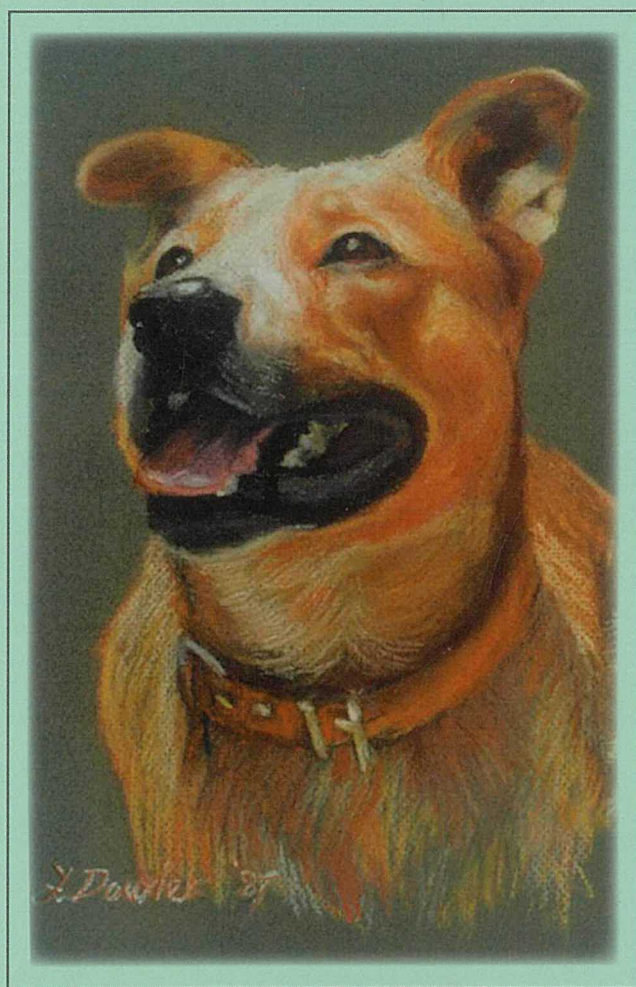




Hendrixthe Dog

1986 - 2003



Hendrix learned to ride on a motorcycle as a pup. In those days, I rode two bikes, a Norton 850 Commando, and a restored 1949 Matchless 500 Single with a Dusting sidecar.

During the winter respite from the fishing boat, I would work driving a truck for the family concrete business, and would ride to the depot on one of the motorcycles.

Hendrix did not like to be left alone when I worked, and devised a very clever strategy to ensure that I would not leave home without him. He soon learned that me putting on my beefy brown Gardener brand RM Williams work boots was a sign that I was mobile, and that he was at risk of abandonment. The cogs turned in Hendrix's analytic mind, and he put two and two together. He deducted that if he took possession of one of the boots, he had control of my every move. A pattern emerged. When preparing to depart in the mornings, I began to notice that one of my boots was often missing. Wherever I found Hendrix sleeping - on the porch, under the bed, in the shed - I would also find my boot, placed comfortably under his head, guarded with a searching eye.

Once roused and alert, Hendrix would follow me about the house as I organized myself. Once he realized departure was close, he would sit in the driveway, blocking my exit, and study my choice of transport. If the weather was cold, wet and uncomfortable, and I wheeled the Norton solo out of the shed, Hendrix would cringe and skulk back towards the shed with a sad, disappointed expression. I would be firm, "Get up on the tank, don't be a wimp." Hendrix rarely responded. He had learned to use my good nature to his advantage.

Once I relented, and wheeled out the Matchless with its comfortable and sheltered sidecar, his attitude would change in a moment and he would leap into his carriage with glee and snuggle up into the sheltered nose, ready for a day of adventure as my offsider in the concrete truck.



Hendrix

...off to work



Hendrix was a superb jumper; he had the genes and he had the inclination. A red heeler Staffordshire cross, he was squat, powerful and adventurous to a fault. He would often leap the suburban backyard fence to find company at the local school, especially during break time, when the sound of the local siren was his cue to awake from slumber and seek adventure.

