

Remembering Ray Imberger (SJC 1961)

Ray arrived at Johns in February 1961 after completing his Leaving Certificate at St Johns College Woodlawn in Lismore. It was the start of a successful career in veterinary science.

He was born into a farming family in Tenterfield on 9th October 1943. This connection with the land stayed with him all through his life as did his ties to Tenterfield. So true to his country roots, he always 'called Australia home'.

Ray was a gifted student, won a Commonwealth Scholarship at school and commenced a Veterinary Science course at the University of Sydney in 1961. This was a natural progression for him as even when a boy in Tenterfield, he showed a keen interest in rural pursuits. This interest continued all through his life.

Ray fully embraced the Johns College culture and become a popular member of the College fraternity. The fresher group of 1961 was over 35 students and the fresher system was robust and active. The freshers in 1961 were an unusually large proportion of the total College population of 120 students.

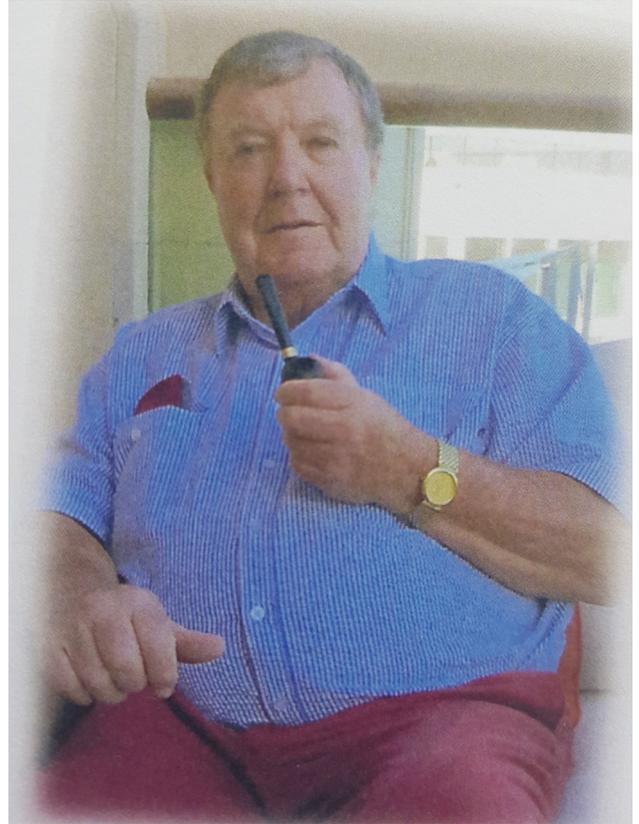
This was an era when the federal government embarked on a major investment in higher education.

It provided substantial funding of Universities for infrastructure development and Commonwealth Scholarships for gifted incoming students. This major drive for education enhancement was strongly promoted by the Prime Minister of the time, Bob Menzies. He believed education was a critical long term objective for Australia. So it was appropriate that 1961 also represented the year that the new Menzies wing at Johns was officially opened by the Prime Minister. Ray attended the opening.

A keen mind meant that Ray sailed through the challenging Vet Science course. There were 130 first year vet students who commenced in 1961 yet only around 30 managed to graduate without repeating a year, 5 years later. At the time the pitfalls of completing the course often clashed with an expectation of active participation in the College social life. Both activities were considered an essential part of tertiary education in the 60's. Ray passed both tests with flying colors.

Ray was also a gifted athlete and represented the College in Athletics and Rugby at Inter Collegiate Rawson Cup events. He was a star winger and was captain of the College XV in 1965. In addition he played for the Sydney University First XV who were the champion side of the 60's in the highly competitive Sydney Grade competition. The side always comprised a number of Wallabies. Ray was a regular member of the winning University of Sydney teams at various Australian Interschool competitions. In 1965 he was part of the Sydney University side that was narrowly beaten in the final. That side comprised 4 Johnsmen – Ray, Stuart Boland, Chris Glynn and Peter Quail. Ray was a strong running (and determined) winger who had a reputation of taking the ball and scoring tries. As a consequence he verged on selection for the NSW State team but that meant a more rigorous training regime that would have interfered with his social life.

But there was more to Ray than the Grose Farm, Rugby and his social life. He was also a keen horse racing fan, regularly attending the race track and betting on the horses. Again this was an ongoing interest that he carried through life.



In 1967 Ray and 2 fellow Johnsmen and Uni/Johns rugby players, Geoff Taperell and Bob Davenport, left Sydney to see the world and gain some work experience in the UK. Ray enjoyed the English environment so much that he stayed there for the rest of his life (over 50 years). Initially he worked as a vet mainly in Upton upon Severn in Worcestershire. Upton was home to Ray from 1969. Shortly thereafter he met his wife Tricia at a Hunt Ball. In 1987 he and Tricia moved to a nearby idyllic village Ripple. His work took him around the Gloucestershire/Worcestershire/Herefordshire borders where he made many friends. Being the local vet for the district he provided professional services to small and large animals in the area. Given his strong interest in horse racing, he regularly attended Cheltenham and Ascot race meetings. Cheltenham is 20 minutes south of Ripple and home to National Hunt racing. Ray was a member of the Cheltenham Racing Club and the National Hunt Club from the time he arrived in Upton in 1969.

Ray and Tricia made annual trips to Australia every February. The ritual entailed catching up with his brother Ralph in Narooma, visiting his friends/relatives in Tenterfield, staying in Byron Bay and having lunch/dinner with his Johns mates in Sydney. The last visit was in February 2018 – at the time Ray was in good health and full of good cheer. Sadly just after he returned to England he had some medical tests and was diagnosed with colon cancer. After some months of medical treatment Ray died in his Ripple home on October 2 2018 aged 74 years and just 7 days short of his 75th birthday.

As a testament to his popularity over 400 people attended his funeral service in Worcestershire on October 30 2018.

He was a good man, a proud Johnsmen and a devoted soul mate to Tricia. He is survived by his wife Tricia and his brother Ralph.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

