

■ vet speak

Eddy and the 'Thunderbox'

AT OUR place we always know when a thunderstorm is coming, because Eddy the golden retriever will be under the desk in our little office.

The funny thing is that Eddy is not our dog. Our dog, Vince, couldn't care less about storms.

Eddy is our neighbour's dog and lives a kilometre away. For some reason he feels more secure in the small enclosed space under our desk.

Noise phobias are common in dogs and can be triggered by storms, but also by fireworks and gunshots.

When dogs 'over-react' with fear they may pant and pace, or want to stay very close to you. In more severe cases they might get extremely agitated and panic.

Some will chew through screen doors and others will run for many kilometres.

With our recent weather, and more to come through summer, it is timely to think about a strategy for managing your dog if it is storm-phobic.

Firstly, provide a refuge – like a wild dog's den – where your dog can 'hide out'.

This is what I call the 'Thunderbox', and it might be a kennel or even a deep cardboard box. If your dog is an indoor dog, make sure it can get indoors without doing its own carpentry work and then provide it with a 'Thunderbox' inside.

You can also use 'Dog-Appeasing Pheromone' (DAP) diffusers to help it relax.

Also there are certain drugs which are useful to reduce anxiety levels.

These can buy time while you use retraining techniques such as 'desensitisation' and 'counter-conditioning' to cure the problem.

This involves the careful use of CD audio recordings of the scary sounds until the dog learns to relax rather than panic.

If your pooch exhibits storm phobia, talk to your vet about how you can make the storm season less traumatic.



FAMILY CELEBRATION: Percy Sheaffe, who has just celebrated his 90th birthday, with wife June, son Paul and daughter Debra. Mr Sheaffe's family settled in the Goonengerry area and ran a dairy farm. Mr Sheaffe owned the Sheaffe Bus Company for many years.

Percy's life on the buses

By MEGAN KINNINMENT

ORCHIDS and buses may seem an unusual combination, but these two things have been a passion of Brunswick Heads man Percy Sheaffe for most of his life.

Mr Sheaffe, who has just celebrated his 90th birthday, is well-known in the region for starting up the Sheaffe Bus Company, which operated between Murwillumbah and Lismore in the 1950s to 1969.

The Sheaffes are a pioneer family who set up a dairy farm on 400 acres in Goonengerry, and it was here that Percy Sheaffe was born in 1917, the eldest of six children.

After being taught to drive on the family farm, Mr Sheaffe first started driving trucks as a teenager, then as a young man bought his first bus.

In 1950, Mr Sheaffe moved to Mullumbimby, where he married June. Together they started the Sheaffe Bus Company, with the bus shed at the back of their Stuart Street property.

One of their first bus drivers was the late Stan Robinson, who went on to create the well-known Stan Robinson Removalist business in Mullumbimby.

At its peak Sheaffes operated a fleet of 13 buses and used to do several runs a day, from Goonengerry to Mullumbimby, Newrybar to Lismore, Murwillumbah to Lismore, and Mullumbimby to Brisbane.

Sheaffes was the biggest bus company in the region until Kirklands took over the New England Service in the late 1960s.

Mr Sheaffe's son, Paul, fondly remembers travelling on the tours Mr Sheaffe would run to popular horticultural events such as the Flower Festival in Toowoomba and the Jacaranda Festival in Grafton.

Mr Sheaffe would also operate tours to the Great Barrier Reef and the Snowy River Scheme while it was under construction.

When the bus company was sold, Mr and Mrs Sheaffe's love of plants saw them opening a plant nursery in Brunswick Heads, where Percy would also practice his orchid-growing skills and June operated a florist shop.

Mr Sheaffe was highly regarded in the orchid-growing community, becoming an orchid judge.

The couple were also heavily involved in the Anglican Church community for many years as lay readers, both in Mullumbimby



ABOVE: Percy Sheaffe (right) takes delivery of a new bus in Mullumbimby, circa 1960.

RIGHT: Percy Sheaffe with his certificate for 56 years continuous attendance at the Mullumbimby Rotary Club.

by and Brunswick Heads.

Mr Sheaffe helped shape Brunswick Heads into the popular destination it is today through his work with the Brunswick Heads Progress Association and in helping tidy up and restore the Torakina Park area.

Several years ago, Mr Sheaffe was honoured for his work with Mullumbimby Rotary with a special award recognising 50 years of continuous attendance. This year he collected his certificate for 56 years attendance.



"He doesn't commit to something lightly," son Paul said of his father. "He gives it 100 per cent."

Mr and Mrs Sheaffe still live in their Fingal Street, Brunswick Heads, home.



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FAREWELL PERRY

It's the end of an era for the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter service when General Manager Perry Wells retires this Friday. Perry started with the service 21 years ago as a fundraiser before becoming general manager in 1991. Under his steady guidance, the organisation has evolved from a volunteer-based surf patrol service into a 24-hour-a-day state-of-the-art aeromedical rescue service.

Perry's passion for the service is second to none. He has driven most of the organisation's major programs and initiatives, including the 10-year aircraft replacement program, the establishment of the Brunswick Street helibase in 1990, the signing of Westpac as major sponsor in 1991 and the establishment of the Coffs office in 2003.

"I consider myself lucky to be a part of an organisation that gets positive feedback almost 100 percent of the time. I am proud of the rescue service family and I remain forever indebted to the staff, volunteers, community groups and the corporate sponsors who have helped turn this organisation into what it is today," he said.

We wish you well in your retirement Perry. You leave the rescue helicopter service in a strong position to meet future challenges and you can be truly proud of the legacy you leave for the Northern Rivers community. Enjoy your travels!