An impromptu road trip to Wentworth Rodeo gave Hendrix a good opportunity to demonstrate his jumping prowess. The wife of a friend of mine hailed from Wentworth, and this gave us the idea of a road trip and some fun. The green F100 truck was packed with friends, including Hendrix the dog, and off we went.

On arrival, Hendrix was left to mope in the truck and gaze sadly at a "Dogs Prohibited" sign, while we walked up the track to the rodeo. A short way in, however, another sign presented Hendrix with an escape opportunity: "Dog jumping competition today."

After some inquiries, I returned to the car, and Hendrix was on his way to his first rodeo. There were distractions galore - ten-gallon hats and checkered shirts, monster Utes and some fine country girls, and soon a rowdy scuffle. Some louts had bumped a pregnant woman and push led to shove.

A woman on the microphone interrupted the bucking horse crowd: "Any of you thinking of joining the fight at the front gate, please stay where you are."

We quickly joined the fight at the gate with the rest of the rodeo crowd, while Hendrix wagged his tail excitedly. The fight slowed down, but Hendrix still quivered with enthusiasm.

Hendrix loved the rodeo. Soon he was registered and the jumping competition began. An adjustable gymnastics horse had been set up as the jump, and the idea was that each dog owner would encourage their dog to chase a ball that was thrown over the horse, with successful jumpers going through to the next round. From the coaching, it was clear that some of these animals had been well trained for the event. Jumping dogs were receiving last minute instructions and encouragement. There were twitchy-looking kelpies, intelligent-looking collies, and a very nervous-looking whippet that looked like it could jump vertically over a cow if given the slightest scare.

The competition was strong. The first round saw several of the contenders drop out. Some lacked the physical ability, and others the intelligence to compete. Hendrix, however, took to the track with gusto and flair. With a fast, loping stride, he pursued the tennis ball like it was his last meal, and cleared the horse jump to the sounds of hoots and cheers from the colourful crowd. Hendrix had appeared the underdog, but soon became the crowd favourite. His main threat, the nervous-looking whippet, seemed to shake with fear. The jump was nearly two meters high now, and only the whippet and Hendrix remained in the competition. Hendrix contemplated the towering horse, ran, and leapt. He landed standing on the horse, surveyed the cheering crowd from up above, and then leapt off. He soon held the ball victoriously in his mouth. The crowd cheered, but the whippet also cleared the jump.

Hendrix contemplated the seemingly impossible task ahead of him. The ball was thrown. Hendrix paused, then turned and ran back to the amazed crowd, swinging past the horse, and claiming the ball. He won second prize, as well as the hearts of the crowd, who appreciated his intelligent approach to securing the ball. He gloated in his celebrity status for the remainder of the day. He was greeted and patted with affection by well-wishers everywhere he travelled. I bet many in that crowd still flash a smile when they remember the day that Hendrix, the underdog from town, jumped his way into their lives.



Hendrix ...at the rodeo



Autumn time in Adelaide. The air is clean, the sky is blue, and the share house comes to life with the usual morning shuffles and groans. Hendrix's ears twitch and his eyes dart in anticipation. The housemates chat and there are smiles of agreement, there is to be a road trip through the twisted and rain-washed valleys of the Adelaide Hills. The classic green 1957 F100 truck is soon filled with nodding heads and wagging tails. The cab looks like the prop for a puppet show.

Hendrix the dog has a special guest. My girlfriend's red heeler has been hijacked for the ride, and Hendrix does not seem to be impressed. He prefers the company of humans and their undivided attention. What a day! We roll along, with the breeze through the open windows and our elbows out, our favourite tunes swept away by the wind. We pass the Gorge Road swimming hole, south of Kangaroo Creek Dam, onto the Birdwood Motor Museum, and stop for a country pub beer. At the Whispering Wall, Hendrix is startled and confused by our echoing calls and we all laugh at his antics. Then, from Williamstown to the gentle slopes of the Barossa Valley, a visit to the famous working cooperage of the Yalumba winery, and we head home through Lyndoch and Gawler.

