

Garrett Lawrence Barry

Walter "Wal" Smith

The following is the Eulogy for Garrett that I gave at his funeral service at St Marys Church in Sydney. The funeral cortege was piped by an Irish Piper from the Cathedral down to Park Street. The piper was actually a teacher at Ulladulla High School, where Garrett's son Ben and his wife Anita work. He travelled from Ulladulla specifically, and would not accept any payment. Quite a number of people that Garrett knew and/or went to school with him attended the service. The wake was held at the City Tattersall Club, with a burial later at Castlebrook. Garrett's last resting place is about 10 plots away, and in line with the Vinegar Hill Memorial. I can't think of a more fitting location.

"I was asked by Kay to give a eulogy for Garrett, from the perspective of our friendship, escapades, and achievements that the family may not be aware of.

It has been our privilege to have known this great man, brilliant educator, confidante, and all round good bloke. We have been honoured to have called him our friend.

The following is by no means an exhaustive list, but just a taste of our friendship over more than 42 years.

My wife, Lorraine and I first met Garrett at a dinner party, sometime in 1975, by a chance meeting with a teenage friend whom we had lost contact with some years before, and now was living in the same town. This dinner was to introduce us to Garrett, who was the History Master at Riverstone High School, and the formation of an historical society in Riverstone was discussed.

Garrett was appointed the History Master at Riverstone High School in 1975, and was the driving force behind the relocation to the school of a slab hut, to be re-erected by his students, to house historical items and become a focal point for their historical research and studies.

An unexpected find occurred when Garrett discovered some students smoking behind buildings where they should not have been. His astute eye saw that the roll-your-own cigarette papers were pink with printing, and quickly established that these papers were important, gave the lads an ultimatum, show me where you found these or face sterner action.

Little did Garrett know he was about to make history himself.

He found that they were using ballot papers from the 1901 election.

Bundles of papers from the 1898 Constitutional Referendum and the 1901 poll were found in a rural shed in the Hawkesbury, and though water damaged and stained, provide a remarkable insight into the forming of Australia's Federation.

Some of these are now held in the State Library of NSW, state and federal archives, Museum of Australian Democracy and displayed at the Old Parliament House. With the majority being held at the Riverstone Museum.

Through this discovery, Garrett was able to give his students a first-hand insight into Australia's Federation $\frac{3}{4}$ of a century earlier.

During his 10 year tenure at Riverstone, Garrett accumulated about 4,000 items of historical artefacts. In Garrett's inimitable way the students were encouraged to help preserve some of the agricultural items.



Garrett Barry with friends Lorraine and Wal Smith in 2010 at the Official Opening of the Display Shed at the Museum.
Photo: Rosemary Phillis



Garrett Barry and students work on re-building the Arthur Strachan Cottage in the grounds of Riverstone High School.
Photo: Riverstone High School

With a growing collection it was important to have a home and to establish a museum, and give Riverstone a perpetual source of pride and interest.

The Bicentennial was due in 1988, and our main focus was to obtain a Bicentennial Grant to establish the museum.

Garrett had his eyes firmly focused on the original School House which was at the time the Masons meeting hall. As Garrett was the President of Riverstone Historical Society the process of getting on the Bicentennial Committee began, finally he, Rob Reilly and I were accepted to the Blacktown Bicentennial Committee, and after lengthy selection processes, the Riverstone Historical Society was successful in obtaining a Bicentennial Grant of \$80,000. This was helped by the fact that we had raised \$10,000 in fundraising. Council purchased the School House and an agreement was reached. The Museum was finally a dream come true.

A short time later, Garrett heard about the Australia Museum in College Street Sydney, getting rid of some of their glass showcases, Garrett decided that we needed the showcases, so he organised for my truck and some able bodied people to head into town to get them. But what he had not counted on was that it was the day of the first City to Surf Run, this caused panic, where to park the truck while dismantling the cases and then load the truck. Luckily he had a professional glass mover to help us.

Garrett then got a transfer to Jamison High School, and the panic was on, how to get all his artefacts moved from Riverstone to South Penrith. Again my truck came in handy and with his sons Jono and Matt, my two girls, Lorraine and I, moved his "Stuff". Garrett told me later that the Principal at Jamison High nearly had a heart attack when he saw what he had, as he expected only a couple of items, not a museum.

Around this time Garrett found a farm and historical machinery clearance sale at Yass, that may have some items suitable for our museum, and suggested we attend the sale to see what was available. On the sale day Garrett, Lorraine and I left early to get there by 10.00am.

What an adventure, the sale was in a muddied paddock, lots were not numbered, and this should have alerted us to what was ahead. We went around earmarking what Garrett considered we needed, the auction started and so did the rain. He was bidding and I lost track of what we were getting. Because of the rain vehicles were getting bogged, adding to the chaos. We were soaking wet, daylight was fading so we decided to find a motel and collect our stuff in the morning.

