbers for the 4WD – the Ampol garage is the RAC representative. 4WD is running very efficiently on gas.

The main activities in Exmouth are swimming, fishing, eating, sunbathing, shopping (Sandra does that a lot) - take your pick. Before Ken talks about Exmouth, it is good to describe life in a caravan.

Wake up around 7am and Ken generally makes the coffee. Then, lie in bed, sipping coffee, and talk about what we

plan to do for the day. Shower around 8am and sit down to breakfast at 8.30am. Grapefruit for starters, followed by cereal, toast and jam, more coffee. We listen to ABC radio national – get Liam Bartlett first thing.

Ken washes up the breakfast dishes and someone else dries them. Ken has this particular way of washing dishes. He has to rinse off each one so that they are clean enough to wash. Hates to wash a dirty dish. No wonder he gets teased about that.

Pat makes the sandwiches for lunch, packs up the cooler bag with drinks. Hot water in flask so that Ken can have coffee at 3pm. Pat spoils him. There is cake, biscuits, cheese and cold drinks available for lunch and afternoon tea, including milk and coffee. Going to the beach, we lack nothing. We even have portable shelters and mats to lie on.

Snorkeling in Turquoise Bay is fantastic. The fish are protected, there are hundreds of species and all are colourful. The coral is also very different. You walk down the beach for a kilometre, get in the water and the water and the current carries you back to the bay. Get out and start the process all over again. Ken does not mind the snorkeling but he is really scared of sharks. The last time he was in Exmouth (in 1997), he saw 2 reef sharks and promptly exited the water. He keeps a good lookout since.

After snorkeling, it is usually lunch, then a quiet lie down in the beach shelter, snooze or read a book. This is really doing it hard. Imagine a clear blue sky, no clouds, very little wind, sparkling water, heat you can only dream about in winter and you have the perfect Exmouth day. It is like that almost every day. If Ken needs a lolly, he nudges Sandra and she peels the paper off and hands it to him. She calls it being nice to him. Ken is just spoilt. Bliss! Just wonderful! 3pm – coffee and fruit cake, also, Pat Smith's homemade Anzac biscuits. Pure joy!

4pm – back to the 4WD, start up and drive back to the Caravan Park. Stop at the lighthouse Caravan Park and have an ice cream. Then continue on to our caravan park – arrive there at 5pm – cup of tea, wash the snorkeling gear, shower, get into a track suit and lie down on the bed.

6pm – Leslie is checking what everyone would like to drink – sherry, wine, and beer, something exotic. Ken is not a fan of sherry, but anything with wine in it is OK.

Ken is usually reading a book while tea is being prepared. They do not trust him to prepare tea. If he is allowed to, chances are that no one will be able to eat it. In the background, CD's play a mix of classical or jazz, the first wine goes down easy. Leslie opens up a can of smoked oysters – 2 biscuits later the initial hunger pangs are satisfied.

The evening meal is accompanied by wine, another 2 glasses. Everyone is quite jolly – lots of laughter. By 8pm, it is time to wash up. Ken washes if Pat cooks. If Sandra cooks, Leslie does the washing up.

If there is room, another bit of fruitcake and coffee. The amount of liquid determines the number of trips to the toilet in the night. Pat goes twice, Ken manages once and sometimes twice. Everyone tries to be quiet, but you can hear someone get up, switch on the torch, open the door, unzip the annexe and then repeat the process (in reverse) when they get back.

Oh, the joys of caravanning!

Ken's diet paid off. He could get into his wet suit. Big surprise when Sandra could not. She had to buy another and managed to get one in the same colour, except of course, several sizes larger. Pat Smith says that Ken cuts a SVELTE figure in his wetsuit. Sandra thinks Pat is being kind.

The fitting of the shock absorbers to the 4WD was delayed. The supplier (in Perth) sent shock absorbers for the front. No one was fazed by the delay – this is Exmouth time. The old shock absorbers were useless when the mechanic got them out. Very costly exercise.

Leslie had a problem with his air-conditioning in his 4WD. Had it serviced before he left Perth, tried it in Exmouth and found that he had lost all his coolant. Cost him in excess of \$300.00 to fix the problem.

