



# FOREST HILL HAPPENINGS

No 43A

President: Stuart Williams

17 June 2020

Hi folks,

Due to the gremlin in my computer eating Barbara's report on our meeting with Peter Hitchener, the report did not make it into the original newsletter. My apologies to Barbara for this error. The upside is – you get two newsletters this week!!

## MEETING REPORT

### PETER HITCHENER

On Monday 15 June, following our club zoom meeting, we then met our speaker Peter Hitchener, via zoom.

What a personable, friendly attitude he had!

He thought he may have been the only person alive before TV, but we all reassured him that we all enjoyed radio serials on the wireless, as did he.

He reminded us that TV came to Melbourne at the same time as the Olympic Games in 1956. His favourite show at that time was the Mickey Mouse Club. He mentioned in the early days there were lots of local productions, eg. In Melbourne Tonight (IMT) with various compares, Sir Eric Pearce, Bert Newton, Graham Kennedy, where often the audience had to wait years to get tickets.

Peter grew up in Queensland, joined Channel 9 in 1973 and moved to Melbourne in 1974. He remembered wearing body shirts, and suits with wide lapels and of enjoying fondues and old wines.

He worked with Sir Eric Pearce, who he said should have been a Rotarian, as Sir Eric was always helping people and doing good.

Following Sir Eric, Brian Naylor read the news for 20 years, garnering a huge following, until his retirement in 1998, when Peter took over the role. At that time John Sorell ran the news department with creativity and old-fashioned journalism.

Peter explained that the newsroom now is a pleasure to work in, mentioning Tony Jones who is so witty and funny and Lavinia Nixon who is "nicer in real life than on air"! There are 100 people working to get the news to air each night and Peter feels working there is a real privilege.

He then asked for questions from the members.

What time do you start? His day tomorrow starts as 8am on FM radio, 12.30-1pm on 3AW, then to Channel 9 until 8.30-9pm, each day is different. He attends meetings during the day where it is decided what stories to use that night; editorial meetings;

what graphics to use for each segment; the whole team supports each other. Do you have time to practice? Everything is tightly scripted, needing to be accurate, sticking to the script and timing.

Have you worked in any other station? His first job was at 4BH Brisbane and got a job in the newsroom, working long hours.

Any plans to retire? Not at present, it is up to the audience, he is having too much fun and hopes to keep working for a number of years yet.

What's the funniest thing you've been involved in? When during the news, his desk caught fire!

Anything embarrassing when on air? A number, but people are always so forgiving.

What team do you barrack for? In AFL I follow St Kilda, who invited him to the President's lunch, when he first came to Melbourne. Rugby League – Melbourne Storm, and Soccer, one of the Melbourne teams, which he didn't elaborate on! He couldn't believe when he came to Melbourne, how friendly and inclusive people were.

Stuart thanked Peter for his talk and his genuineness to engage with us.

*Notes by Barbara Williams*

## *KEEP SMILING!!!*

