

1900

1910

1917

1922

1927

1931

1932

1936

1939

1942

1949

1959

1960

1962

1968

1970

1975

1985

1987

1996

2008

# AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT

**The slowly turning wheels of the paddle steamer SS Royal** play a rhythm in the waters of the legendary Murray River, the effect being both anticipatory and soothing. The pink and grey galahs are sleepy, yet trusting, as they awake standing on the branches of dead gum trees that line the muddy river banks in the early morning light.

Captain Charles William Dyer may or may not have noticed the birds squawking softly every sunrise, but his romance with the land stayed with him for a lifetime, and perhaps may have been the greatest legacy that he passed down to the next one hundred years of Dyers that would follow him.

Although Captain Dyer's son Leo, after spending the bulk of his life in road transport, was regularly haunted by his earlier life on the river, in his later years he would often warmly reminisce with his children stories and times about his life on paddle steamers on the great Murray River.

It was at the young age of 19 that Leo Dyer followed his older brother Charlie into the First World War where they actually served

together in the same battalion in France for a brief period. Sadly, Leo would eventually return home to life on the paddle steamers without his big brother Charlie, who was killed in action in La Barque, France in 1917.

Following the war Leo purchased the paddle steamer SS Arcadia and went to work with his wife Annie and three children on the Murray River. As road and rail infrastructure improved life became even harder for paddle steamers. Leo eventually went to work with his eldest brother Dick in road transport, after Dick had suddenly taken ill with pleurisy and subsequently been hospitalised for three months.

When Dick recovered and returned to work he informed Leo that there was no money to pay him, to which Leo replied, "Well then it looks like you've got yourself a partner." Thus Dyers Brothers Transport was born. Neither Leo nor Dick could have possibly imagined the chain of events that would set the mould for the next three generations to come.

As a business it has exceeded all

expectations. From generation to generation it has grown and expanded. It holds to firm family traditions with a sense of strong ethics that have so evidently been handed down from father to son. And perhaps, the business is a direct reflection of the family and its enduring values.

As fate would have it, for a span of more than one hundred years, and over four generations, two world wars and a depression, this convoluted business, and equally convoluted family, are still successfully evolving. From the paddle steamers in the early 1900s, to the first two trucks in 1927, the size of the business is impressive, where they now turn over, well ... a hell of a lot.

As their story unfolds and picks up speed, you will come to know the Dyer family from one page to the next and you will find yourself, as I did, admiring the tenacity woven through the story of a family that has essentially become a dynasty in their own right.

In the present day the Dyer family business lives strong through Graeme Dyer's sons Scott, Greg and David, all with an equal

share in the business as it continues to grow from strength to strength. More importantly, in pursuing this growth, the emphasis has been on the how the business grows, rather than focusing on the revenue and the profits it can take.

Today, as I rest my elbows on Graeme Dyer's bleached timber kitchen table and listen to his quiet voice, I am immersed in a story that is both captivating and compelling to me for so many reasons. The triumphs, the tragedies, the losses and remarkable achievements parade past in glorious colour and detail. My heart soars, and breaks, and experiences everything in between.

The story of this extraordinary family, where family means everything, lies within the pages in your hands. The Dyer story is one of inspiration, heartache, hardship and family that serves as an insight to those standards and values we would all aspire to.

