

I am super excited and curious at what retirement will bring. Curious how this will change my life and excited at the prospect that 'time', so valuable in our busy working lives, can be spent with family and doing activities I enjoy: cycling, fishing, and outdoor adventures.

Time has always slipped through my fingers, never enough in a day to accomplish all I want. The realisation the ever increasing speed at which time flies has brought me to this stage in life is astonishing. It only seems yesterday that I was cycling eighteen miles down country roads to spend weekends at a school friend's house in Cookardinia, NSW. Time was spent setting rabbit traps in the local graveyard, picking mushrooms the size of dinner plates and taking the 22 to practice our shooting, mainly to get our dinner. Life was uncomplicated with little to no responsibility.

I was born on the day the first Frisbee toy was invented and Robert Menzies was Prime Minister. My early years were spent on sheep properties in the Riverina region of NSW. Surrounded by rolling hills and small creeks, it was idyllic in many ways. The eldest of four I spent many hours playing outside. Memories are vague of these years; however, they become clearer once I moved to the small town of Holbrook and started school.

Yearly family swaps would happen during the school holidays. A designated spot was decided halfway between Griffith and Holbrook, a place called Narrandera. Here, cousins would pile from one car to another heading off for a break from home and giving parents a reprieve from bored kids. Gorging on apricots, not always a healthy pastime, from the many trees that grew in the orchards to swimming in the channels that surrounded the property, our days were full of fun.

Always competitive, I was involved in all forms of sport, a favourite being tennis. I played tennis from age nine. Initially local competitions then throughout the region once I got my driving licence. My competitive trait was to carry on into adulthood; from breeding and racing endurance horses to cycling!

Two events changed my life, one was finishing my apprenticeship. This prompted a move to the Sunshine Coast in Qld, a far cry from the rural environment I was used to. Sun, surf a motorbike and good friends; my life was worry free and a little wild. Then, I was to lose my mother to cancer. Aged 52, she was younger than I now. It saddens me she did not meet my wife and children as she would have been an amazing, kind and involved grandmother. Death leaves a huge hole but I became more independent and resilient. And it has made my own family a priority in my life.

Alice Springs, in fact, the Northern Territory did not register on my radar at all during my twenties, thirties and early forties. Who would have thought I would be calling it home, not me! Sun and surf on the Sunshine coast followed by the rich red soils of the South Burnett, Qld with its paddocks of peanuts and stark white silos preceded my big move to an environment so foreign.

My new adventure had begun. The landscape was spectacular with colours so vivid it hurt the eyes. I had commenced a sea change way outside my comfort zone. I initially worked for an Aboriginal organisation which meant travelling to remote communities in WA and SA. But I have spent the last 11 years working as a police officer, travelling and living in this remote environment, experiencing all it has to offer.

Living in Alice Springs saw me accomplished a childhood dream of taking up mountain and road cycling. A huge sport in this region, I have met many like-minded people who share my new found passion. We are lucky to have some world class tracks here that attract many interstate and overseas riders. So, back to retirement! I see it as another stage in life, one that has to be grasped with both hands. Although my exterior has gathered the lines of life I still feel I am that kid on a bike heading out to Cookardinia!