I am so happy with this splendid adventure that I decide to share my joy with my girlfriend who has been working as a nurse at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. My happiness is not contagious. She has been working all day, while I've been at play. To make matters worse, she has returned to an empty house. There is an argument, then the statement, "I don't care about you. I just want my dog." The phone goes dead.

Feelings of guilt and anger, then revenge and trickery. I call her dog a cab. The cabbie has a laugh at my story, and is happy to assist. The confused looking red heeler is bundled into the car, the smiling cabbie is tipped, and the cab roars off. I retreat to the lounge and a comfortable fire with Hendrix, along with a bottle of beer and my giggling friends.

When we call on my girlfriend the next morning, both Hendrix and I are wearing cheeky grins. Her frosty welcome melts and we are soon chuckling over the idea of using a taxi to transport one's dog.

The incident opened up a whole range of new freedoms and opportunities for Hendrix and I, and soon Hendrix had become a frequent user of public transport.

Often, when travelling home to the foothills after working at the port, I would stop at a city hotel for an after work drink. Hendrix would sit outside the pub and welcome patrons. He often found a friend to throw a stick and pat his head, and often a friend driving by would see him from the street and drop in to join us.

On a Friday or Saturday afternoon, these after work refreshments would sometimes develop into a big night out, and we would change venues to see a live band. Although entry restrictions were not as vigorous in those days, dogs were denied entry. So Hendrix, after sitting and playing outside the front bar for several hours, would have to go home.

Over time, Hendrix became the seasoned traveler. We would call him a cab, and onlookers would stare in astonishment as he leapt into the open door of his chauffeured transport. He would place his red paw on the door's armrest and lay his head on the window, like a very important pooch. The cabbie's shock would be eased with a tip, and directions given to the unlocked front door of our house, where Hendrix would be duly delivered. When I returned home that night, I would find him safely asleep on the couch. Hendrix was a very independent friend.

Hendrix

....Taxi Ride



August 1989. The fishing season has ended and the boat is scrubbed up and safe in its marina berth. There have been lashings of rain in the north and Lake Eyre is full, and my friend Mick and I decide to take a road trip and investigate. The swags are loaded into the ute and Hendrix the dog joins us in the cab, tail wagging and panting with excitement. We are bound for the Oodnadatta track, destination Lake Eyre. I was worried about the heavy winter rains, and the mud we would encounter. "No worries mate," says Mick, "I've done this all before, and there will be plenty of grey nomads up there in their flash four wheel drives and tow gear, happy to give us a hand if we get stuck. They can hook us up, and we can lay back and enjoy the ride."

And that's pretty much what happened.

Lake Eyre was a wonderful sight, then we were back on the track, onwards towards Marree and Williams Creek, stopping for a beer at the pub. Several times the sliding and lurching ute comes to a grinding halt in the thick mud, and we are rescued by the smiling nomads, and towed back to traction. Hendrix loves the adventure, and runs between the vehicles like a general controlling the troops. We meet some wonderful people, and often share a campfire and a cup of tea with our rescuers in the evenings. Hendrix the dog receives a lot of attention, and loves to play with his new friends.

After lunch at Williams Creek we kick the tyres, ask Hendrix his opinion, and decide to take the Stuart Highway on to Alice Springs where we plan to surprise two girls we know from our home town of Adelaide that are staying at Green Leaves Caravan Park. One of the girls has a cute blue heeler that I know Hendrix is keen on after they met the previous summer at Carrickalinga Beach, south of Adelaide. We are looking forward to Hendrix's excitement when they are reunited.

We arrive in Alice Springs on the Friday night and there is much laughter and surprise. Hendrix is looking very happy to have a canine companion. We head out to the tavern for a beer, grab some supplies, and head back to our campsite to fire up the barbeque.