Apart from swimming and shopping, we go walking in the canyons. You have to drive up the canyons and you need a 4WD. The road is graded but rough – lots of shake, rattle and roll. Sandra has been taking lots of photos. There are 3 main walks – SHOTHOLE, CHARLES KNIFE and MANDU MANDU.

It is always a good idea to have a sturdy pair of walking boots, a hat, water and sun cream when walking in the canyons which can involve up to 12 kms return. Ken loves the walks. Sandra went crook at him for setting too fast a pace. Ken thinks that old age is catching up with her. He fails to understand what the problem is – after all, he carries everything in her daypack.

There are goats in the canyons. We have not seen any other wildlife other than kangaroos. Ken has a fear of heights and cannot appreciate the views. He stands well back from the edge and tries to take in the views through his 'Bushmaster' binoculars. He was rather proud of that purchase because they are as good as large binoculars.

Visited the caravan park across from ours for a fish bar-b-cue – cost was \$11.00 each with salads supplied – BYO. Great atmosphere, sit around the pool, meet people from all over the world. That night, we met a couple from Germany and a couple originally from Sheffield (now living at the Vines).

Sandra loves to shop. Bought 12 place mats with the fish design on them. The compliment the tablecloth we bought when we were last in Exmouth in 1997.

Visited the Naval Base. This presents an excellent investment opportunity for the person prepared to use the facilities built by the US Navy. There is a swimming pool, bowling alley and an outdoor movie theatre at the base.

WE saw 2 x kenny kidna's on the drive back from the Visitor's centre (near Turquoise Bay). One KK was sunning himself on the road. We stopped, he rolled himself into a ball and refused to play or move off the road. We moved him off the road. Hopefully, this KK remembers not to sunbake on the road.

Kangaroos are a real danger, mainly after 4pm. Ken has hit one. They sit by the side of the road and jump out when you least expect it. The trick is to drive slowly so you can stop in time.

Discovered that the Yacht club has a bar-b-cur every Friday night from 6pm. Cost is \$8.00 each and you get steak with 2 sausages, 4 salads and bread. No BYO but drinks are very inexpensive. Sandra laughed when she ordered a bottle of red wine. It came chilled. Seems that all the drinks have to be locked in the fridge for security purposes. So don't expect your bottle of red wine to be room temperature at the Yacht Club.

The atmosphere at the Yacht Club is terrific. They light a fire and the cool breeze, twinkling lights and sound of the waves in the bay make it very pleasant.

Towards the end of the stay at Exmouth, Ken was becoming bored. He wanted to get on to the next stop. He realised that the time in Broome would be quite short. Anyway, there was nothing we could do. Perhaps next time.

Optus does not have a mobile service and that made the cost of phone calls very expensive. We had to use phone cards. The Telstra one seems to be the most expensive. Primus Telecom offers additional value when you buy one of their cards (e.g. for \$10, you get an extra \$2.00).

Ken is forever grateful to Pat Smith for packing biscuits and cake, most of which Ken managed to consume, much to Sandra's displeasure as his weight ballooned.

On 12 August 2000, we travelled to Karratha and stayed there for 3 nights. Some 68 kms out of Exmouth, the 4WD started to backfire running on gas and power was somewhat lacking. It seemed that we were having difficulty going faster than 100 km/per hour in overdrive.

Ken panics in these circumstances. We stopped and switched to petrol. Ken had his heart in his mouth all the way to Karratha – it was a long way to travel and Ken was half expecting us to break down. The 4WD backfired a few times on petrol. It was difficult to know what to do. You are miles away from anywhere and you just have to get to

the next destination. Slowly the kilometres to Karratha became less and less.

We made good time and arrived at 3.30pm. Ken went directly to the RAC breakdown service. Surprise! Surprise! When Ken explained the problem, they did not want to know about it. It was 'gas' related and they knew nothing about gas. I was told to wait until Monday and see a gas dealer about the backfiring problem.

I explained that the backfiring occurred when running on petrol, yet, it did not make the slightest bit of difference. They just wanted to be rid of me.

Well, Ken is made of sterner stuff. In fact, he can be downright stubborn when he wants to – even worse than Sandra does and that is saying something. Ken drove back to the Balmoral Caravan Park in Karratha, got out the mobile phone and phoned the RAC in Perth. 6 minutes of music and waiting got him quite angry.

