

## Doreen Harding

### 28/3/35 – 30/9/03

Many of our customers knew that Doreen was battling cancer. At times we felt we were winning, other times not so. In the end she died quickly, ailing within days of seemingly being quite well. Whilst we desperately wanted to keep her for so much longer she died peacefully and with such dignity that we felt comforted in the end.

Doreen contributed nearly 30 years of her life to the Caravan Industry. Tom and her purchased the forerunner to Harding's Caravan Services in 1976. She was instrumental in the business development and growth right up until the day she died. Greg & Fiona had assumed ownership and control by then but, of course she still played a role.

Doreen and Tom led the CTIA New Caravanners Safaris. They gave up countless weekends to take nervous owners of new rigs away for onroad training. Time and time again the participants would return walking tall and confident ready to hit the road.

Doreen stood alongside Tom during his five-year presidency of the CTIA. She endured endless meetings, travel and home life interruptions to their already busy schedule.

Doreen loved her association with Caravan World Magazine. For ten years she contributed monthly destination articles and was the anonymous author of the popular and informative "Trekabout" column.

Doreen and Tom promoted the caravanning lifestyle through their seminars at the Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth Caravan Shows. These were often gruelling and many people would not have realised that in some cases she was battling cancer at the time.

Only a matter of hours before her death Tom verbally took Doreen on a trip around Australia with him, recounting many of the places, people and events that they had experienced together. I sat and listened to the special times they had shared. Doreen was

wide-eyed and attentive as they covered tens of thousands of kilometres, countless places, people and events. Much of this was new to me and it reinforced the excitement and adventure yet intimacy of their travelling time together. Sadly this was to be their last trip.

### *A personal note from Tom*

I send my heartfelt thanks to my many customer friends who have taken the trouble to pass their condolences on the passing of Doreen. It has been uplifting to the family and I to read your messages. Amusing anecdotes, acknowledgement of Doreen's contributions' and simple kind words have warmed us all. It is wonderful to be reminded how much she touched others too. I am doing well and look forward to maintaining contact with the caravan community through my normal seminar series' and a stint at Bayswater during January 5th-10th to relieve Greg whilst on leave. I would love to see you in the showroom during this week sometime. If not, I will definitely catch you on the road somewhere out past the black stump! Kind regards, Tom.

*Hardings Caravan Services specialise in connecting your car and caravan together in a manner that allows a safe and enjoyable holiday. Our core business services for you are as follows:*

#### **Towing Equipment for your Car and Caravan**

- Hayman Reese Towbars
- Electric Brake Controller Installations
- Weight Distributing Hitches
- Sway Controls
- Towing Mirrors

#### **Mechanical Servicing for your Caravan**

- Brakes
- Bearings
- Chassis & Running Gear, eg Springs & Jacks etc.
- Steel Modifications, eg Bumper Bars and Bike Rack Mountings

#### **Caravan Body Repairs and Maintenance**

- Insurance Repairs
- Resealing and Water Damage Repair
- Interior Hardware Repairs: Catches, Window Fittings etc.

#### **Improvements**

- Interior Modifications eg Single Beds to Double Bed
- Solar and 12 volt Installations
- Air Conditioners and Roll Out Awnings

#### **Accessories & Spare Parts**

- Spares for Repairs
- Accessories

#### **Other Specialist Services**

- Get To Know Your Caravan Seminars
- Free Technical Advice
- Information through our Website

### **Diary Dates**

- Get to Know Your Caravan Seminar  
2.00 pm Saturday 31st January and Saturday 28th February 2004, Bayswater.
- Bendigo Caravan Show  
21st – 23rd November 2003  
Bendigo Jockey Club Racecourse.  
(Hardings are not attending)
- Get to Know Your Caravan Seminar  
2.00pm Saturday 31st January 2004  
Bayswater
- Melbourne Caravan Show  
30th March – 5th April 2004  
Caulfield Racecourse.