Stories around the fire. Hendrix doesn't normally enjoy the company of other dogs, but now he has a spark in his eye. The next day we join the girls in their Land Cruiser troop carrier and take in the local sights - Ross River, King's Canyon, and other beautiful places.

On the Tuesday, Hendrix and his girlfriend are left with the girls while Mick and I take a scenic flight over the Olgas and Uluru. Hendrix whimpers in frustration when we leave, it seems he is eager to fly too. He will get his chance. We decide to load the ute on the train for the trip home. The train departs at 5pm, so we leave the ute and go for a beer with the girls. Back at the station for farewells and the trip home, there is a fuss. The loading officer spots Hendrix. "You're too bloody late to check your dog in, mate. You should have been here an hour ago. No bloody way."

What now?

We leave Hendrix with his companion and give the girls money and instructions to book him on a flight to Adelaide, where my brother Alan will pick him from the airport. As we board the train, I look back to see Hendrix smiling with his head cocked - he gets to spend an extra day with his girl, and gets to fly home. This is the first of many airport homecomings for Hendrix.



Hendrix ...Alice Springs



It's the March/April full moon break from fishing, the boat is safe in the marina, and I've been down at the port dropping off the usual load of between-trip repairs to an engineering workshop. I stop at a city pub for a beer, and as usual, Hendrix the dog is spotted outside by a mate driving by, who happens to be my road trip buddy, Mick. We have a laugh and a chat with the cheeky barmaids, then Mick mentions a call he got from a mutual friend who is working up at Leigh Creek. There has been a shut down, but he can't get back to town, so he's been ringing around trying to entice some mates to drive up for a visit and a look around.

Mick has the weekend free, so next morning, we fire up the green 1957 F100 truck. It's an incident free drive to Leigh Creek, our mate is happy to see us, and we're off up the road to the Copley Pub for Friday night bar games, 'Toss the Boss,' and the chance of a free beer or two.

On Saturday morning, we roll up the swags and have a dingo's breakfast. Then, the three of us, and Hendrix the dog, pile into the cab, off to Arkaroola. I'm at the wheel for the nice drive through the autumn green Flinders Ranges. As we approach the Arkaroola camp grounds, we realise that no dogs are allowed. The lads have had a few beers, and are convinced the hat and sunglasses they have taped to Hendrix's head make a clever disguise, and will get us through the reception gates.

Although I'm amused by their confidence, I give Hendrix the command, "Lay low."

He knows the drill, and jumps behind the seat, head down. We book into our cabin, leave Hendrix behind with the footy on (although he always preferred golf – easier to keep his eye on the ball) and head to the camp restaurant for a feed. We make good friends with the staff, and the camp engineer offers to show us around in the morning – there's even talk of a scenic flight. When the bar closes, we head across to the van and tent site. A surprise – our mate's brother is at the campfire. There's hugs, a wrestle in the dirt and stories around the campfire, which inevitably leads to the kind of rowdiness fueled by rum, gin and alpha kin - all sorts of mischief.

It was all innocent to those nearby, but probably a bit too rowdy for some of the more distant neighbours. All settles down, we head back to our cabin, and Hendrix is happy we're home.

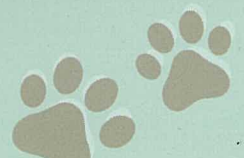
There's a knock on the door early next morning. Mick opens the door and it's the camp manager - there have been some complaints, and we're to pack our bags and get out. I'm watching from the double bed as the manager is telling Mick about the complaints, with Hendrix lying next to me tucked into the blankets. Only his head and paws are hanging out, and he is nodding his head between each remark, following the conversation with great interest.

The manager's eyes keep flicking toward the bed as he is speaking, clearly he can't believe he is seeing a dog. The door closes, I hear a few steps on the verandah decking, then a pause, two steps back, and another knock on the door. Mick opens it again. I can see the manager trying not to smile as he scolds us, "Not only are there no dogs allowed in the national park, or in the resort, you're sure not meant to have a dog in the cabin, especially in the bloody bed."

