

## Grant Pember (1971)

By Tony Becker and Don Crouch

Grant Pember, former student, Prefect, Vice Captain of School and Council of Governor died on September 11. He was 70.

About 170 days ago I was lauding Grantley Paul Pember at his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the farm.

Part way through, I recall interrupting myself while expressing my love for the boy and said that this speech sounds more like a eulogy.

The last thing on my mind then was to consider that we would be gathered here today to eulogise this wonderful long-term friend who has given us a lifetime of friendship, adventures and so much joy.

Grant's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday circus was a great example of the diversity of social and community groups in which he circled.

From the high-end property developers and State Government committees to his favourite charity work and local community groups, especially the Second Valley Swimming association that met daily at the jetty, he embraced us all.

I can only reflect on the last 58 years of our extraordinary full life as mates.

Richard Muirhead has talked of their years together and how this fatso kid nicknamed **Yogi** ended up at Pulteney Grammar School.

I must pay tribute to Grant's parents Norma and Brian who sculptured his unique personality.

They embraced me as a son and brother as I was invited to all the family holidays and birthday functions.

Grant, Wendy, Hayley, Georgie and Richard, have over the years embraced the Becker and Walter families to continue that fine tradition. I know that it will be everlasting.

My hero worship started in 1965 when we met in Joe Honey's grade seven class.

Sport and outdoor activities were a catalyst for both of us.

As we have seen over the years, Grant was pretty good at everything, his gnarly hands touched.

Who could forget those twisted fingers.

From prep school football and cricket, we progressed through to the Duke of Edinburgh award to canoe around Hindmarsh Island, hike Mount Brown in the Flinders and learn the art of Judo among a raft of other activities.

At an impressionable age, Grant was hijacked by his Greenacres neighbours into following Port Adelaide. Geof Motley, Grant's hero, died on Tuesday.

His passion has been handballed to seven year old grandson Gillan.

He was a key defender for the 1971 Pulteney First XV111 that set the record for an undefeated season and a premiership player for the Old Scholars.

As a studious influencer with a million projects on his mind, Grant was always leadership material.

It was a natural progression for him to be appointed a prefect, a house captain and vice-captain of school.

Little did we know then that he would eventually be appointed to the school council.

But there was a growing pain to break free of convention.

A transformation occurred when

1. Richard Muirhead and he bought an old motor bike and side car to ride to school
2. Surfing became the latest passion. With mates he bought a Holden FE panel van that they painted purple using Norma's vacuum cleaner.
3. He joined the Geology class and purchased an oversize pair of khaki shorts for field trips. They became his uniform for years along with tatty shirts.

Around our early teenage years, Brian bought a bondwood speed boat and taught us to water ski at Goolwa in the middle of winter without wetsuits.

Digressing slightly, it was Grant's elegance as a water-skier that mesmerised Wendy after their first meeting on a sinking aluminium yacht in the middle of Bass strait.

Grant's love of boats – both power and sailing – led us to houseboat and camping trips along the Murray that were a forerunner to:

- Racing a catamaran off Glenelg with Christopher Walter
- traversing the Med and South Pacific with the Joyces
- Racing in the Caribbean with Don Crouch, Joe Walker and I,
- Racing on Wild Goose with Chris Juttner
- Cruising with Graham McLeay

- Greece again with Richard Muirhead
- and the prospect of revisiting the islands of Tonga.

As Grant burned the candle at both ends, I have to include Petanque, lawn bowls, cycling, snow skiing, hiking and farming on the long list of feats.

Music was a driver; His choices were eclectic and unconventional.

Early on he introduced us to:

- Alice's restaurant by Arlo Guthrie,
- Creedence Clear water Revival's Proud Mary
- and Daddy Cool's Eagle Rock.

They became anthems to our teenage freedom and alcohol fuelled football parties.

Dare I say that Norman Greenbaum's **Spirit in the sky** with its opening guitar riff became a dance favourite despite its haunting lyrics.

He's off to the place that's the best.

Grant's spirit will live on . . . in all of us!

Grants entire career has been related to the property industry ---- predominantly commercial and industrial real estate.

For those who don't know me my name is Don Crouch and I first met Grant 50 years ago when we both commenced tertiary studies doing a 3 year fulltime course at the then Institute of Technology studying property valuation.

I was lucky in 2 ways that I met Grant --- the first and the obvious one was that he was, as you would all agree, simply a great guy --- we got on well and had many common interests ---

The second reason I was lucky was that he was studious, diligent with his studies and very committed --- I am afraid that I didn't necessarily share the same traits as my immediate goals were more focused around having a good time , going to the pub or playing pool! ----this is where Grant came in handy ---as and when assignments or tutorials were due I would ask Grant how he was going with them and when he had them completed he allowed me to copy his work, which I would then slightly plagiarize the content and hand them in knowing that with Grants help I would pass with only limited effort on my behalf!

So a big thanks to you Grant, you allowed me to have fun while I studied.

