

Initial upload 24 April 2012  
Latest Update 6 December 2013

## **JAMES WILLIAM HARFORD**

James (Jim) was the eldest child of James Frederick and Hazel May Harford. He was born on 9 February 1941 at Broken Hill.

Jim's parents separated when their three children were very young. Jim was placed in an orphanage in Wilcannia in 1948 and 1949. Jim also stayed with Dawn & Bill Tucker and also was looked after by his grandmother, Flora Tucker. Flora had a nervous breakdown when Fred Tucker, who was her youngest and favourite son, died in 1957. She went to Adelaide for three months. During this time the boys were in an orphanage and Judy lived with her aunt Eunice (Schipanski).



**Barry & Jim**



**Jim**

Jim won a bursary and went to school at the Marist Brothers College. Without this bursary there would have been no money to pay his fees. Jim was treated very well at school and he was helped by one of the brothers, Brother Columbanus Pratt. He participated in sports and we have identified him in a school boxing tournament in 1953 and in the swimming sports in 1954 in which he was third in the under 13 Freestyle & Backstroke events.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Barrier Miner 26 March 1954

Jim was a good a very good student and did well in his examinations. He completed the Leaving Certificate in 1957. His subjects were General Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Ancient and Modern History and English.



When Jim left school his first job was as a cadet journalist. This would have been the Barrier Daily Truth which was owned by the Workers Industrial Union of Australia, (WIU of A) a union which favoured employing boys from Catholic schools. On the other hand, the Barrier Miner employed people from the High Schools.<sup>2</sup> Jim stayed at the paper for about eighteen months. He did not like writing about gossip and other personal stories and consequently he lost interest in the role.

Jim worked in Broken Hill with the Main Roads Department as a trainee surveyor before shifting to Adelaide. At this time he owned a pink Hudson car with a vinyl top. In Adelaide he joined the South Australian Main Roads Department as a Surveyor. He worked with them for about two years surveying for new roads around Adelaide. While at Adelaide he rolled his Hudson and we believe it was written off.

At about the age of 21 in 1962, Jim moved to Sydney where he obtained a job as a Laboratory assistant in the Engineering Department of the Sydney Technical College which later was known as the University of Technology Sydney. While there he studied for and obtained an Associate Diploma of Engineering.

In about 1967, Jim moved to Brisbane and got a job with the Water Resources Department as an Engineering Technician. Jim also undertook an Associate Diploma in Electrical Engineering

---

<sup>2</sup> Graham "Bushee" Burke

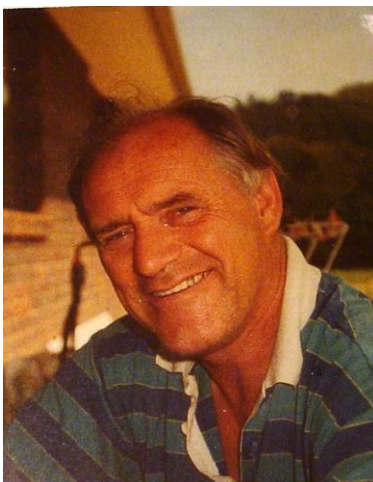
at the University of Technology in Brisbane (formerly called Queensland Institute of Technology) completing the course in 1980.

While working in Brisbane Jim met and married Lynne Anne Bennett. Jim and Lynne lived at Waterford in a house with ten acres of land. Lyn was involved with horses and required the space keep them. After about eight years Lynne left Jim for her boss at work. They divorced on the 27 May 1980. Jim was a quiet person who spent a lot of time reading. Lynne probably found her boss far more interesting. There was an amicable divorce settlement under which Jim kept the house block at Waterford and Lynne retained the nearby 10 acres of land for her horses.

It is of interest that in August 1981 Jim applied for the details of his father, Fred's War Service Record. As it happens there are actually three separate files and he appears to have received only the record for his first period of service. Neither of these files offer any inspiration if Jim was looking for good points about his father's time during the War. We believe that Jim would not have been at all impressed. At the time Jim was living at 26 Coronation Ave, Nambour. He had moved there in August 1980 from Brisbane and obtained a job at the Maroochy Shire Council where he was Manager of the Soil Laboratory. He stayed in this position until 1997 when he was 56 years old.

