

# Meet a local identity: Dick Martin's story

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When Dick and Peg Martin and family visited Peg's family at Shallow Inlet in September of 1958 little did they know that they would also themselves become residents of Sandy Point in the not too distant future.

During this visit, a chance meeting between Dick and an old friend Vic Ryan (affectionately known as "The Master") was to be the trigger for a move from suburban Springvale, where Dick, Peg and family were then living. Dick had been working as a waterside worker for the past 8 years.

Vic operated the local school buses and had for some years been driving the bus from Sandy Point to Fish Creek. It just so happened that Vic had been granted a new contract (commencing February 1959) to operate a bus on an additional route which he intended to drive. This created a vacancy for the driver of the Sandy Point bus. Vic suggested to Dick that as he was a regular visitor to the area he might like to consider moving back and assume that position. Dick readily accepted and so his long association with the Sandy Point region was taken to a new level.

As an interesting aside, did you know that a small school operated in Sandy Point between 1919 and 1927 in the area now known as Ash Avenue.

Dick and Peg were no strangers to the area. Dick's family had many years before lived in Fish Creek. His father Wally was a farm worker and rabbit trapper who over the ensuing years after a stint in Fish Creek was to move his family to various locations around South Gippsland and beyond. Wally and his wife Laura ultimately moved to Melbourne.

Dick did his schooling at Fish Creek and is in fact one of the oldest surviving ex pupils. Dick, on leaving school, worked at Grimshaw's Garage in Fish Creek as an apprentice motor mechanic. This business was located in premises between the Pub and the School. The building was razed to the ground many years ago as a result of a fire. Dick was also a very handy footballer for Fish Creek before opting to move to Melbourne to work.

Peg's parents were long time residents of Sandy Point as were three of her brothers. The Henderson family, all fishermen operating in Shallow Inlet, moved to Sandy Point in the early thirties. Peg lived at Shallow Inlet before moving to Melbourne to live with her older sister Mabel and commencing work as a sewing machinist in a clothing factory.

Dick and Peg who met "back home" were married at Fish Creek on 6 February 1942 and set up house in Punt Road, Prahran near the Alfred Hospital. Later after spending a number of years in Port Melbourne they purchased a block in Springvale on which Dick built the new family home (in addition to another for his parents next door!).

After selling their house in Springvale the Martins moved to Sandy Point in early 1959, residing initially at Shallow Inlet in a house adjacent to those of her parents and several brothers, but then later moving to a residence on John Bowron's property "Blue Meadows".

Dick worked seven days a week, which was to become the norm for many years. In addition to initially driving the antiquated 1948 Model Bedford school bus (they got better!) each morning and afternoon, Dick also worked between bus runs at CSB Motors in

Fish Creek as a mechanic, Spare Parts Manager and later as a machinery salesman. On the weekends he worked at "Blue Meadows" for John Bowron.

The road to Fish Creek was not bituminised in those days and there were many interesting trips for the kids on the bus, as Dick's son Rick well remembers. There were the extremes of nearly choking on dust during the summer months to sliding all over the road during winter. There was one time when road works just outside of Fish Creek on Gales Hill created the equivalent of a skating rink with the bus facing all directions as it went down the hill. Dick however always managed to have the bus facing in the right direction at the bottom of the hill! Much to the kids' delight there were also many occasions when they were late for school as a result of numerous trees falling on the road overnight.

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The Sandy Point township or "Playground Estate" as it was called in those days was developed in the mid to late fifties by three Melbourne Property Developers - Lachlan McInnes ("Mac"), Barry Bahen and Kevin Cotter. Adverts for it featured a bikini-clad girl with the slogan "The Playground of the South". Blocks were initially sold for £125, or £10 deposit and £4 a month.

Both Mac and Barry were well known identities over the ensuing years. Sadly both were to pass away at relatively young ages. The original Bahen holiday house near Ned Neales is still enjoyed by Barry's family to this day. The McInnes family sold their holiday house several years ago.

Dick purchased a block of land in Sunshine Rise in 1959 for £150 (\$300) and subsequently moved an old house from Fish Creek to that location for the family to live in. This seems like a bargain now when blocks are selling for approx \$240,000.

The Martins moved from Blue Meadows to Sunshine Rise in 1961 and later extended the house.

Dick continued to drive the bus (the route having been extended to include Foster) and sell farm machinery, however in 1975 an additional job offer emerged.

Mac and Barry of Playground Estates fame offered Dick the job of managing the Sandy Point Caravan Park. Dick accepted the offer and a very cordial working association that was to last many years was born.

The Caravan Park was seasonal so this fitted in well with the long school break when the school bus didn't operate. There was also a resident caretaker who attended to the cleaning and maintenance.

This was right up Dick's alley as he loved people contact and was always up for a chat!

A few years later Dick assumed the additional role as the local representative for Playground Estates in respect of real estate sales. Dick conducted inspections with clients after which any resulting sale and associated documentation was handled by the Company's Head Office in Melbourne.

Dick retired at age 65 and continued to lead an enjoyable life at Sandy Point. He and Peg would often spend part of the winter months in Queensland and in fact



*Dick Martin enjoying a beer with his son Rick. Rick continues the family involvement with the Sandy Point community as Treasurer of the SPCG.*

did two extensive trips caravanning trips around Australia.

The Martins had 5 children, Rick, Rodney, Rosemary, Darryl and Joanne, many of whom still live nearby or visit regularly. Sadly, Peg passed away in 2004 at the age of 83. This was the catalyst for Dick to join Probus -an activity that resulted in many enjoyable trips and companionship. He also played ten pin bowling at Morwell once a month and carpet bowls at Sandy Point weekly. Trips on the Community bus were also a favourite pastime.

There will be campers who have stayed at the Caravan Park over the years and many property owners in Sandy Point who will have dealt with Dick in the past and will remember him well.

Rick Martin