

Meet Peter Bell:



Peter was born in 1932 in Mullumbimby which is in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales although the family lived six miles away in the coastal township of Brunswick Heads which lies about 20-30 miles south of the Queensland border. Peter was the middle child of five born and has one surviving sibling, a sister who still resides in Australia. His father was a builder by occupation but worked most of his life in a sawmill at Mullumbimby and Peter remembers his Dad riding his bicycle 6 miles to work and the return 6 mile journey at the end of his working day. Although times were tough after the Great Depression, Peter recalls both his parents being very hard workers so that they could provide a good life for their family.

Peter attended school in the district and recalls a very happy childhood where he spent his days in and on the water and in the bush. He said he was rarely home during his childhood days and they were very happy times. After leaving school, he was successful in applying for a job with the Commonwealth Bank in Sydney so the country boy left home headed for the "big smoke". He found the adjustment quite hard to deal with and after about a year, he was transferred to Coonabarabran which is 300 miles N/W of Sydney where he worked for the next 2 years. Due to having to carry cash down the street, the Police allowed him to carry a gun, a huge thing for a 17 year old boy. He then transferred to the Newcastle branch for the next year but generally did not enjoy the job so resigned and moved to the Commercial Bank of Australia in Cairns for the next 4-5 years where he would relieve at remote branches in the "boondocks". In seeking higher wages, Peter obtained a job at a sugar mill in North Eton which is about 20 miles inland from McKay and in the off season, he would travel around seeking jobs to tide him over until the mill re-opened. Peter said that although the work was tough and the hours long, he earned very good money in this role and a far cry from the minimum wages he had experienced in his time at the banks.

From here, Peter joined the Australian Navy based out of Melbourne where he was attached to an aircraft carrier. His thoughts of seeing the world in this role were cut short as the ship left Australian waters only

once bound for NZ and the sailors were not allowed off the ship. The rest of the time was spent on exercises solely in Australian waters. It was whilst in Melbourne that Peter met a NZ girl and they returned to NZ to be married before returning to Australia for a brief period. They then re-located to NZ where Peter had a variety of jobs including farming at Waimate, taxi driving in Timaru, the Ministry of Transport as a Road Traffic Instructor in Gore and he spent 5-6 years in this role which he found interesting and enjoyable. His next role was as a stores officer with the DSIR (Department of Scientific & Industrial Research) and in this role, he had a weeklong trip to Antarctica. Peter finished his working life as a legal annotator for Brooker & Friend travelling extensively over most of the South Island.

Peter moved to Christchurch in 1994 and continues to live with his wife Penny in the same property in Centaurus Rd. Around 2 years ago, Peter had to have his leg amputated below knee due to vascular problems but he has an extremely positive outlook to life saying that this is the happiest time of his life with a wonderful wife. Unfortunately, he is unable to wear a prosthesis but has a power chair and a most supportive wife who assists him with his daily needs. Both Peter & Penny are avid readers and go to the Council library in Colombo St every day.

Favourite Food: In his younger days a good steak but nowadays Peter likes a lot of fruit.

Favourite Place: The Gold Coast.

Favourite Activities: Played cricket and rugby league as a young man. Nowadays, reading and visiting the library regularly.

Favourite Music: Pop and the "crooners", Dean Martin and Bing Crosby.

Favourite Books: Drama/thrillers and author, James Patterson

When asked what was the biggest risk he ever took in his life, Peter laughed and said, "Being cheeky to my mother" In keeping with Peter's positive approach to life, he said he is happy to wake up every morning and able to still take a breath.

Thank you so much Peter & Penny for inviting me into your home. It was an absolute pleasure spending time with you both. Editor.