We got back to the farm early in the morning and started to load the truck. A woman came up to Garrett and I and said "Have you seen my pony cart?" No said Garrett, but the woman looked up to the truck and said, "That's my Cart" and Garrett fluttered his eyes and smiled his most charming smile and said "Wal, I think we should get that off for the lady".

We set off back to Sydney about 1.00pm and decided to stop outside Goulburn for Macca's.

When we got to Marulen, we went through the Truck Weighing Station and started up the hill when we got a flat tyre. Pulling over I discovered we didn't have a Jack or brace, so Garrett and Lorraine went for a walk to see if a farmer could help. In the meantime, I was able to wave someone down who promised to get the weigh station guys to ring the NRMA.

Garrett & Lorraine had no luck, and we waited for the NRMA, So began another adventure.

The NRMA guy turned up but had nothing to remove the tyre, I asked if he could go to Marulen and borrow some tools, he replied; "No, no one in the town would help me they don't like me." Garrett asked what he suggested we do, but his suggestion that we just leave the truck on the side of the

highway and go into Marulen to see if the heavy truck mechanic would help tomorrow was not an option, as it would more than likely not have anything left when we got back.

The NRMA man suggested that we turn the truck around and drive back to the weigh station, which again was not an option, as it would probably blow the other tyre, which it did. We walked to the weigh station and told the operators of our predicament, who then waved down a bus heading to Sydney and hitched a ride for Garrett as he was anxious about getting back because he had to open the school on Monday morning.

The bus pulled over had a load of footballers on board, who were on their way home from a game in Canberra, but the driver was concerned that his delay had something to do with his passengers, or being overweight. He was certainly relieved when told that Garrett only needed a lift back to Parramatta, that he was only too happy to oblige. Garrett sat on the step and joined the footballers in song. He was deposited at Parramatta and was able to catch a train home and the school was safely opened Monday morning.

Lorraine & I arrived back in Sydney 3 days later, with the truck tyres mended but that's another story.

Shortly after, Garrett, got another transfer this time to Nyngan, Kay and the boys were off on a new chapter of their lives. When the Nyngan floods came, Lorraine & I headed out to Nyngan to help clean up, but Kay and Garrett insisted they were OK, and took us on a tour of the surrounds, Garrett at the time had a Leyland P76 and he didn't want it damaged in the floods so he took the car and put it in the athletic field to keep it safe as it was the only flood free part in Nyngan. Garrett suggested that we take Kay and son Ben back to Richmond, which we did.

When I was elected to Blacktown Council I was regularly invited to different sporting functions, as my wife was not too interested I often took Garrett with me, he loved these events, and you could bet that he would find at least 2 – 3 people he either knew, taught or taught their parents, he always enquired where they grew up and went to school etc.

If he went somewhere and he would buy a raffle ticket, put a \$1.00 or 2 in the pokies, or place a bet, you could be sure he never came out of it without making a profit. Earlier this year Garrett took me to a Hawkesbury race meeting, and told me how to read their form. All I knew about horses was the nose crossed the line first, and the tail followed. I took too long making my selection, so Garrett went off and placed his bet. That bet returned him almost \$2,000 for his \$12 bet, THANKS MATE. You didn't tell me what you were going to back.

One great excitement for Garrett was when he was contacted by a former Riverstone High boy called Allan Barry, Allan was no relation but they had developed a special bond, and because of Garrett's influence, had become a very successful businessman. He had never forgotten the extra tuition Garrett gave him at a time in his life when he needed a mentor. Garrett was thrilled when he got a call from Allan to catch up.

During his last illness it was a privilege for Lorraine and I to assist him and Kay where we could.

On Thursday week ago Kay called to see if we could take Garrett to Norwest Hospital, as the ambulance would not take him there as requested by his doctor. When we got to Atkins Cl. Garrett was in a bad way, so Kay & I got him into the wheelchair and out to my car.

On the way down the street, Garrett said, "How about we drop into the Club on the way" with a little laugh," I said what do you think of that Darl, there was no answer, Garrett said "who are you talking to?" I said "Lorraine", he said "you silly bugger you left her behind with Kay".

The seriousness of the trip became more apparent when Garrett said his oxygen was running out. The race to the hospital became more urgent, and the speed limit was reached and exceeded with me even passing a highway patrol car. We reached the hospital as the oxygen ran out completely, fortunately, there was a Patient Transport vehicle parked at the Emergency door and I was able to get them to assist Garrett. Even to the end we shared a last adventure. As Lorraine said on Sunday night, "The world has lost a wonderful person, teacher and Historian and we have lost a great friend".

Until we meet again, thank you for the journey Mate."



The photo above appeared thirty years ago in the *Blacktown Advocate* of 9 December 1987.



1946 - Ron's wedding to Joan Andrews (nee Stanford).

Photo: David Andrews



Ron in his Army Uniform.

Photo: Coral McDonald (nee Alderton)