# Workshop news & info

## Definitions

- **Working links:** The number of chain links under load when your weight distributing hitch bar is pulled up by the snap up bracket. Note: A minimum of four working links is required to prevent stressing the bracket when you turn corners.
- **Towball Weight:** If you were to stand on the towball on the back of your car you would be exerting a certain "download" on the towbar. Your caravan does the same. It is important to ensure that this weight is within the limit of the car and it also gives us critical data about which level ride system is best for you. PS The best way of ascertaining Towball Weight is to either bring the van in or borrow our special scales.
- **ATM:** The total weight of your caravan comprising timber and aluminium, possessions, water, wheels and tyres including ball weight. If you could hang your loaded van from a rather large set of fishing scales the ATM would be the displayed weight.
- **GTM:** Refers to the ATM less the Towball weight. This measures the load under the tyres. If the van was hitched to the car and you had the wheels of the van only on a weighbridge the resulting measure would be the GTM.
- **Coupling Height:** Refers to the height between the ground and the bottom of the coupling when the van is level. This is the altitude to which we set the towball surface on the hitch to make the van tow level.

## Bad news!

Hayman Reese has indicated an impending 6% price increase across the board in January 2004. Clearly we will have no other choice but to pass this on to our customers. We communicate this information for budgeting purposes and recommend purchases of Towing Equipment prior to Christmas if circumstances allow.

## Why Hardings?

Of course there are lots of places that can fit a towbar to your car, plenty of Auto Electricians will wire in a brake controller and if you hunt long enough you can probably find a cheap Weight Distributing Hitch. The real challenge is to seamlessly combine these items to provide a safe and effective towing package. What's my point? Here is a recent example of how it can all go wrong.

A customer purchased a brake controller on special at the Caravan Show and had his local Auto Electrician install it.

Elsewhere he also purchased a standard 250 kilogram weight distribution hitch. Soon afterwards his car and caravan arrived at our premises to install the new equipment. Here is what we found:

1. He had 250kg weight distribution bars and because it was a heavy caravan he actually needed 340kg weight distribution bars.
2. The gas bottle brackets fouled the position of the hitch snap up brackets and needed to be cut off and re-welded.
3. The car was higher than the caravan and the standard drop shank in the hitch kit could not go low enough so the caravan would have been travelling along nose up. A special 50mm lower drop shank was needed to suit the rig.
4. The safety chains on the caravan needed to be extended to suit the new hitch.
5. Furthermore it was then discovered that the towbar on the car was not actually suitable for a weight distributing hitch. Whilst it had a 50mm square opening the manufacturer would not warrant its use with the heavy level rides.

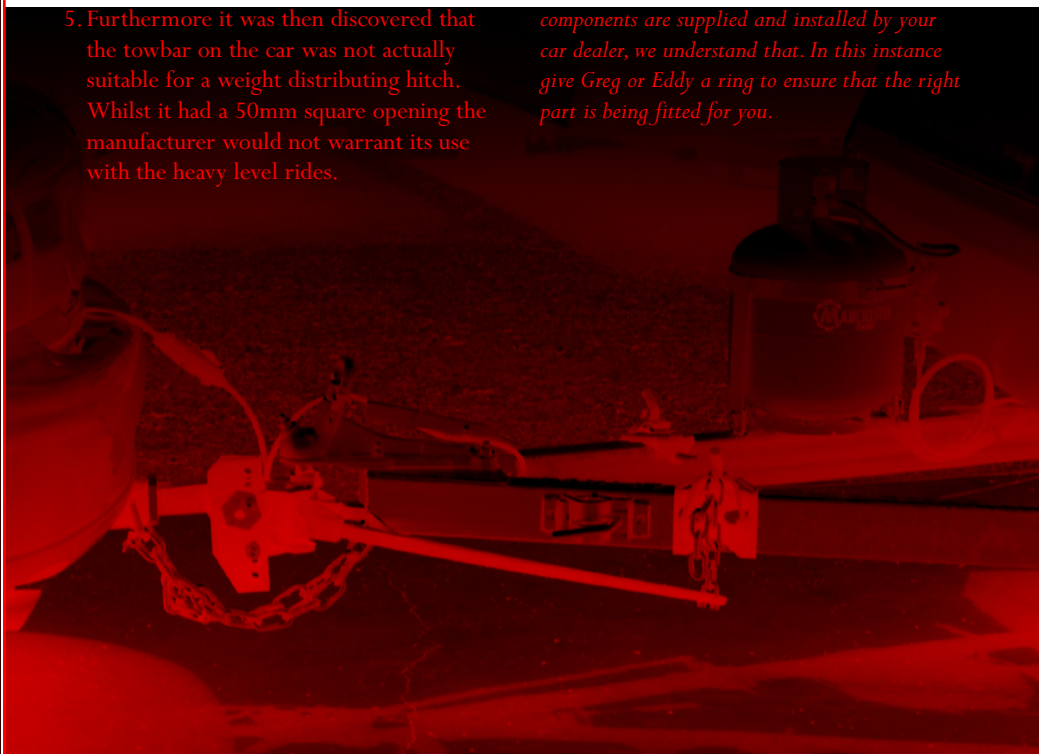
6. At the point of hitch kit supply there was no discussion about Sway Controls, what they are and what their benefits are.