When he finally got through, Ken asked for a Supervisor to call him back. RAC did this and a long conversation ensued about the situation. Ken insisted that something be done. Result – the breakdown service called at the caravan park, lifted the bonnet, tweaked the carburetor and agreed that the engine was not idling satisfactorily when running on petrol. The breakdown service bloke seemed to have a mystical fear of gas – recommended that I not run the 4WD on gas in case I blew up the motor. He did nothing to reassure me. Nothing would be done until Monday. He explained that a repair service was not available on Saturday afternoon or on a Sunday. Lesson – do not breakdown in a country town on the weekend.

Ken worried and fretted for the rest of the Saturday and Sunday.

We spent a pleasant day looking at Aboriginal rock carvings and then drove down to Hearson Cove beach.

First thing on Monday morning, Ken drove down to the gas repair shop. Another surprise. The gas bloke did not even look at anything remotely connected with the gas systems.

He thought that the problem was one of ignition and timing. First, he checked the points, then the leads to the sparkplugs. Then he checked the plugs only to find they were the wrong type for gas. He changed the plugs and put everything back together. We did a test drive on both petrol and gas. The 4WD was running very differently.

Outcome! The problem was not related to gas. The RAC breakdown people could have fixed it if they were interested.

We spent Monday looking at Dampier. Ken visited a friend of his at the courthouse, had a chat, made a few calls and used his Internet to send some e-mails.

The drive from Karratha was without incident. Thank goodness given the circumstances of the 4WD backfiring on the way to Karratha. Ken was understandably nervous given the circumstances of recent days.

We stayed one night at South Hedland on 15 August 2000. Sandra had an interesting experience. The lady at the Caravan Park kept saying "hello sweetie" each time she saw her. Sandra is unused to anyone calling her sweetie, especially women. Ah well! So much for customer relations.

The Caravan Park at South Hedland has a smart card, which you must pay a refundable deposit of \$20.00 to operate the gates. Not a bad way to ensure that only the tenants are able to drive into the park. The ablutions were quite clean and the park was well laid out. We will stay there again when next in South Hedland. Hope the "hello sweetie" lady has moved on.

We visited the shopping centre and the motel to book a room for the both of us when we came back this way from Broome.

The next day we travelled to 80-Mile Beach for one night. 80-Mile Beach is the halfway point between South Hedland and Broome. We caught up with Steve and Gladys McAllister from South Australia. They had a friend (Terry) with them, but Ken cannot remember his surname. We will be meeting up with them in October 2000 anyway.

The photos in this album about 80-mile beach do not do it justice. It is simply terrific. The tide goes out at the end of the day and you can spend hours collecting all types of shells. Watch out for sea snakes though. Sandra managed to collect a bucket of shells, which we had to carry around with us until we got back to Perth.

Our destination was Broome and we arrived there on 17 August 2000.

The Caravan Park is the only one in Broome that offers en-suites. There is a down side though. The sites are quite small and moving your car and caravan is quite a task for the unwary. Leslie can tell you stories of how difficult it has been.

We got a nice surprise when we parked the van in the bay. The area next to the bay is supposed to be used for parking and it was, by someone else. It turned out to be the vehicle owned by the person next door to the site.

Leslie approached that person and asked him to move the vehicle. He refused and attempted some story about being a permanent resident and had the right to park there. Leslie then went off to see the Park Manager. In the interim, there was a flurry of activity and the vehicle was promptly moved. Needless to say, they never spoke to us whilst we were there. Ken always made sure that we parked the 4WD in the space, advertising the fact that right is might.

Broome is a terrific place especially the swimming at Cable Beach. The area was affected by the storms and a considerable amount of sand was washed away from the main beach. A lot of rocks are exposed. Also the sandbanks are exposed and they are being stabilised.

Most of the work to stabilise the area is being done under lights at night.

During the day, people come to the beach (it is just opposite the famous Cable Beach Hotel) and lie on the grass soaking up the atmosphere. You can have meals, coffee, drinks, whatever you wish, life is just soooooo easy.