Off he marches.....



Hendrix ..Arkaroola



Hendrix the dog would often disappear for a day or two. He would go for a wander and sniff about, lost in his dog awareness. When he caught a sniff of people having a good laugh or a party going on, he would join in, jump in the back of someone else's truck and go along for the ride. I think that whenever he sensed this familiar atmosphere he figured the crowd must be mates of mine and was confident we would all meet up down the track.

He probably got the idea from one of his early mentors, a mate's dog Boris (named by Jenx's father after an exclamation that the dog was "as ugly as Boris Karloff"). Once, when we were at a bottle shop drive through, Boris leapt out of the window and into the window of a carload of rowdy rebels heading out the other way. He also saw similar behaviour from another pure breed mongrel named Dirty (after the song Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap). Sometimes it actually did work out that we would meet up. Other times he found his own way home after the adventure, or, after five days missing, I would place an ad in the local rag or pin up a wanted poster. Other times he was simply picked up by the dogcatcher and locked up for a few days. Those times he would do backflips when after two days of solitary confinement he saw me standing at the cage. I was used to having to go out and look about for Hendrix the lost dog.

Through our travels in the north we had come across lots of good bands with some great didgeridoo sounds. Often I got talking to the band after the show to get insight on the different rhythms and sounds. I got myself a didge and learned to play. Hendrix would walk away at first, but once I got the rhythms down, he would sit by and relax.

Home in Adelaide after a road trip up north, I spotted an ad for didge lessons for beginners – perfect. I went along and the bloke who taught me to play had spent time in the heart of traditional didge country. He had been taught by some elders who had given him their blessing to show other folk this meditative tradition. He told me tales about sitting around the campfire, playing, telling the story of that day's adventures. From him I purchased a fine piece, which he had gotten from Arnhem Land, a prize possession, now locked away in the poolroom.

One day I had lost Hendrix while driving up north, and spent the afternoon looking for him, only to find him asleep not far from where I thought I had lost him. He was under a tree by Madranka Springs. So around the campfire that night, I did a two-minute didge song, telling the story of how I lost my dog. I played the rhythms, and put in the sounds of what I came across in my search for him. These were the sounds of kookaburras, dingoes, a little kangaroo, a big kangaroo, an old bush donkey, a waterfall, a rhythm of how I walked for miles, only to find him asleep snoring under a tree by the spring.

Hendrix ...Lost Dog



Hendrix the dog loved riding in the sidecar, preferably on the lap of a comfortable companion. Some days, a mate and me would fire up one of the Outfits; the 500 Matchless or the classic Norton Big 4 and go for a cruise, sometimes along the winding roads of the Adelaide Hills, other times down to the sun and sand of the beach.

Hendrix often joined us on these outings, having such a good time that there would be an incident to report by the end of the day. He would sit on the passenger's lap, admiring the view from all angles, changing positions from side to side, looking straight ahead, and turning around to look behind. All my mates loved riding in the sidecar with Hendrix, but it was lucky they had a helmet, gloves and goggles to protect them from Hendrix's constant movements.

One particularly sunny morning, we headed down to Brighton Beach and pulled up beside the jetty across the road from the local pub. From his higher vantage point on the passenger's lap, Hendrix could see out over a small wall to the calm waters of Gulf St Vincent. There were some children playing cricket on the beach just below him, swinging bats and bouncing balls along the water's edge.

Eager to join the match, Hendrix took a quick look left and right to make sure no cars were coming, took off across the road, and leapt over the three-foot wall. I would love to have seen his face as he cleared the wall. As smart as he was, what he couldn't see was that we were a good three or four meters above sea level. What he had just cleared was not a small step, but a retaining wall. We saw him go, with no chance of stopping, and expected the worst. When we looked over the wall, he was sprawled on the sand, a red starfish-like figure. However, Hendrix took no damage, although he was perhaps a little winded and bruised. Like a seasoned sportsperson, he got up, shook himself off, and hurried off to take his place in the game.



