

The Reflections Continue....

We continue our selection of interviews with long standing members of our community. This month our reflection focuses on Rod and Liz Donnes. Remember, 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.



Rod & Liz Donnes

Rod and Liz Donnes couldn't have started life any further apart. Liz was born in Gordonvale, North Queensland which is north of Innisfail approximately 300 kilometres north of Townsville.

Liz grew up with three sisters and three brothers. Her mother was a housewife who worked in the home and raised the children. Her father was a traffic officer and train driver in control of the sugar trains.

Liz attended primary school in Mundoo located 5 kilometres from Innisfail. It was 2 kilometres to walk to school and on rainy days she would walk barefoot to protect her shoes. When she commenced High School in Innisfail she had to take the bus to high school.

On the other side of the country Rod was born in Dalwallinu Hospital. He grew up with four brothers. His father was a farmer at Xantippe. Rod attended Dalwallinu Primary School and Dalwallinu High where he was Head Boy in 1966. He had to take the bus to school every single day of his school life.

When Liz left school she began office work for a Cane Harvester producer. Eventually she commenced a career in nursing which spanned over 50 years, either in medical or administration. Rod left school and commenced working on the family farm where he stayed for the next four years.

His career took a different turn when he was called up to serve in Vietnam. He undertook his basic training at Pukapunyal Training base located in central Victoria. Rod became a Royal Australian Engineer, and after leaving the Army he worked at a variety of jobs including, a sugar mill in Innisfail, where at one time there were five mills all running at the same time.

He later became a shearer for twenty years whilst at the same time running the CSBP depot for twenty-eight years. He also did a bit of fertiliser spreading.

It was whilst Rod was in the army that he was sent to Tully just south of Innisfail. Tully's claim to fame is that it is the wettest place in

Australia. They measure their rainfall in metres not millimetres.

The army engineers were constructing Tropical Trials units for testing tanks.

Liz was also working in Tully at the local hospital and the two met at a dance held at the golf club. They dated for a period of time, took a break and then ended up together again.

Eventually they married in 1973 and returned home to Dalwallinu. Their only son Mark now lives in Broome and they have four grandchildren and now have two great-grandchildren.

Liz recalled leaving the lush green cane fields of northern Queensland to travel to her new home in Western Australia. The couple drove over from Queensland and arrived in Dalwallinu or Xantippe to no power, no water and a million or so flies. She sat down and cried. There was no green in sight just dried bare paddocks.

Rod reminisced on how the Nullarbor was still dirt in those days. He said that after driving sometimes for miles (*not yet kilometres*) when you finally met a car you would be so excited people would hang out the car windows waving madly at each other.

The couple soon involved themselves in the many different community activities that Dalwallinu offered. Liz commenced

Place of wheat and wattle....

working at the Dalwallinu hospital but also played lawn bowls, softball and netball socially. Rod played footy until he was married, but joined the rifle club, Apex club, was involved with the Tourism Committee and loved travelling to Leeman to do some fishing. Rod continues to be involved with the RSL and Anzac Day and both Rod and Liz are involved with the Senior Citizens of Dalwallinu.

When I asked the couple what it is they miss from years gone by in Dalwallinu, they responded with 'friends, diminished services (*Liz recalls the hospital having an operating theatre where babies could be delivered*) and far less shops, (*Rod recalls having three fulltime banks in town*).

Rod stated it was sad to see the population dwindling.

Whilst the town may have increased, the farm populations have decreased drastically.

When asked about what they would like to see brought new to the area their wish was for more water, even a lake. A couple of things that Liz feels young ones today wouldn't understand or remember are Memorial Baths (*local swimming pools*) and a Duchess (*a ladies dressing table*).

Rod and Liz have a passion for travel and Rod enjoys the odd bit of prospecting. They have travelled around Australia and the world and visited such exciting places as Canada, New Zealand, England, Vietnam, Bali and had a safari in Zimbabwe.

Rod also attended a study tour with the Australian Fertiliser Association looking at different

methods of fertilisation.

We would like to thank Rod and Liz for sharing their story with everyone. We are sure this couple have more stories to tell if you were to ask them.



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