Fancy a swim? It is just a short walk down the steps and along towards the lighthouse. Good waves and huge

problems if your eyes are unable to handle the sights. Yes, the bodies on the beach are worth looking at. Slight problem with the entry to the water. The shells are exposed and quite sharp. You have to be careful entering and leaving the water. Both Sandra and I cut our feet.

Ken enjoyed the swims we had. His eye muscles got a lot of exercise though.

Leslie and Pat took us to dinner at the Cable Beach Hotel in the Lord McAlpine Room. This is 5 star dining and we celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. It just so happened that the Sinju festival was on the same day. Terrific atmosphere and great food, especially the sweets (Ken deems this the most important part of the meal).

Shopping in Broome is something else. You will need 2 whole days to get around all the shops. Sandra managed to do this over one day and dragged Ken along to carry the bags. On the way, she managed to stop at Linney's and select her birthday present. Ken is up for some big bucks in December.

Broome also has a weekend market and this is very cosmopolitan. All the hippies come out and sell their wares. You rarely see them during the week. Very few people wear anything on their feet. Their skin is a tanned colour and all of them sport that healthy look born from spending long lazy days on the beach. What a life!

We stayed until 22 August 2000 when Sandra and I bid farewell to Leslie and Pat and began the long drive back to Perth down the centre.

Our first night was at South Hedland, followed by Newman on 23 August 2000. Ken woke up on the morning of the 24 August 2000 and announced that we would not be staying overnight at Mount Magnet. He took the view that accommodation may not be acceptable and resolved that we should drive in excess of 12 hours on that day in order to reach Perth.

We managed to do that and arrived in Gosnells on Thursday, 24 August 2000 after 9pm. Very tired but glad to be back.

We travelled in excess of 6500 kms overall over 7 weeks of an interesting and very enjoyable holiday. Would we do it again? Yes, most definitely. Ken is already planning the next trip but this will be to the Eastern States and back by 4WD.

Rainbow Jungle is unique and is Australia's most beautiful parrot habitat – situated 3.5 kms from Kalbarri township on the Red Bluff Road. This tourist attraction has over 300 tonnes of local tumbago sandstone used in the construction. Everywhere in the complex are shaded walkways and brick paving with waterfalls, running streams, fountains, water lily ponds and fish.

At every turn, we saw something different. Sculptured gargoyles, stained glass windows, hundreds of palm trees, ferns and tropical plants. Parrots of every colour of the rainbow, the magnificent Eclectus Parrot valued at over \$4000.00 native to Australia; the exquisite Sun Conure from South America valued at \$8000.00; Red Tail Black Cockatoos, Gang Gangs and Purple crowned Lorikeets. Dozens of varieties of Australia's most beautiful parrots are kept in large enclosures. Rainbow jungle is a must for photographers.

Construction of this facility started at the end of 1984 and the first section was open to the public from September 1986. Since then, 3 more sections have been built. The owners have done all of the work themselves. The last section was completed in Feb 1991. There are photographs on a notice board showing the various stages of construction. You get a much better appreciation of the complex when you climb the tower and have a look around.

The four of us spent hours looking at all of the birds. If you wanted to, you can spend all day here, enjoy an afternoon tea, or an ice cream or bring your meat and have a bar-b-cue.

Definitely worth a visit and we will be visiting this place again when we next come to Kalbarri.

In these pictures, you can see the coastline of the lighthouse in Broome. When the tide is out, the footprints of dinosaurs are quite visible. Sadly, we were not able to see them. There are concrete footprints on one of the rocks to show the size of these pre-historic creatures. The coastline is truly beautiful. Very blue sea and one can sit on the rocks and just take in the view for hours. There is a story about the lighthouse keeper. His wife was not able to have the use of her legs and he used to carry her down to a pool scooped out of the rocks for her to bathe in. The distance from the house (only the old chimney is standing) indicates his daily love and devotion to her.

The pictures on the right show the Chinese festival in Broome. We were quite fortunate in being able to see it from a vantage point of a restaurant table in the Cable Beach Club. We were celebrating the 40th anniversary for Leslie and Pat Smith. The festival is a yearly event and representatives are invited each year from overseas. The colour of the uniforms is 'ochre' or almost 'orange' and when set against the green and blue background, it makes for a very colourful sight. Parking is a bit of a premium when the festival is on and was compounded by the majority of spaces in the main parking area being set aside for food stalls.