Hendrix

*Incident Report:
High Jump*



Another day in autumn, after a ride through the Adelaide Hills, we were heading home along Chain of Ponds. The evening sunlight filtered through the Eucalypts and reflected off the water. This time, it was a different mate in the sidecar, but Hendrix as usual was sitting upright on his lap, enjoying the fresh air in his face. He kept his paws up on the dashboard, leaning into each bend like the pillion in a motocross rally. He kept an excited eye on any farm animals we passed, particularly on the cattle. Being part Australian Cattle dog, Hendrix had always wanted to be a farm hand. He was obviously looking for an opportunity to prove his skills, and before long, he saw his chance. As we came around one of the bends in the road, the excitement became too much. With his paws on the dash, he waited until the sidecar reached the top of the bend and leapt out of the car, over the fence and into a paddock of cows.

He set to work rounding up the surprised cattle, running left and right and up the hill, so that by the time we hit the brakes, spun the bike around and sped back, he had the cattle neatly rounded up into the far corner of the field. We parked the bike and jumped into the field ourselves to round up mad dog Hendrix. Half way across, we met the slightly confused farmer, who looked as though he was not sure if he should be angry or amused. If it had just been a stray dog in his paddock, he may have just been angry, but he had seen the whole thing. He began telling us how the dog had leapt from the sidecar, over the fence and started rounding up cattle. As if he had been the only witness.

While we tried not to laugh, Hendrix sat looking up at us; proud of his afternoon's work and clearly believing he had saved the farmer a lot of trouble. We picked him up and bundled him back into the sidecar with the farmer chuckling, "keep a better hold of him next time."

As we drove away, we looked back to see the farmer walking away from us across the paddock, still scratching his head.



