



Ron Andrews

David Andrews

My father, Ron Andrews, lived almost two-thirds of his life of 88 years in Railway Parade, Riverstone (now known as West Parade). He was born in 1924 at 35 Railway Parade in a sturdy weatherboard house with a covered verandah on two sides. The house is still there.

Soon after Ron's birth town water was extended to the houses in the street and his parents no longer had to rely on water tanks and the fickle rainfall. In the biographical notes that Ron assembled shortly before his death in 2012, he remembered the day in 1932 when electricity was connected to the house. He observed that electricity meant no more smelly kerosene lamps and no more reading in bed at night by candlelight.

Eventually, there were more far-reaching changes. The wireless brought entertainment into the living room. Ron's parents would listen to radio dramas and children were expected to maintain silence or face the consequences. The fuel stove was replaced by an electric model – no more rising early in the morning to chop wood, no more choking smoke in the kitchen, and no more unstoppable heat that made hot days even hotter inside.

Ron was keenly aware of the effects of these developments because during his childhood he always helped his mother with her housework. He also assisted his father with his carpentry and picked up skills that were to last him a lifetime.

When Ron ventured into the work force, he quickly became aware of one of his fellow travellers on the daily train trip to and from jobs in Sydney each day. He started a friendship with a striking brunette, Joan Stanford of Richmond. It was the beginning of a life-long partnership.

Ron and Joan became engaged during World War II. They were married soon after Ron's discharge from the army in 1946. Ron's notes record his frustration with the delays the young couple encountered in building their own home in the tight post-war economy. They chose a block of land at what was then 37 Railway Parade (now 24 West Parade), next door to the home of Ron's childhood years.

There is little said about the war in Ron's notes. He volunteered and served as a signalman in New Guinea. His notes do recall a chance wartime meeting with his older brother, Basil, who was serving at an adjacent base. Ron also kept a poem penned by another signalman with a scorching wit. One of the verses records that Ron – nick-named "Andy Beau" - took such good care of his uniform that he slept with it neatly folded underneath his sleeping bag to ensure that the trouser creases were properly maintained.



1965 - (left to right): Scott Andrews (David's brother), Ron Andrews, David Andrews. The boys are wearing Riverstone Swimming Club tracksuits.



1953 - a family gathering - back row (left to right): David Andrews, Joan Andrews (Ron's wife, David's mother), Jean Alderton, Freda Andrews, Nellie Stanford, Molly Stanford, Jacoba Andrews (Ron's mother), Coral McDonald; front row (left to right): Basil Andrews, Ron Andrews, Clarrie Stanford, Jim Andrews, Ray Stanford.

Photos: David Andrews

That poem revealed some key features of Ron's personality. He was a fastidious man who put a whole-hearted effort into everything he undertook. At school he revelled in the precision of technical drawing and achieved a strong result in the Intermediate Certificate.

He threw himself into sports – rugby league, cricket and tennis. Ron's league team at Westmead Tech was at the top of the competition table when it played against Ashfield in a curtain raiser to a test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Rugby league remained an abiding love for Ron. If Riverstone played at home on a winter Sunday, he would make the short walk to the park to watch the local A Grade. He was also a long-suffering supporter of Parramatta and enjoyed occasional test matches at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Ron fondly described the legendary 1951 French tourists as the best football team he had ever seen.

Later, Ron attended almost every league match my brother, Scott, and I played for Riverstone and even some of our high school matches when work commitments allowed. He greatly enjoyed the friendship of the fathers of our teammates and he always seemed composed regardless of the dramas of such a physical sport. If Ron shouted, it was to encourage or instruct. I recall him telling me to use your fend, tackle low, and run it up hard. It was good advice for both football and life.

Ron had several changes of employers during his working career. Immediately after the war, he spent some time at Riverstone's meatworks and also worked for suppliers of butchers' materials and equipment. His employers prized his reliability, his honesty, his perseverance, and his ability to relate to clients as friends. He was chosen to fix seemingly unfixable problems and to develop new business in difficult or remote parts of New South Wales.

Nevertheless, it was his family that came first for Ron. Throughout their married life, he made sure that Joan had everything she desired. He made ample provision for the education of his children and for a happy retirement in Bateau Bay. The achievements of his grandchildren were sources of great satisfaction and he never tired of hearing about them. During his retirement years at Bateau Bay on the Central Coast, Ron spent countless hours researching and documenting family history, teaching himself to use a personal computer as part of the process.

Ron described the move to Bateau Bay as the best he had ever made but he never forgot his beginnings in Riverstone. His retirement unit at Kiah Lodge was originally a base for expeditions to parts of Australia he and Joan had always wanted to visit. It later became a secure haven as Ron's health waned.



1975 - (left to right): David, Ron, Joan and Scott. (Taken in front of Ron's house in Railway Parade, now West Parade.)