7. There was no auxiliary wire fitted to the car suitable to run the fridge on twelve volts whilst driving.

8. It was at this point that I barely had the heart to inform the customer that their recently installed brake controller was not our preferred type, why, and what alternatives existed.

Lots of places will sell you a weight distributing hitch, they will probably even carry the box out cheerfully and put it into the boot of your car. Let us tell you that it is NOT THAT SIMPLE! Many people will have noticed the array of hitch components on the east wall of our front workshop. There are TWENTY ONE different combinations that may apply to your rig. Seven different shanks and three different bar types. The incremental cost of swapping components is negligible when we supply and fit your hitch in comparison to having to purchase non standard parts over the counter. At first glance our price may seem a few dollars more but by the time we have installed the right package, made any A-Frame adjustments and given you a road test you will get THE BEST VALUE IN TOWN.

*Footnote: Sometimes circumstances demand that components are supplied and installed by your car dealer, we understand that. In this instance give Greg or Eddy a ring to ensure that the right part is being fitted for you.*





## Product Review:

### Tekonsha Prodigy Electric Brake Controller

*This is a new, high tech, all singing all dancing digital brake unit.*

Many of you have used the early square fronted Tekonsha (pronounced Te Kon Sha) Controller in the 80's and 90's and also The Tekonsha Voyager in the late 90's. The new Prodigy reflects a quantum leap in technology.

#### It has the following conventional features:

- Manual override.
- Gain control to increase or decrease output level.
- Must be mounted facing towards the driver but can be set between zero degrees (flat) and 70 degrees nose up.
- Compact size
- Standard four wire hook up
- Proportional braking ie. pendulum based.

#### The following features reflect its technological breakthrough:

- No pendulum levelling required. It does so automatically and self adjusts for hills.
- A three level "boost button" exists to expand the range of the gain control.

#### A digital readout provides the following information:

- Voltage level from 0.0 to 13.0 to the brakes.
- Nine different symbols advise the driver of situations such as an interruption in the wiring circuit to the brakes, loss of power to the unit, short in the brakes and confirm that the unit is correctly installed.
- The prodigy will "hold" the caravan brakes on with 25% of the power setting while you are at a standstill with the brake pedal applied for longer than 5 seconds, eg. whilst at the lights.
- The Prodigy will brake proportionally in reverse. Furthermore pressing and holding the "boost button" for five seconds with the brake pedal depressed will cancel any "boost and hold" settings for a period of three minutes.
- It has an optional mounting pouch with a plug in harness that allows quick removal for storage or swapping between vehicles.



- The Prodigy is a very flash looking unit. How much?  
\$350 supply only.  
\$400 install to existing wiring.  
\$450 supply and install.

As a comparison the Hayes Lemmerz unit is around \$275 installed.