The pictures you see on this page indicate the desolation of the bush (after a fire) between Broome and Hedland.

We drove right through the bush fire that raged on either side of the road. It would have been dangerous to stop, so we went a little further on the road to a clearing. We stopped the 4WD and Sandra got out and took pictures.

The fire was prevented from reaching the road by grading either side up to twice the normal width of a road. It seems to be standard practice in the country, perhaps as a means of preventing kangaroos surprising motorists and also as a fire break.

These pictures are of 'Yardie Creek'. The Shire of Exmouth has made a concerted effort to build a hard top road all the way to Yardie Creek to ensure that tourists without 4WD's can get there. When we were last in Exmouth in 1997, the black top a few kilometres before Turquoise Bay. Getting to Yardie Creek in that year was quite a rough bouncy journey with possible damage to your car. Ken was not prepared to risk the Ford Falcon on dirt roads. Thank goodness for the 4WD. Yardie Creek has many surprises and a terrific walk from the parking area. Parking is well organised and you have to walk about 100 metres to a picnic spot that is well shaded. We had a great lunch and after taking the esky back to the 4WD set off on a walk along the top of the gorge that followed the creek.

We were amazed at the variety of wildlife living in the gorges. You have to look closely at the photographs to see the rock wallabies resting on one of the ledges. The herons also have their own part of the gorges and nothing else is allowed to stray into their territory. If you look at the water, you may be lucky to see turtles. We travelled up the creek in a boat in 1997 on a tour run by Neil McLeod. This time, there were no tour boats but some brave and energetic people tried rowing up. It is a long way to go and come back using your arms. Ken felt sorry for the bloke rowing. We noticed many people walking the gorge in thongs. The area is very rocky and if you slip and break the thong, your feet will be history by the time you get back.

In Karratha, one place to see are the Aboriginal rock carvings. These pictures illustrate what we were able to see. The area is quite difficult to walk in and it is best that you have a sturdy pair of walking boots, a hat, some water and sunscreen.

You walk into a canyon and continue through it. It seems endless with all these rocks around you, like someone has picked them up in a front-end loader and just dumped them in a pile. It is difficult to make out some of the carvings. You have to use your imagination.

Aboriginals who camped in this area would have carved out various animals and scenes that they saw. It must have taken some time to do it because the rocks are quite hard. All around you, there is evidence of camping by the hundreds of shells of oysters and mussels. The campsites are called "shell midden", a way of describing a campsite where the Aboriginals dumped their rubbish.

In the harshness of the rocks you can also see the wildflowers. It is amazing how such colours can exist and continue to live even though there is very little water. When we were there in August 2000, we saw quite a lot of water, most of it in stagnant pools. However, these pools continued to be fed by water from sources in the upper rocks. We were unable to determine the source of the supply.

Climbing the rocks to see some of the carvings is tricky and dangerous. But unless you do, you may miss out on some of the carvings that are not normally visible from the floor of the canyon.

Take a look at the sturt desert pea. The pods on the inside are black. This contrasts with the flower in Exmouth where the pods are white. It seems that Exmouth is the only place where the pods are white.

These pictures are from Karratha in the Balmoral Caravan Park. The day previous, we witnessed the caravan next door being surrounded by twittering birds. The owner was feeding a flock of Corella's and Galah's.

These pictures show Leslie feeding them the next day.

The Corella's are white and quite suspicious of people. They will not come to your hand and take food from it. This contrasts with the red breasted Galah's who seem to have no fear and will quite happily sit on your hand (in fact compete for space) and take food from it.

Leslie had to be careful about their beaks. I think that he was bitten on the fingers on a few occasions.

The Corella's are real showoff's. They like to get up into the tree branches, find one that has a fair bit of flexibility and then hang upside down from one foot. We spent a lot of time just watching these acrobats go through their paces.

Aside from the birds, notice how the vehicles are parked. In this caravan park (owned by the Fleetwood Group), all vehicles are parked on the road. This seems to work quite well. Concrete extends from the road into the block and all facilities (water tap, drainage) are in the concrete slab. The only downside about the concrete slab is the placing of pegs for the fly that goes over the beds. Some hooks embedded in the concrete will solve this problem.

