

# Stories from the Hood Family - Auto Wreckers

*Allan Hood*

*The following stories capture the character of life in Riverstone in the 60s and 70s and the commitment of the Hood Family to customer service with their Auto Wrecking business.*



**The Hood Wreckers hearse on a trip across Australia  
Photo: Screen Shot from a Hood Family Super 8 Movie.**

## Anonymous Driver

Back in the '60s my Dad got a phone call 10.30pm. "Hello John, this is Sargent xxxxx, we have a car on its roof on the bend opposite the cemetery on Garfield Road. Would you like to attend with your tow wagon?"

He said "Yes, I'm on my way." On arrival, my Dad found the '64 Holden Police car parked near a car on its roof.

The Sarge said "there is nobody around, the driver is not here. Just pull it back on its wheels and tow it back to your yard and I'll have a look at it in the morning."

Off went the police car. My Dad pulled the car back on its wheels, then a voice came out of the blackthorns. "Hey Hood, are the cops gone yet?" My Dad shone a torch in and asked "is that you ....."?"

"Yer, are the cops gone?" came the reply. "Can you give me a lift home please?"

So Dad dropped the fellow home and headed to the wrecking yard with the car on the hook where it stayed until next morning. Nothing was ever said to anyone.

## New Years Eve Party

One year my Dad decided to have a New Years Eve party at the wrecking yards. He thought he'd better do the right thing and let the local police know. He called in to the police station, told them what was happening and invited them to drop in if they wanted.

The party had started and the police arrived. They drove the EH police car into the yard and Dad shut the gates behind them. They had a slab of beer in the boot and got out and joined the party.

After awhile things got a bit rowdier and one of the family started throwing people into the pool. Unfortunately they also threw the local copper in too, uniform, gun and all. We helped him out and the party continued.

The next day Dad went down to the local police station to apologise. The police officer had his gun in pieces on the counter and was oiling it to prevent it from rusting. Dad started to apologise. "Don't bother apologising," he was told, "that was the best New Years Eve party I've been to."

### Cinderella Slipper

Hoody's wreckers got a call from Bowdens Truck repairs at Bourke, NSW. They needed a 6 volt Chev truck starter motor. We obliged them by sending the spare part COD by rail.

We needed to pack the motor in something for the journey. My Dad spotted Nugget Spencer's old gum boot, left behind after a concreting job had done on the floor of a shed. The starter motor fitted perfectly in this gum boot. A few fencing staples and it's ready to go on the rattler to Bourke.

I went down to the Riverstone Railway Station to be greeted by none other than Ray Smith. "What in the hell is that?" he asked. "A starter motor off a Chev truck heading for Bowden and Co at Bourke," I replied..

"I bet your old man had something to do with that packaging, fancy a gum boot wrapper. o.k. where is it going?"

"Bowden and Co at Bourke, NSW, COD please."

About six months later, Mr Bowden turned up from Bourke on his way to the Big Smoke Sydney, with a Borage gum boot in hand, laughing his head off. He said, "You Hoods have got the best way to get a laugh out of anyone. It was the talk of the town in town for months at Bourke."

### The Speedo Story - from Hoody Wrecker archives.

One time a customer was travelling around Australia and the speedo on his XW V8 Wagon was broken and we had none left at the wreckers. I volunteered to give him the Speedo out of my own XW Falcon to help him out. "I'll get another one out of the next wrecked one that comes in." I told him. (Which was only a few weeks later.)

In the meantime one Monday night I was at a training night at 177AD SQ Army Reserve training. One the way home I was driving along the road near the Richmond Air Force base and would you believe I was pulled over by the cops. I got out and said "What have I done wrong officer?" I asked.

He said, "You were clocked doing 78kmph in a 70 zone."

"I'm very sorry Sir," I said.

Then a senior police officer got out of the Police car and shone a torch light on my face. "Oh, you're Hoody from the Auto Wrecker aren't you?" he asked. "Yes Sir." I answered.

