

The Reflections Continue....

We continue our selection of interviews with long standing members of our community. This time we are focusing on Jim and Betty Sawyer. If you think you know of someone we should chat with and who may share their story with us please contact Deb at the Shire. You can email ea@dalwallinu.wa.gov.au with your suggestions and your contact details. All suggestions are welcomed. Our aim is to capture the history from our residents while they can still share it.

Jim and Betty Sawyer

Trying to write an original story about Jim and Betty Sawyer was always going to be hard. In the last 2 months there has been several stories about Jim and his windmills in the media. It makes it difficult to write something that is new but we will try.

Jim was born in Perth but his parents were already living on the farm at Dalwallinu by that time. He started his education at Dalwallinu School and he said it only used to take him 10 minutes to ride his bike to school. This changed when he started high school. He moved to Rockingham to board with his grandmother and travelled by bus for an hour each way to attend Fremantle Boys School.

Betty was born in Tambellup in Southern Western Australia and was raised in Borden. She attended Salt River school which would take about 30 minutes on her bike to get to. After primary school Betty won a five year scholarship to attend Albany High and this is where she finished her schooling. She had to board in Albany but it was only about 5 minutes to walk to school.

After high school Jim returned to the farm to help his dad out in 1951 and has remained on the farm ever since. He has diversified over the years and together with Betty they have increased the size of their holdings.

Betty went on to teachers college



after high school and upon qualifying her first teaching pracs were at Ongerup and Wagin. At 19 Betty

Place of wheat and wattle....

moved to Dalwallinu to take up her first teaching placement in 1953 and this is where Jim and Betty met, courted and eventually married. Betty stayed at the hostel in town and shared a room with Gwen Hyde.

Once Jim and Betty were married Betty had to retire from teaching. Married women were not allowed to teach. Whilst she was teaching she also assisted the migrant workers to the area by teaching them English. She taught the children during the day and 2 nights a week the new Australians until she was married. They were called 10 pound poms, even though most of them were Italian as this referred to the way they travelled to Australia, not their country of origin.

A particularly beautiful memory Betty has of this time was when some of the workers were leaving and they rode out to the farm to say goodbye. After they left Betty received in the mail a picture book of Venice and Rome and a beautiful Italian scarf and pictures from Italy. The migrants had written to their families to organise this before they left.

As a team Jim and Betty worked together to not only grow their farm business but also their family. They have three sons and now have eight grandchildren, and ten great grandchildren. There are seven families of Sawyers living on their properties in Dalwallinu.

Their boys are all farming the land and their holdings have increased considerably during Jim's time. Betty



and Jim spoke of them diversifying into pigs and how Jim travelled away to learn about how to raise them as he was always keen to try new ideas.

In later years when Jim's parents needed assistance they built a unit for them to live in across the lawn from the main house. This allowed them to live on the farm until their death. The unit has since been removed but Jim and Betty are adamant, just like his mum and dad, they will be on the farm until the end.

Betty was involved in the CWA younger set but also had to give this up when she married. She was asked to judge the garden competition which evolved into the Tidy Towns. This also evolved to include the local farms as they didn't want to miss out. She has always been involved with the Pithara Show judging flowers and also Dalwallinu Show in particular judging the Children's section and Arts and Crafts.

When Jim wasn't farming he was volunteering with the Fire Brigade where he was the Chief Fire Officer for 30 years. He also spent 30 years as a volunteer ambulance officer.

Jim was behind the collection of King Browns (*for the younger readers - that's big beer bottles*) to cash in for money. He would collect them all, load them into the train carriages and send them off to Perth. This money was used to fund the Ambulance service in Dalwallinu. Jim was a long term Committee member of the WA Pig Industry, an Advisor to Cunderdin Ag College and was also an inaugural member of the WA Veteran Car Club which started in 1959. Jim has two wonderfully restored vehicles on his property if you get the chance to visit him.

The duo also found the time to play and enjoy badminton and travel throughout Australia. I asked them if they ever wanted to live anywhere else and was given a resounding "No".

In later years when you would think they would start to slow down and enjoy their retirement the two continued their travelling. Over their many years together they have crossed the Nullarbor 32 times mainly in search of Jim's beloved windmills. Betty tells me when they watch the weather they check to see if there is a place named they haven't visited; but this seldom happens.

Through the Windmill Shed and his amazing fascination with windmills which began when he was about 12 years old Jim and Betty have met and made friends all over the world.

Jim and Betty are great ambassadors for the Dalwallinu community. They welcome guests onto their farm to view the magnificent collection of windmills on a regular basis and this is a great tourist attraction for the area.

When I asked them what they thought the young people of today are missing out on from their younger days they reminisced about the drive-in in Strickland Drive. And finally when asked about what they are passionate about they responded; family, farm and windmills.

I'd like to thank Jim and Betty so much for being so generous with their time.



Jim and Betty Sawyer