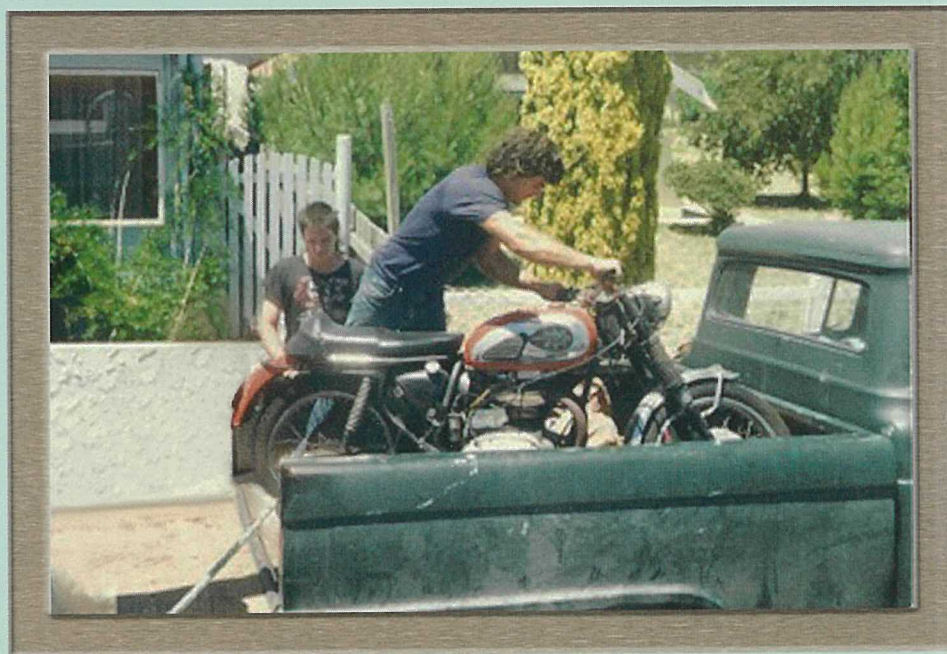
Hendrix

*Incident Report:
Cattle Dog*



Like all dogs, Hendrix loved riding in the back of a Ute, or more regularly, the back of my 57F100. One weekend, I had the job of delivering a mate's 1969 BSA lightning to a workshop. To make the job easier, I had removed the tailgate from the truck. On the way down, Hendrix and I were together in the cab, however on the way back, there were a few mates to drop off, so Hendrix happily jumped in the back of the truck. About half way home, I looked in the rear view mirror; no dog. I stopped the truck, jumped out, and looked down the road. No sign of him. I looked closely at the tray. We had failed to notice the big puddle of oil in the middle, which now had a clean shiny streak through the centre. It was obvious what had happened. A few kilometres back, there would be a sponge-like mutt limping down the back streets, his previously red fur turned black with oil. I would love to have seen his face as his paws began to lose their grip with every gear change, and he slid further and further towards the back of the truck.

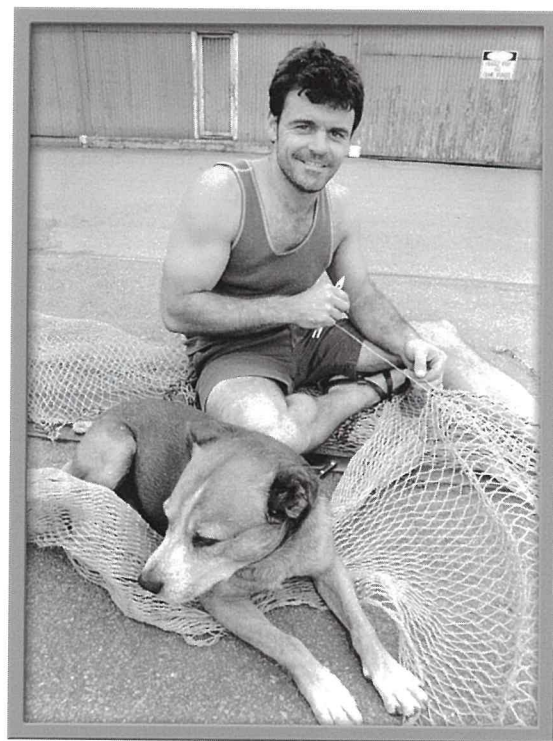
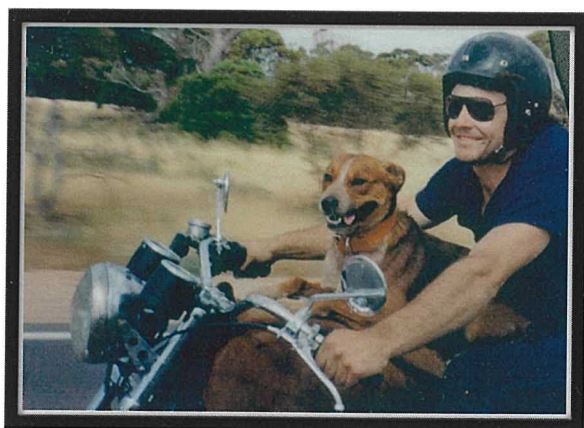
We turned the truck around and attempted to retrace our route, but there was no limping dog to be seen. After driving about, I heard a whistle blow, and the sound of a ball being kicked. I knew my dog. There was an oval around the corner, and sure enough, there was Hendrix, in full gallop down the field. The soccer game now had an extra player. Slightly embarrassed, I marched onto the field to retrieve mad dog Hendrix. He was right in the middle of the play, clearly believing that he was helping his team of choice to victory. I grabbed Hendrix, apologizing to the obviously upset umpire. As a disappointed Hendrix and I left the field, I could see that some of the players seemed amused, and others annoyed, depending on the colour of their socks. We made a quick exit, realizing that they would soon discover that their ball was now covered in slippery black oil.



Hendrix

*Incident Report:
Team Player*





Hendrix