**Our thoughts:** The Prodigy has without a doubt dramatically raised the technology bar in terms of its features. The more penetrating question is whether the substantial price tag delivers commensurate benefits. Let's have a look at it:

- The self-levelling pendulum is terrific, particularly in comparison to some early controllers where the pendulum level was a real headache. On the latest Hayes unit however, the manual levelling is quite straight forward and manageable.
- The "boost button" feature is neither here nor there. It's just an extension of the gain control. The only benefit is the fact that the boost levels increase the braking power by a known amount. Against this if you are on B2 and you want level B1 you have to push the button three times, eg from B2 to B3 to B0 to B1. Like the old digital alarm clock that would not go backwards on the settings.
- The digital readout is an absolute winner. Using the "hold" feature you can set the braking level to a consistent level and compensate for inevitable variations in the caravan brakes as they warm up. This has substantial benefits for drivers who currently feel the need to consistently "fiddle" with their brake controller. There are certainly some rewards in the message symbols, particularly if the plug pulls out of the car socket or a main wire breaks, but the unit is not able to identify that only one wheel is braking out of two or only two out of four etc.

## Get to know your caravan seminars

These three hour sessions are held at our Bayswater premises and hosted by the guru Tom Harding. Covering towing equipment, caravan equipment, practical caravan design and a huge amount more they are a must for new and intending caravanners. (See page one for dates). \$25 per head. Ring now for an application form. These sessions will book out.

## Lost

We have a customers travel diary left behind some months ago. It is un-named 1/2 A4 size brown aboriginal art pattern cover with title "My Trip" in gold writing. First entry 1994 and it appears the home town is Boronia (Vic) as this is a recurring start point. If this book is yours or your friends please call us ASAP.

- The "hold" function is quite neat and would be particularly useful if you were sitting at uphill lights with a three tonne caravan behind you. In other words a nice little bonus but far from essential.
- Proportional braking in reverse. So what?
- The mounting pouch and quick release plug and socket is great. It also comes with a sunglasses type case that holds The Prodigy when you remove it. A real bonus if you swap the controller from vehicle to vehicle or if it annoys you when not towing. Mind you Hardings have been fitting four pin plug and sockets to controllers for two decades now!

**In summary:** This is a brake controller for the enthusiast. If you are prepared to invest some time learning about its operation I am sure it will truly reward you. However I don't think you will get the best out of it unless you get involved with all its features. In fact if you install one and don't master it I expect that it may master you!

I believe it is well worth the money if you learn, utilise and understand all its attributes. However if you don't want to get involved with whistles and bells you should not feel that purchasing a Hayes unit is compromising your brakes because that is absolutely not the case.

**Want more information?** Talk to Hardings or visit [www.tekonsha.com](http://www.tekonsha.com)

## Products, tips and ideas.

- **Sway controls:** The Hayman Reese Friction Sway Control makes a substantial difference to your caravan's handling in turbulent conditions or difficult spots. Customers love to tell us how much it helps, especially when road trains overtake them travelling the same direction. If you feel the tail of your van "wiggle" in this situation then you will be amazed how a sway control will improve stability. Once upon a time we would have only recommended them for larger vans, but now we are regularly fitting them right down to 14' caravans. Next time you are in, insist on a demonstration and explanation. At \$375 fitted they are a practical and easy way to improve the safety of your rig (see picture above right).
- **Raised j/wheel clamps:** Sick of digging a hole to allow the jockey wheel to fit on a low site. Let us weld a raised jockey wheel clamp to the inside of the A-frame. This will allow improved clearance for the jockey wheel in tight spots and will also make it easier to hitch up your levelling bars.
- **Raising the whole van:** They seem to build them so low! Every week we raise caravans to improve clearance for jacks, A-Frames and Levelling Bars. If like others you are sick of bottoming out talk to us about lifting the van up. The sound of silence as the drive into the next service station will put a smile on your face.



