

THE ENCHANTING STORY OF *Peter and Shirley Bullough*

70 years ago, Peter and Shirley met at Corrimal RSL Club and to this day still come to the club as members. Here, is their story.

IT STARTED WITH A DANCE

On a stormy night in 1952, 20-year-old Peter Bullough walked down the hill from his family home in Corrimal to attend the RSL club's Friday night dance. Peter didn't know as he trudged through the drenching rain, that this night would change his life.



When he arrived at the club; a simple tin shed at the time, he pulled off his wet shoes, and put on his pumps. "If you were any good at dancing in those days your shoes were called pumps and you never wore them apart from on the dance floor," says Peter.

That night Peter looked across the crowd of dancers and for the first time glanced on 17-year-old Shirley May Hennessy. "I saw this young lady and I thought, 'Gee she looks nice', so I asked her for a dance."

Not knowing that Shirley's parents were the dance organisers, meant that Peter would have some awkward moments on that first night.

Shirley smiles sheepishly as she recounts the story:

"I was dancing with Peter and another man kept bumping into us. Peter was annoyed and said, 'Who's this fella think he is?' I said, 'That's my father'.

The embarrassment didn't end there, however.

"During intermission, we walked across the road for a milk shake and the lady on the door told us to be back in 10 minutes. Peter said, 'Who does she think she is?' and I replied, 'That's my mother'.

And to top it all off.

"When we returned to the dance floor, yet another young man kept banging into us and again Peter said, 'And who's he?' I told him that it was my brother.

"So that was how we met and how Peter met my family," said Shirley.

Seventy years later and Peter is still with Shirley, and they still attend Corrimal RSL as two of its longest serving members.

A WONDERFUL MARRIAGE

Unfortunately, Peter's job at the time meant that he and Shirley would be in a long-distance courtship for four years.

He worked on the Snowy River Scheme, and it was an onerous job. "Once you signed up to work down there, you worked down there, and that was it," said Peter. When he finally finished the work, he married Shirley in 1956 at the Methodist Church in Wollongong.

After they were married Peter became a long-haul truck driver which again took him away from his family. "I was never home," he said.

However, the bond between Peter and Shirley was strong and his job did not stop them from having an amazing marriage together. "We've had a wonderful marriage. No problems. Everything has run smoothly," said Peter. And Shirley agrees, "We had a good life."

FAMILY LIFE

When asked what their greatest life achievement is, both Peter and Shirley confirm, "Our family."

They both grew up in the area. Peter, one of eight children, was born in the house in Corrimal that he and Shirley now live in. Shirley, born in Wollongong, had two brothers and according to Peter was considered the golden girl of the family.

While Shirley's family came from Wollongong both her parents were heavily involved in the Corrimal RSL club. Most notably Shirley's mother, Evelyn May Hennessy, became the second life member at the club.

Today Peter and Shirley talk with pride about their family including their three daughters: Kim Maree, Lynda May, and Susan Gaye; five grandchildren; and four great grandchildren.

A COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS

For Peter, a club member for 69 years and Shirley a member for 66 years, Corrimal RSL Club has been their community since they first met.

It is the friendships made at the club over the years that are most important to Peter and Shirley. As Peter puts it, "This club has forever been the friendliest place you would ever want to go."

Peter recalls being part of the self-proclaimed 21 Club; a group of 40 men who were members of the RSL club. Aside from the social activities Peter said it also had a welfare aspect. "If somebody was sick, we'd go around and see what we could do to help them," Peter said. "And the same with the ladies."



One of the highlights for Peter and Shirley was in 1994 when the 21 Club organised a trip to China as a group from the RSL. "We had a wonderful time," said Shirley.



Shirley was also a member of the Honeybees, a group of ladies who raised funds for breast cancer research. These ladies would cook and sew items which they sold at a stall in Corrimal Court. "We made a lot of money for the Garvin Institute," said Shirley. "We all worked well together, and we made good friends."

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

Throughout their lives Peter and Shirley have always been mindful of waste. As a child of the depression Peter says, "It made you very conscious of waste. I try to make things go as far as I can. Whatever I don't need, there will be friends that can use it."

When they got married wages were not much more than \$15 a week. "You had to be very careful and save quite diligently to achieve what you wanted to do," said Peter. "You can't waste anything."

Fortunately for the family, Shirley was a professional seamstress and able to sew most of the family's clothes. "No matter what she made it would be done just like it would be in a factory," said Peter, "She's brilliant at it."

THE LAST WORD

And from the couple who's fortunate meeting on the dancefloor was followed by a diligent life filled with family, friends, and community:

SHIRLEY – "It's just a normal life isn't it."

PETER – "Of course it is Shirl."