Jim had retained his house at Waterford and rented it to a single woman with two children. Her name was Lesley Ducat. Jim used to go down there and stay in a caravan in the yard when attending the University of Technology. On one visit Lesley became pregnant and after pressure from her parents they married at Yeronga on 26 September 1981. However the marriage did not last and they were divorced on 11 October 1991. Jim maintained good relations with Leslie and stayed in touch with their child, **Todd** who was born 13 July 1982.

In 1988, Jim met **Heather** (Conklin) who was separated from Lutz Petersen. Both Heather and Lutz had worked in Sydney for about 5 years and saved to buy a Macadamia Farm in Woombye Qld. They had two children, Kurt and Kym Petersen. After separating, the farm was sold and Heather had a house built in Yandina Qld where she lived with her two children. In 1989 Jim moved into the house with Heather. They married on the 21 March 1992.

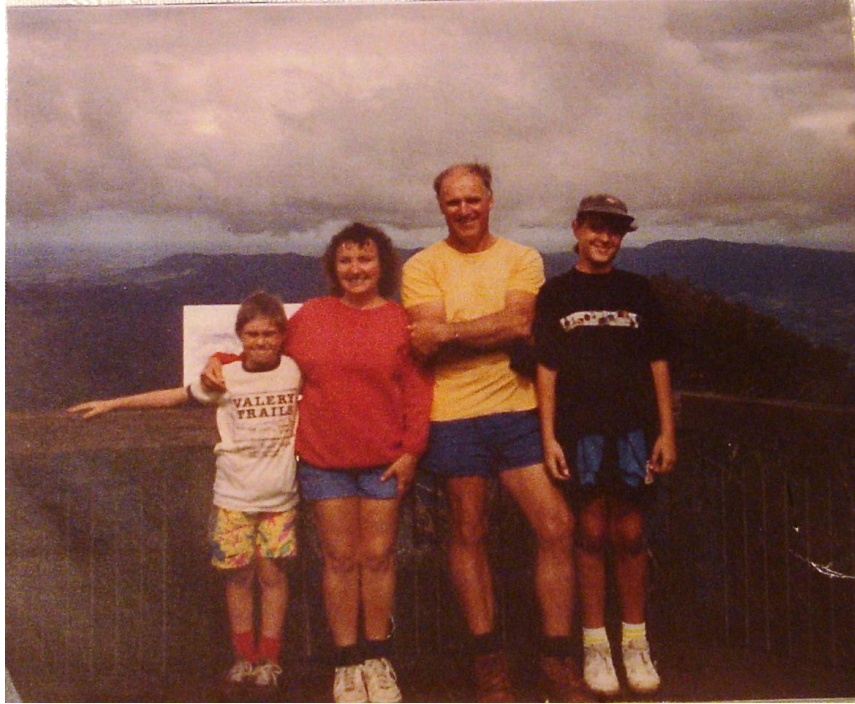


**Jim about 1990**



**Jim and Heather's Wedding**





**Todd, Heather, Jim & Kim c1992**

Jim insisted on retiring at 56 which he did in 1997. After the children had completed school, Jim took several contracts with NSW Road Traffic Authority. This involved Jim and Heather travelling very widely over New South Wales.

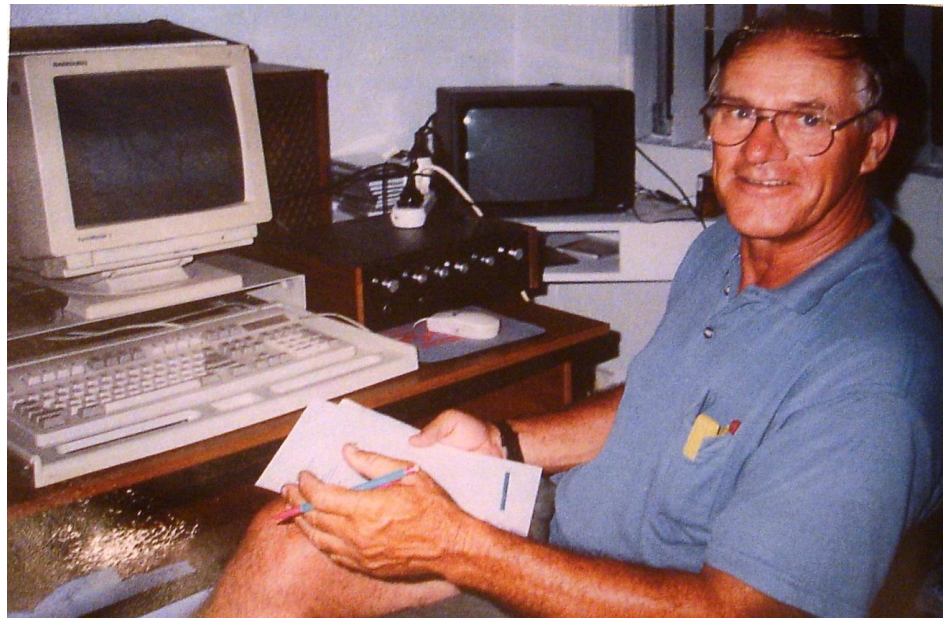
They did not want to continue living in Queensland and looked for a place in northern New South Wales. They bought land at Federal, a small town between Lismore and Byron Bay where they built a house.