The Hayman Reese Friction Sway Control

- **Caravan Park Site Maps.** Why not carry an A4 plastic pocket with you to file your favourite Caravan Park Site Plans in an orderly way. Then you can request your perfect spot by site number when you ring up and book ahead next time.
- **Lube hitch bars and awnings.** Don't forget to lube those hitch bars and rollout awnings. The trunnion on the end of your level ride bar needs some heavy oil to stop it squawking as you turn corners. The awning ratchet mechanism on A&E and Faulkner must be regularly lubed with a silicon (non oily) spray. There is a hole near the ratchet assembly control on the right hand end of the awning roller. Give it a good bath of Selleys Ezy Glide or equivalent. This will help keep the spring and internal cogs working. Please do this every time you go away.
- **Slip your hitch shank into the snap up bracket.** Sick of handling the heavy greasy ballmount assembly. Slip it shank first into an open snap up bracket mouth on the A-Frame. It fits in neatly. Furthermore if the snap up is tack welded and you use a lockable hitch pin it will be also very secure there.
- **Corner jack stabilisers can be a real irritation.** Worn, bent, broken, seized, inaccessible or all of the above. Things can be done to make them more manageable. New style jacks (less than 5 years old) probably have a hexangular head and this is a great improvement over the old slotted rod tips. We can upgrade these by simply welding a 1/2" nut onto the end and supplying a new handle. Lubricate with Silicon Spray or Inox, because a heavier oil based spray can attract the dust, possibly causing the rod to jam in the threaded bush winding block. This can strain, break or seize the mechanism.

If all else fails invest in a set of "stakka jacks" the free-standing pyramid stands that will never let you down. These are fully adjustable can be used on site or at home to ease the load off the tyres and suspension. At \$22 each they are also a cost effective way to solve jack problems once and for all.



## Don't forget to service the Van!

This should be a 10,000 kilometre routine. Over the page is the comprehensive workshop format we use. We also give you a report on any impending maintenance items so they don't take you by surprise next time. Be ready to hit the road and enjoy a trouble free holiday.

Single Axle Caravan \$140  
(\$150 effective 1/2/04)

Tandem Axle Caravan \$165  
(\$180 effective 1/2/04)

## Caravan Park Guides: How to get them.

1. Victorian Caravan Parks Guide: Phone VICTOUR on 132842 and it will be posted direct to you free!
2. RACV National Caravan Park Listing: Phone RACV 131329 \$9.00 members, \$14.00 non-members plus \$5.50 postage or pick one up at the RACV Shops.

## Christmas trading arrangements:

Closed December 25th, 26th and 27th

Closed January 1st

Closed January 26th

Closed March 8th

Please note that from 24th December until the 12th January there will be no workshop staff on duty. Full operations recommence from Monday 12th January. Caravans may be brought in prior to this but service work will not commence until that date.



## Eddy's Show Room Review

Here's Eddy The Expert showing off a curved awning rafter. They fix to the wall of your van and tension into the roller of your awning. Because of the curve they lift the vinyl cloth up slightly to reduce flapping and prevent water catchment. At \$95 fitted they are a winner.

The Aussie Truck Mirror is a huge step forward in Towing Mirrors. It is very secure, wide of vision, quick and easy to fit and will not scratch the car. Bring your car in to try one on. Will fit most models. \$230 pair

Guess Who? Eddy again with the expandable clothes line. This neat little number attaches to the wall of the van and expands to provide a substantial amount of line space. It is strong enough for wet towels but don't forget to remove it from the wall and stow it inside when you move on. \$75.

Dirty Water in your water tank? Tank Clean is an easy to use compound designed to clean the nasty taste out of the tank and pipes. A \$19.50 bottle will perform a couple of treatments.



## Destinations: A newcomers guide to Gellibrand

- Where is it: 25 kilometres south of Colac, Victoria.
- The culture: Old timber town situated on the Gellibrand River, gateway to the Otway Ranges and rainforests of Western Victoria.
- Abundant: Fresh mountain air
- Activities: Bird watching, bushwalking and fishing
- Day trips: Lavers Hill, Barwon Dam, Cape Otway Light House, the Twelve Apostles, Loch Ard Gorge and London Bridge.
- Where to eat: Gellibrand River Hotel. Built at the turn of the last century it is the oldest original hotel in the region, situated on 5 acres with views to the river valley from the bar.
- What to take: Walking boots, rainwear to protect you from morning mists and a heater to warm you in the van after you put out the campfire.
- Where to next: Toss a coin! Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Wye River or back to the Princess Highway via Timboon or Cobden
- Caravan Park: Gellivan Park, Beech Forest Rd Gellibrand Ph 52358357.