These photographs show the views from Charles Knife Canyon, which is 23 kilometres south of Exmouth. It is almost directly opposite the entry to Kailis fisheries. The Charles Knife canyon road follows the original trail blazed by Charles Knife and Jack King in the 1950s to what was then regarded as impossible access to the Cape Range oil-drilling site. The well site is still there and worth the quick look.

The canyon has spectacular panoramic views and reminds you of the badlands in the USA in those old 1950s westerns. In fact, you could make a movie in this canyon and would think that you are in Arizona, USA.

In the photos, you see what looks like a road. It is not, but the bed of the stream that meanders from the canyon to the sea.

Managed to get a picture of Sandra sitting on the bonnet of her toy (4WD). Like she was born to it.

These pictures are of Kalbarri when we went to look at many gorges in the national park. Apart from the “intrepid explorer”, the other people in the pictures are Leslie and Pat Smith. Leslie is Sandra’s brother. He likes to tease Ken a lot, especially about his podgy frame.

The spectacular Murchison River gorges meander for 80 kilometres through the vast sandplains of the Kalbarri National Park. Some 400 million years ago, multicoloured sands were deposited in layers. Today the resultant formation is called Tumblagooda sandstone. These layers now form magnificent red and white bands in the gorges as the Murchison carves its way into the sea.

We were able to see “The Loop” where there are several lookouts affording views of imposing cliffs which drop right down to the river below. We also saw “Nature’s Window” (see photo with Ken sitting in front), a natural rock arch which frames the superb view upstream. The “Z bend” requires extreme care but has a view to take your breath away. The “Hawks Head” (see photo) is not to be missed.

These pictures are about 80-mile beach that is on the way from Port Hedland to Broome. We stayed there for one night (16 Aug 2000). It is the chosen stopping off point for caravans because of the distance between Hedland and Broome. I suppose that if travelling by car only, there would be no need to stop off at this park.

There is a dirt road from the black top to the Caravan Park, which has a spectacular view of the sea as you approach it. The park is well laid out and is very popular with people towing caravans.

The sunsets are terrific and worth the visit. The tide goes out and you can walk along the beach collecting shells. Sandra brought back 2 buckets, which we had to carry around with us all the way to Broome and back to Perth.

The people in the picture are Gladys and Steve Whittaker from South Australia. Another bloke called "Terry" was also travelling with them in his own caravan. Ken enjoys talking to Steve about camping trailers. Sandra hates to camp. She prefers the relative luxury of a caravan and loves a motel room.

These pictures are from Broome and our visit to the dragon boat festival. See the bloke relaxing in a reclined position? Well, that is Ken. He always relaxes that way. Leslie Smith is sitting next to him and his wife, Pat, is on the chair. Guess where Sandra was? Yes, behind the camera. Well, that is what you get for being so perfect with the camera. You are never in front of it.

The dragon boat races are really something else and although not unique to Broome, you can see the influence of the Chinese community from the pearling days. The crews really put themselves out in the races and it was quite obvious from the beginning that one particular team was going to win. They were made up from the local surf club and had the experience with paddling the canoes, which are really surf boats with dragon heads attached to the front.

The life in Broome is something else. Ken could just about take this every day.

These pictures are from Cable beach in Broome. The area in front of the hotel is reserved for parking. As you move towards the beach, the grassed area offers the sunbather, reader, lollabout, whatever, a most pleasant opportunity of sitting, lying down, eating, drinking and of course watch everyone else going by. After the grassed area, there are concrete steps down to the beach. The dune is being protected against erosion. Work is carried on at night under floodlights so that the tourists are not disturbed from enjoying the beach.

The couple in the picture is Lesley and Pat Smith celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in the Caravan Park in Broome. Sandra had a good idea and went out, bought a bottle of champagne, had Ken cook breakfast and we celebrated their anniversary in the best possible way. That night, Leslie took all of us to dinner at the Cable Beach Hotel (Lord McAlpine Room) and kept up the celebration with more champagne, wine, food, sweets, etc, etc, etc.

Ken forgot about his waistline that night.