

Morning Fellow Rotarians of Surfers Sunrise.

This morning, I am detailing what Rotary has meant for me since joining the Mermaid Beach Rotary Club on 10/11/1982.

I was born in the Biggenden District Hospital on 3rd July 1948, the first son of 3 of Nita and Ron Thomasson. Our farm was at Boompa, which is 30 km from Biggenden and 80 klms from Maryborough. I lived on the farm with my grandparents, my parents and my brothers. Our farm was the largest supplier to Biggenden Butter Factory with 120 Jersey Cows.

I went to School at the Boompa State School which had 6 boys and 8 Girls in Years 1 to 8. After Year 8 the students would go to a boarding school in either Brisbane or Southport. I went to Boarding School at Brisbane Boys College for two years, then to Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton and then worked on the family farm for 2 years. I then worked for the Department of Primary Industries for a year before starting my Veterinary Science Degree at the University of Queensland.

I graduated in 1974 and married Margot that year.

My first job was at Southport Veterinary Surgery in Nerang Street and after two years, I decided to set up my own practice on the Lower Gold Coast Highway, in Burleigh Heads, in a shop front with good exposure to passing traffic. At that stage, there were Veterinary Surgeries at Southport, Surfers Paradise, Currumbin and Tweed Heads.

The clientele at Burleigh was very different to Southport, as Burleigh had Burleigh Waters, which was expanding rapidly, Mermaid Beach and Palm Beach and many people were moving from NSW and Victoria to new homes with their pets. The pets needed to be hospitalised with Tick Paralysis, and then Parvo Virus happened, which was the dog's version of Covid. Dogs needed to be put on an IV Drip and confined in a kennel. Vaccines were scarce and the dogs needed to be isolated. Sites for Veterinary Hospitals on the Gold Coast were becoming expensive, and then there was the Council Development Approval to deal with.

In 1979, we bought a dog boarding kennel on 2 acres at Benowa (now called Ashmore) and we moved there and started a Veterinary Hospital. Our daughter Emily was born in 1985. I joined Mermaid Beach Rotary Club in 1982 as Margot's Father who had retired from Chinchilla, where he had been a Rotarian for 50 years, was a member of that club. The club suited me well as it had a lunchtime meeting, and by this time we had two young sons, Charles and Warrick. I became an avid reader of Veterinary Magazines, mainly from the USA and Margot and I attended an overseas conference each year. By this time, we had 4 Veterinary Practices, which we named Vetcall and Margot had become the HR person and Accounts Manager. We employed 12 Vets and 20 Nurses and in later years I had 6 Partners. None of this could have been achieved without the advances in computers, e.g. Inventory Ordering/ Control, Wages and Productivity Spread Sheets and daily banking online.

I retired from Veterinary Practice in August 2015 after selling out to The corporates who retained my Partners as stakeholders until they retired.

In my Year as President of Mermaid Beach Rotary Club in 1998, we held a Les Brightwell Memorial Dinner at Conrad International Hotel. We raised over \$10,000 on this night. Les Brightwell in his will left the Mermaid Beach Rotary Club a House in Campbell Street Sorrento which was sold. The Club now oversees The Les Brightwell Trust, which gives help to people of any age with a physical disability.

In my year we also did The Cancer Appeal and the Salvation Army Appeal where we collected door to door in the Mermaid Beach Area.

We made Donations to Numerous Organizations including Care Flight, Gold Coast Recreation and Sport, The Wheelchair Project and Headway.

I am looking forward to sharing the rest of my Rotary Experience with the Members of the Surfers Sunrise Rotary Club at their Breakfast Meetings.