"What's that uniform you're wearing?"

"I'm in the Army Reserve Sir."

"Good on ya Hoody."

"I can explain my reason for exceeding the speed limit by 8kmph." I explained the story and how I had given the other fellow my Speedo. They looked in and could see that the car had no Speedo.

"There is no doubt about it, you Hoodys look after your customers." The senior officer owned a Fairlane and had bought many a spare part off us himself over the years.

I told them as soon as a Falcon came in that I would grab the Speedo out of it. I'm not a lead foot and I take it easy.

#### Like Father Like Son

Back in the '70s I was a fireman in Rivo's NSW Brigade. We went on a fire call to Clarke Street Rivo. While heading northward down Garfield Road, the clutch blew up. We turned into Clarke Street and called on the radio for a recovery truck to tow us back to the Fire Station.

It was getting late in the day so I asked Peter Aldridge, our Captain, if I could get a lift back to our wrecker where we had a 6 ton scrap truck that I could use to tow the fire truck back to the station. He said "sounds good."

Anyway we got back to the wreckers, hitched up the Flat Top to the fire truck and made it back to the station ok.

Just recently, I asked another older retired fiery Bill Barnett about it he said, "Hoody's Wreckers to the Rescue." He also said "Like Father Like Son. Once a Towie, always a Towie."

#### The Fire Fighting "Branch"

Back in the '70s while in the Army Reserves, you had to do two weeks basic training. I ended up doing my two week stretch at a place called the Bardia Barracks at the Ingleburn Army camp. (This has since been flattened and sold for residential development, very sad).

While at the camp, one night one of the twelve bed barracks caught fire. Next thing everyone called out "fire, fire, fire". I automatically kicked into gear as a trained NSW Fireman. I was wearing only a pair of shorts and a blue singlet and raced over to where the fire was. They had a 2.5 inch hose rolled out, but no brass branch (nozzle) in the fire hose box. So I raced back to our barracks, threw open the FH Box and grabbed the branch. I raced back, to the fire, screwed the Branch onto the hose and sang out "WATER". Someone turned on the water and I rolled out the hose to make sure there were no kinks in it and started to put out the fire.

Anyone who was involved in the fire was taken to hospital that night to get checked out for smoke inhalation, including me. The next morning when I returned to my barracks, I walked in and the eleven other soldiers asked, "how did you know what a branch was Padre?" (Padre was what they nicknamed me.) "Because I'm a trained NSW Fireman." "What, you're a fire fighter?" Then they all started to clap and cheer me. I felt humble and embarrassed. You do what you have to do to help out.

### Rusty Flattened Jam Tin

One day we were on a driver training exercise in Army Reserve in the Hawkesbury area. We had about ten trucks, Land Rovers, 'D' series Ford 6 wheel drive troop trucks etc.

I ended up with other troops in the back of a D series on wooden seats, not very comfortable. The convoy came to a halt. I thought to myself, "what's going on?" I got out and wandered up to a Land Rover (nice comfortable seats, Officers only), with the bonnet up. I was greeted by Corporal Skinner (a lady soldier). "Ah, Private Hood, you must know something about how to fix a broken down truck coming from a car-wreckers."

"I'll give it a try Corporal Skinner," I said. As I had walked up to the Land Rover I kicked a piece of rusty jam tin under my boots. "What's happening anyway?" I asked.

"It won't start, someone stalled it and it now it won't start."

I look under the bonnet. They had the ignition turned on and out of gear, so I picked up the rusty jam tin and arced it across the two terminals on the solenoid and she started up straight away, claps and cheers again. I felt embarrassed and humbled.

"Private Hood, where is your kit?" asked the Corporal

"In the 'D' series." I answered

"Well go and get it, I want you in this Land Rover in case it breaks down again." So I went and collected my kit and travelled the rest of the trip in the comfortable seats.



**The Hood Auto Undertakers hearse near the Cenotaph in Riverstone.**

**Photo: Neil Bromby.**