## Batteries in caravans becoming essential.

Fact. Caravan Park sites are not growing at the same rate as van sales. Customers are reporting an increasing need to book further ahead to avoid missing out on their preferred parks. This reduces spontaneity and "locks you in" to a travel plan. Tip: Insist on a Hardings Battery Installation so that you can take advantage of the unpowered sites. They are cheaper, often grassier and usually readily available. The installation can be as simple or complex as you like. Cost will vary accordingly. For example:

- Conventional 75 Amp Battery (loose) with an attached socket to suit the caravan's electrical plug. Approximately \$250.
- Sealed 100Amp Battery mounted in a dead spot in the van, appropriately wired into the caravan's circuit and connected to a regulated 240 volt Battery Charger. From \$500-\$800.
- Sealed 100Amp Battery installed into the van, supported by an 80 Watt Solar Panel and Regulated Battery Charger. From \$1800 to \$2500.
- Talk to us about the options.

## How to escape.

Lifelong friendships have been made with wonderful people met in caravan parks. But sometimes, just sometimes, you absolutely have to get yourself out of that conversation with the resident park bore. In case you can't think of a polite way to excuse yourself here's a selection of excuses:

### So nice talking to you but:

- I have to check the level of effluent in the porta potti
- I think the ice cream may be melting in the freezer
- I must move the solar panel to maximise the afternoon sun
- I think it's time to adjust the TV Antenna
- It's my day to Baygon the towbar
- I'm sure the washing must be dry now
- I think the gas bottle is about to run out
- I have to use the neighbours en-suite before they return
- New arrivals are backing onto their site, can't miss that!

# Caravan Undercarriage Service

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Van: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Job Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Reg: \_\_\_\_\_ Mechanic: \_\_\_\_\_

Item	Check	Strip	Lube	Replace	Comments
Tyre Condition	*				
Tyre Pressure	*				
Spare Tyre Pressure	*				
Bearings	*	*	*		
Grease Seals				*	
Drums	*	*			
Magnets	*	*			
Brake Linings	*	*			
<b>A' Frame and Chassis</b>					
Hand Brake Adjustments	*				
Jacks			*		
Jockey Wheel	*		*		
Jockey Wheel Clamp	*		*		
Springs	*				
U-Bolts Tight	*				
Shackle Bolts/Bushes	*				
Shackle Plates	*				
Spring Hangers	*				
Chassis Welds	*				
Water Tank Mounts/Hoses	*				
Safety Chains	*				
Gas Bottle Mountings	*				
Spare Wheel Mount	*				
Plumbing Protection	*				
Paint A-Frame	*				
<b>Electric – 12 Volt Only</b>					
Electric Brake Wiring	*				
Stop Lights	*				
Clearance Lights	*				
Indicators	*				
Lenses	*				
12 Volt Plug	*				
12 Volt Lead	*				
Breakaway Unit	*				

**\*Mechanical service recommended every 10,000 km**

## Website update

www.hardingscaravans.com.au is up and running. Featuring Caravan Show dates and special trading hours for long weekends and public holidays etc. Check out technical articles on Electric Brake Controllers and tips to improve the performance of your Caravan refrigerator. Direct links are also available to helpful industry websites such as:

- **Hayman Reese.** Access towbar and weight distribution equipment data, towing tips and more.

- **Camec.** A great deal of your caravan is built using supplies from this fantastic company. Check out their online catalogue for spares and accessories. Of course Hardings will supply.

- **Caravan Industry Association Victoria.** Our trade body will keep you abreast of upcoming shows and industry events.

- **Victorian Caravan Parks Association.** Find a Caravan Park anywhere in Victoria and activities and things to see in that region. So Helpful.



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