Heather says that Jim was a wonderful husband who was always sensible, philosophical and logical. He loved to read. Her children loved him and were very happy with him. Todd and her children got on very well.



**Kim, Todd, Jim & Carpet Snake**

Jim had a great sense of humour and often went to lengths to play pranks on people. One such instance was the following article purported to have appeared in the Byron Bay newspaper. We have been told by two separate sources that it was in fact a set up and Jim had produced the story using Photoshop making it appear as a newspaper cutting. The event never really occurred.



Jim about 2000



In 2007 at the age of 66, Jim developed pins and needles in his legs and visits to the doctor did not provide a meaningful diagnosis of an illness. Jim had always looked after himself he did not smoke and did not drink much. He changed his doctor and he was diagnosed with Spinal Stenosis.

**Spinal stenosis** is an abnormal narrowing ([\*stenosis\*](#)) of the [\*spinal canal\*](#) (the opening in each vertebra through which the spinal cord passes) that may occur in any of the regions of the spine. This narrowing causes a restriction to the spinal cord, resulting in a neurological deficit. Symptoms include pain, numbness, pins and needles and loss of motor control.<sup>3</sup>

Jim was referred for an MRI which showed that he had Arterio Venous Dural Malformation Fistula on his spinal column. (AVM).

*An AVM is a tangled mesh of abnormal blood vessels directly connecting arteries to veins in the brain. An AVM can form almost anywhere in the brain, brainstem, or spinal cord.*<sup>4</sup> This is a very rare affliction.

Jim had an operation and seemed to be alright. However, the nerves never healed correctly from the chest down. He developed a condition called neuropathic pain. Where ever there was pressure he would experience a burning sensation, like hot water or acid burning. If he stood the pain would come from the soles of his feet to his thighs. If he sat he would experience the pain to the knees and chest. He could not have peace lying down. Jim's health deteriorated, developing first signs of kidney failure. He was in extreme pain most of the time but throughout this he remained stoic and good natured.

Ultimately, Jim could not withstand the continuing pain and managed his own death in a very well planned methodical way ensuring his affairs were in order and that no one else could be implicated. Jim died on the 2 August 2007 and he was cremated on 10 August 2007 at Lismore Memorial Gardens at Goonellabah..

We had been told previously that *"Jim was an old bushie and he had an outdoor funeral and his coffin was roughly handmade of old painted wood with an ill fitting lid. It was decorated with paintings of bush scenes, wild birds, hills etc. The handles were bits of rope."*<sup>5</sup>

His wife Heather was amused by this description of the coffin but added that it was to some extent true. *"Jim was an outdoor man. He spent twice a month, weather permitting, going out camping, bushwalking, abseiling or to the beach with all of us. He loved nature and was shocked by the devastation of the Australian bush. He asked to be buried in a recycled cardboard coffin. So that is what we did. And it was not cheap."*

**Heather has recently<sup>6</sup> given us a further description of the coffin:**

***"It was made out of thick cardboard and made for painting, Most of the family and friends did some artwork on it. Our grandson even painted a pirate ship on the front.***

---

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia.org

<sup>4</sup> brainfoundation.org.au

<sup>5</sup> Janine nee Fitzpatrick

<sup>6</sup> 6 December 2013

***And yes there were scenes of the Australian native bush with native birds. On the top of the coffin every one wrote a little private message to Jim and stuck it on the top of the coffin. Yes it was different, but that was what Jim had requested, I think it looked beautiful and very different."***



**Jim in the Bush**



**Todd & Jim**



**Jim about 2003**