

Geoff Pfister

Clarrie Neal

2011 saw the passing of Geoff Pfister, a person who was much loved and well regarded by those who had the pleasure of knowing him. Geoff was a long time hairdresser in the district and keen sportsman. I thought I would share some of Geoff's memories.

Geoff came to Riverstone in 1964 to work as an indentured apprentice with Brian McNamara in his hairdressing business on the corner of Garfield Road and Marketown Lane. Geoff recalled it was a wonderful work environment and with Brian such a great story teller there were plenty of laughs and funny moments. In the quieter moments Brian and Geoff would play indoor cricket with Geoff recalling chasing any balls that made it out the door and down Garfield Road.

At other times he would spar with Brian, sometimes going home with a blood spattered coat, his concerned mum wondering just what on earth was going on in that shop. Brian believed a young bloke like Geoff should know how to defend himself and organised one of the town identities, George Cafe, to give him boxing lessons.

Geoff said he had much to thank Brian for, not just for the boxing lessons, but also for the excellent training given as a hairdresser. Brian was very particular with his hairdressing and would not let any one walk out of the salon with anything but the best. Geoff completed his apprenticeship in 1968 and in 1969 he was offered the opportunity to buy the business.

Geoff recalls taking over from Brian and being told by Eric Conway that he could lease the shop for \$10 per week, the same price Brian paid, "We shook hands on the deal, no lease or papers were ever signed, and that's just how it was."

Men's hair styles were undergoing radical changes in the 1970's with long hair becoming popular. Geoff wanted to be a part of this trend and decided to do a Tafe course to learn about the new styles. At the time there were no specific courses for men's styles and the Tafe College advised him to do a course in ladies hairstyles. This advice at first did not impress Geoff at all, but after more consideration he decided to give it a go and attended Meadowbank Tech. College two days a week for three years. Geoff was convinced this was the best decision he had made regarding his career.

While studying the ladies hairdressing, several ladies who accompanied their children to the shop for their boys' haircuts, expressed a lot of interest in the course. He clearly remembers his first two lady customers, Doreen Ross and Heather Smith. He recalled Heather's radical style cut drew a lot of attention to the fact he was now cutting ladies hair.

The defunct Schofields Cricket club was reformed in 1973 with Geoff as Secretary and Lachie Lumsden as President. It became one of the strongest clubs in the competition. For their efforts both Geoff and Lachie were rewarded with Life Membership.

Geoff was a very keen sportsman, playing Cricket, Rugby League, Touch Football and Squash. He was a member of the Richmond Golf Club for several years, and enjoyed water skiing.

Geoff, who had commenced his Rugby League career as a 14 year old, showed enough promise in 1967 to be selected in the Penrith District President cup squad, along with Michael Britton and David Simpson. Their coach that year was Charlie Sandilands.

In 1976 increased business meant moving to a larger shop at Schofields, where he opened Geoffrey's Hair Flair. He kept his Riverstone salon for a few years before selling it to Donna Ceraveckie. The Schofield salon prospered to the point where he required three staff members to help him.

Requiring a larger salon he returned to Riverstone where he leased the Wattle Cafe. In 1985 he appointed a nail artist, an innovative move at the time that is widely accepted today. In 1989 he opened a salon in Richmond, selling it in 1998. In 1993 he moved his Riverstone salon into larger premises, and in 1996 he seized the opportunity to buy the two storey building that was Conway's Newsagency. The premises were restored to the style of the 1920's, the era when it was built, and the walls were adorned with historic photos of Riverstone.



1997. The proud Pfister family on opening night of the new salon.

Photo: Geoff Pfister Collection

Geoffreys Hair Flair opened again on the 10th March 1997, with men's and ladies hairdressing downstairs, and the Beauty, Therapeutic Massages, Nail artistry and a Clairvoyant upstairs. Geoff believed his 37 years hair dressing had seen the greatest changes ever in this profession. Today, hairdressing salons cater for the whole family.

A knee injury led to a change of career for Geoff as he was unable to stand for the length of time needed by a hairdresser. He sold the business to Nicole Attard and branched into another subject that he loved, photography. Geoff formed a business taking wedding and portrait photos. Later he branched out into teaching photography with friend and professional photographer, Geoff Higgins. For a period of time he also worked in the photography section of Harvey Norman.

Geoff was a great supporter of the local community and was a member of the Riverstone Festival committee since its inception. He was a member of the Riverstone and District Historical Society and he was instrumental in re-forming the Riverstone Chamber of Commerce in 1997 and held the position of President for many years.

In 2010 Geoff was diagnosed with motor-neurone disease. Sadly he passed away in April this year. In July a benefit night was organised for his family. Held at the Riverstone Bowling Club, over 240 people gathered to take part in the event which was organised by Maurie Smith.

An article in the *Gazette* of 20 July 2011 summarised some of the special things about Geoff.

Mr Pfister was remembered as a caring husband, father and friend, who did a lot for his community, through fundraising to coaching junior rugby league teams. Leading up to his final days, Mr Pfister was even able to conjure the strength to attend his final meeting with the Hawkesbury Camera Club to hand over his presidency.

Mr Pfister's family and friends said they will miss the man who always put other's needs before his own.



Geoff Pfister (left) and his brother Phillip at the 2010 Riverstone Festival.

Photo: Rosemary Phillis