3 years later we both graduated and our friendship continued to blossom to the extent that Grant was groomsman to Jo and my wedding in 1976.

In the immediate years following this I was transferred to Perth with my job and didn't return to Adelaide until 1985

In this period Grant had begun to well and truly establish himself in the Adelaide commercial property industry, initially working as a valuer for what is now JLL and then partnering with Rob Northcott to head up their own valuation practice Northcott Pember and associates

In the mid 80's Grant was appointed one of the founding directors of the then emerging property giant Colliers International, heading up their investment sales team .

This was again fortunate for me as he offered me a job on my return from Perth which I duly accepted. ---another big thank you to Grant ---he was always making it easier for me!

We both continued to work within the industry until Grant tired of the grind of the corporate life and in 1988 was enticed to join as a director with the Mancorp group – one of Adelaide's most successful real estate developers and perhaps then best known for their revitalisation of Adelaide's east end precinct..

Partnered with Bill Manos and Theo Maras, Grants success continued to grow and as a trio they went from strength to strength --- from the outside Grants analytical and diligent approach to all things real estate added another very positive cog to the already successful Mancorp machine --- I am sure both Theo and Bill would concur with this --- but equally I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall listening to, shall we call it "discussions", that would have been had by these 3 uniquely different personalities --- in particular for anyone who knows these guys you can well imagine every second word truncated with the "F" word !---by the early 2000's when Grant was around 50 he was able to realize the fruits of his time spent with Bill and Theo and life at his beloved farm in second valley beckoned and he retired from Mancorp and the world of commercial property.

But as they say you can never keep a good man down and in 2011, a year or so after I had retired from full time work we were encouraged by mutual friend, David Govey, to do some part-time consultancy work for the publicly listed Centuria Property Group--- this did however mean that we both had to undertake further studies to become licenced representatives --- at our age this was a task we both did not really relish, but we both eventually successfully completed the course.

I do have to point out at this stage I did this without Grants usual assistance as we had an independent observer in the room when we were undertaking the exam! --- maybe they had heard of my previous history!

A few years later we both tired of the corporate culture of a publicly listed company and in 2013?? Teamed up with Andrew Cain under the banner of Harmony Property Investments which ultimately now runs in conjunction with MRS.

For the next 10 years until the present we have formed what I believe has been a very successful and honest operation where we have given advice and comment to both the Harmony group and potential investors on various commercial property opportunities in SA and indeed around Australia. --- our views digressed every so often as Grants analytical and sometimes long winded review of property was completely different to my quick "gut" approach but I believe that is what made us successful.

Not content with just doing some part time consultancy work, in 2017 Grant also teamed back up with Theo and Steve Maras and once again added his wisdom and input into the Maras group operation assisting them in sourcing new development and investment opportunities both here and interstate.

I am eternally grateful to Grants wisdom and knowledge and as I said right from the beginning "I couldn't have done it without him"

Before I finish it would be remiss of me not to run through the many government, industry and community boards that Grant participated in over his many years in the property industry --- they included, and it is a big list

A member of the state planning commission

Past board member Adelaide Central Market authority

Past vice president (SA division) of what is now Property council of Australia

Past member of the state local heritage advisory committee

Committee member strategy and policy – city of Unley

Co-founder east end coordination group

Past board member Anglicare SA

Past board member of the Pulteney sports foundation and a trustee of the Pulteney foundation

Past chairman Seymour college foundation

Past board member Fleurieu Festival

Past committee member Second Valley progress assoc

Regular contributor to kick start 4 kids program and Impact 100

There are probably others so I apologize if I have missed any

Not sure about you guys but that list certainly makes me feel a bit inadequate!

I think Grant was almost drawn into wanting to be involved in committees and boards---it was almost a love hate situation but importantly it gave him an opportunity to express his opinion on matters he believed in ---and we all know Grant had strong opinions.

If I may I would like to wrap up with some personal vivid memories of Grant --- let's call them Grantisms

Firstly --- heaven help anybody who didn't listen to ABC radio Adelaide or didn't pour diligently over every edition of the Financial review --- your opinions just weren't worth listening to!

Next --- Grant also had a distinct dislike for any Queensland based property opportunity --- he often referred to Queenslanders as a mob of bastards and all obviously "part of the old white shoe brigade"

Port Power --- an absolutely one eyed supporter,--- but not necessarily a fan of coach Hinkley!

On a personal level how could anyone forget his fingers --- never have I seen a more knarled and twisted set of fingers---presumably as a result of his footy playing days ---he made Neil Kerley look like a hand model!

And finally he was an Adventurer --- he skied, he sailed, he cycled, he swam, he camped, and he travelled overseas --- he was always planning the next adventure of which many of you here today have probably shared with him

Most important of all he passed doing what he loved best --- another adventure with Wendy, with a group of close and great friends, sailing and swimming!

It may have been too early in his life but it was certainly the way Grant would have chosen to leave us!