

DON BURNETT HISTORY FOR PROBUS 12th October 2018

I was born in Pymble in 1935 and moved to Gilda Ave Warriawee (opposite Knox) at age two.. My home for the next 26 years.

I first attended Wahroonga Preparatory School run by the then Presbyterian Church behind St Johns Church Wahroonga. I have few memories of WPS however one incident sticks in my mind –when aged five having had my mouth washed out with soap and water by the headmistress for apparently uttering the word “bluddy” within earshot of one of the all female staff.

Moving on to Warriawee Public School for third and fourth class I was very fortunate to be selected to attend the Artarmon Opportunity School for fifth and sixth class. Undoubtedly the best part of my Artarmon years was the task of “film boy” which entailed going into the city each week and collecting films from the various film libraries such as the Canadian Consulate. 16mm films at this time were a mainstay of the education system, the predecessor to the TV and Computer of today. Being all of age ten, this experience I found not the least bit daunting. My City experience led me on to organising fellow students to join me visiting all sorts of city attractions. I believe that it was this experience that came out later in life leading me to organise the various Probus Trips..

Whilst at Artarmon I started at age 11 in the workforce (part time) at Snowdon’s Garage on the Highway at Pymble. On Saturday mornings I was paid the princely sum of 3/6 and during school holidays my daily rate was 6/-. (Tips of course were a pleasing addition). Petrol sales of course were much different in those days . We still had a couple of hand bowsers selling such exotic brands as “Golden Fleece”, “Atlantic” and “Purr-Pull” (the petrol was dyed purple!). At age 13, I graduated to working the Christmas holidays at Wahroonga Post Office helping (or at least I felt I was) the Postmen with their parcel deliveries and on Saturdays doing telegram deliveries (mainly weddings) The Post Office I remember paid me an allowance for the use of my own bike!. Looking back it appears no one cared too much about child labour in those days.

My secondary schooling was at Shore in North Sydney- not a brilliant student, I passed the Leaving Certificate in 1952 but failed to matriculate -.First Class Honours in Geography (Third in the State) and 3b’s, truly a unique Leaving Certificate result. While not a brilliant student I achieved some success in Athletics representing the school in the Mile event. My love of Maps and interest in running led me later in life to becoming a very keen (but not very good) Orienteer= a new sport in Australia which had been started in the 60’s. Orienteering for the uninitiated involves running through the bush following an extremely detailed map, and finding a number of check points..

Reaching a legal working age at 15, I spent my remaining school holidays working in a family firm Angus & Coote the Jewellers. I joined Angus & Coote full time on leaving school and worked my way through all sections of the business, factory, mail order and of course the retail shop. As an aside I became a fully qualified Gemmologist.

As part of my training it was felt that I should travel overseas, meet our suppliers and learn a little of real retailing from the Nation of Shopkeepers- the Poms! On the very first day at Harrods I met a delightful Canadian who joined me in learning how to write out Harrod's dockets. Most members of Warrawee Probus have met this "delightful Canadian" as some 57 years ago she became Mrs Susan Burnett.

During my bachelor days I became an active member of the CMF (Citizen Military Forces). From a military viewpoint I was of the fortunate generation- too young for World War II and Korea and too old for National Service in Vietnam. I received my Commission just prior to leaving for the U.K. and during my time in Britain I was attached to the Honourable Artillery Company, the second oldest military unit in the World (second only to the Swiss Guards) However the friends made and the experiences gained in the HAC were just so memorable . I remember that my immediate Superior at the HAC had served under Field Marshal Montgomery (a customer of mine at Harrods) at El Alemain. An important part of the experience was being paid for every minute of my army experience in the UK enabling me to get married in Canada some eighteen months later.

As part of my overseas experience it had always been intended that I should return to Australia through Canada and work with a major jewellery firm in Toronto. This worked in very well with me visiting London, Ontario (Sue's home) each weekend.

Having been overseas since 1959 I returned home in early 1961 and resumed work back at Angus & Coote with my first Management role with their shop at West Ryde .I returned to Canada for the wedding in August. I was posted 12 months later to Canberra to open a flagship store in the newly opened Monaro Mall. Two years later a major change came to our lives when I was invited to join Lend Lease to manage the Monaro Mall. This change opened me to a whole new career in a brand new industry – shopping centre management. This was an industry in which I was to become totally involved over the following 30 years.

Canberra was undoubtedly the best time of our lives. New home, two new sons (now three in all) and fully active in all aspects of Canberra's business, social and sporting community. Canberra was full on.in every regard. President {and later a Life Member) of Jaycees (Junior Chamber of Commerce), a Canberra Theatre Trustee, Director of Canberra Cruises and Tours, the list goes on. As part of an increasing range of responsibilities for Lend Lease I was appointed a Director of the Company Board responsible for all their dozen or so Canberra properties..

An eventual move back to Sydney was inevitable.In 1977 I was appointed General Manager with a move back this time to Turrumurra. Retiring from Lend Lease in 1981 I was invited by the MLC to take over the management of one of their smaller shopping centre investments. This became the catalyst for a whole new era in my business life with a shopping centre consultancy and management group that at it's peak employed over 250 staff, managed at some time over 50 shopping centres with involvement in every state in Australia, New Zealand and later several

countries in S.E Asia. After 14 very successful years I sold the business to Colliers Jardine but not before I was invited to become a Director of Yeperenye Pty Ltd, an Aboriginal owned Shopping Centre and major commercial property in Alice Springs. I held this position until my retirement in 2012.

Apart from now bringing up and educating three very active sons I was able to retain my great interest in orienteering but joined another organisation one that had been a secret ambition since childhood – the KuRing Gai Bushfire Brigade. Over the past 35 years I have filled at some time virtually every position in the Brigade ranging through President, Secretary, Training Officer as well as being a front line firefighter all resulting in a Life Membership of the Brigade in 2014.

These days, now in retirement, Sue and I spend a great deal of our time at our beach home on the Central Coast. Our interests include upgrading investment properties while I maintain four Superannuation Funds (Sue's and mine and one for each of three sons and their families).

Don Burnett.

Alternatively, The John Carty version. Very short and to the point.

Lived all my life around Warrawee and Turramurra except for 14 years in Canberra.

Educated at Shore

Employed Angus and Coote, later Lend Lease and later still had my own business managing Shopping Centres

Retired 2014.

Don Burnett

Revised by James Burnett

Dad suffered a major Heart Attack on 18th October and sadly passed away 24th October 2018 at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney.