

*The Noosa Junction story is part Aussie larrikin, part entrepreneur. It's as entertaining and intriguing as the characters that created it - an irreplaceable piece of history based on memories and recollections of those past and present...*

## The Junction Story

*The meeting of two dirt roads: little more than sandy tracks in parts; with corners renowned for accidents if you took them too fast. Taking people to other places...*

Until late in the 1950's when Jean and George Cookman decided it was as good a place as any to build their home, with a shop in front. The first business was a plumber's workshop. Whether by design or accident, it was a move to pay dividends. It was also the humble beginnings of the place we know today as Noosa Junction.

'People thought we'd never have any neighbours...' '...talk to us in 20 years time!'

In 2010, some fifty or so years later, the 25 pound investment is now worth millions and George Cookman's words proved prophetic - around 270 businesses now call the Junction home.

An eclectic blend of old-timers and fresh faces, from the creativity and passion of the foodies, artisans and rag traders; the easy-going, self-deprecating humour of the 'tradies' and the surfers who were hard to tell apart if the waves were pumping; the foresight and audacity of the entrepreneurs; and the solidifying presence of the service industries.

*Its charm is in the sum of the parts - ever changing...this is our story*

the barefoot years...laid-back beginnings...

In the 1950's and 60's no one had heard of the term, Noosa Junction, it didn't exist. It was called Sunshine Beach Road by locals and it was known, not as a destination, but as a place to go through...to go fishing at Sunshine Beach or to get petrol or a hamburger, after you'd been for a surf.

These were the times when Tewantin was better known than Noosa.

Where the Junction stands today was nothing but bush - where tall gums stood proud; nature's colourful gift of bright yellows and vivid reds were splashed across the landscape every season as the wild Christmas Bells bloomed in festive

celebration and the surrounding sandy hills were so thick with native bushland you had to carve your way to the beach. David Low way didn't exist, and a sometimes dangerous strip of sandy dirt, hardly a road in places, carved a path for traffic, right through its centre.

It evolved slowly into a laid back surf town - a community of surfers and 'tradies' in Utes – almost everyone had a dog – once the surf was up that took priority. It was relaxed, a bit rough and ready and quintessentially Australian.

Locals tell tales of friendly rivalry at the petrol pumps – put in by enterprising businesses to service the through traffic. The original Shell service station was in front of local painter, Orb Burge's house, built on Sunshine Beach road where the Oasis store now is - it had two bowsers right on the kerb. You just pulled up on the roadside to get your petrol.

Just around the corner and still operating today, the Mobil Service Station was built in 1972 Len Daddow a long-time Junction resident who lived above the service station until the mid-nineties. Len went on to become the longest serving Honda auto dealer in Queensland and with his business now in Cooroy he is responsible for many a local's new set of wheels.

Across the road, on the Noosa Drive corner where local watering hole Irish Murphy's now stands, the Banksia Caravan Park, also pumped fuel from its adjoining Ampol service station; dispensed tourist information and advice; and later as one of the bowsers gave way to fuel of a different kind, became the known spot for locals and tourists alike, for a quick takeaway.

Built around 1968, the 6691 square metre site was first bought by Ron Sadler who built both the Caravan Park and the service station. Popular from the beginning with tourists from down south on extended holidays to catch the sun; surfers chasing waves and those new to town looking for a place to start out.

Described by locals of the time as the barefoot years, the still to be named Junction was a laid-back destination, with easy access to surf, river and bush. It was alive with character and not even real estate agents wore ties.

Nola Croucher, with her husband, David, and friends Ron and Fay Cochrane, became owners of the Banksias Caravan Park and service station from 1976 till 1981.

Their first season was a baptism of fire – they'd never heard of Noosa before they arrived, taking over in the November, just before Christmas and handling the Christmas rush. They were never empty, particularly over winter when the Victorians drove up arriving in April or May with their caravans to play bowls at the bowling green next door. They'd stay through until September, and make their way home.

The lush green site was a landmark in town. The caravan park and camping ground also had a swimming pool and was home to permanents and semi-permanent residents as well as holiday makers.

The popular corner developed into something of a sporting precinct with bowls, tennis and squash on offer.

Hailing from Childers in 1970, Ray (Snow) Garraway with his wife Sandra, were among Noosa's first 'sea-changers'. Quick to realise Noosa offered little in the way of fitness facilities, the self-confessed 'fitness fanatics' built the Noosa Squash Centre, with their home on the top level, shortly after arriving with their two children.

The squash courts, built on the site where Noosa Junction Plaza's IGA supermarket is today, were a hit with locals and visitors including legendary British-Open-winning squash player Heather McKay. A 16-consecutive British Open titles winner, McKay called in for regular games during the height of her career.

Most early locals remember the squash courts. It was one of few attractions, along with the Reef Hotel up on the hill, in the still developing town, and the only place to go, according to the local teenagers of the time, for take away food late at night.

Ray and Sandra recall busy times when business was booming... "People would arrive early before work. We'd just leave the key out and people would come in and play squash and just leave their money on the counter," Sandra said.

According to the Noosa Shire Mayor of the time, Bert Wansley, who held office from 1980-88, the Junction developed from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, when a proliferation of advertising signs and traffic meant Council had to step in. Everything just 'grew like topsy' with no town planner in sight until Council appointed one in the late seventies.

Noosa's first roundabout, at Cooyar Street and Sunshine Beach Road, was built despite local scepticism. Bert remembers considerable opposition and having to convince the Department of Main Roads, the Shire engineer and fellow councillors that a roundabout was "the thing".

According to Bert the locals were a "bit anti-roundabouts" - people wanted traffic lights and businesses thought roundabouts would interfere with their trading.

It was an early precursor to what would become an integral part of the local shire's traffic management, with some 110 roundabouts now in the area.

The area's rapid growth and early lack of planning and development, that many felt was at the expense of the local environment, was a topic explored in detail by one of Noosa's most renowned environmentalists, Nancy Cato. In her book, 'The Noosa Story' (second edition, 1982), she wrote:

"Noosa Junction, from a single application for a hardware store in 1969 (rejected at the time as the area was not planned to be commercial) has grown into a large shopping complex with banks, chemists, bakers, general stores, restaurants and a delicatessen. It has recently spread round the corner of Cooyar Street into what was an area of wildflowers and wallum at the back of Cooloola Hill. The place has grown in haphazard fashion,".

Many people, past and present, have had a hand in shaping Noosa Junction as a destination. The Noosa Junction traders first emerged in the late seventies as

businesses developed. Each has left their mark in some way – many having ideas that would later evolve. John Taylor, owner of 'Casa Deli' and then secretary and President of the Traders Association, remembers ideas to improve the Junction, even in the early days. "An artist's impression was drawn up of the changes some business owners in the late 1970s and early 1980s wanted to see in the Junction, but at that point they were told it couldn't be done – but it's how you see Noosa Junction as it is now."

Named after the T-intersection at the end of Sunshine Beach Road... *Noosa Junction finally grew into its name in the early 80's through a local newspaper competition. There was also a competition to beautify the Junction in the 80's. Gabrielle Poole won it and was given the job of designing gardens and creating an atmosphere for the Junction. He designed metal trellises with bougainvillea in the centre of Sunshine Beach Road. These were replaced many years later in a subsequent makeover, as the Council decided to use native plants in the area.*

## The people....entrepreneurs, conservationists, laughter & larrikins

It was a town where 'everyone knew everyone else and what they didn't know they made up' Barry Elms.

A cast of larger than life characters have played their role in developing the Junction, putting their own uniquely indelible stamp on the T-intersection. Some stayed a while and others are still here...some made good and some went bust...and some well they just plain didn't care – they lived here for the lifestyle and still wouldn't live anywhere else.

Devin Minchin, the Farmer who bought the 'picture show' to town, was looking for investment opportunities in the early eighties and realised there was little to do in town at night. His early foresight led him to the Junction, a town he thought of as destined for growth but still a 'baby' in the seventies and to the proposed site 'virtually in a dog track' on Sunshine Beach Road with not much more than several banks and a Chinese restaurant. Designed by Sydney architects, his 'picture show' went on to change the face of the Junction. And the cinemas still play a pivotal role in the night life of locals and tourists alike.

The Grand Opening night of 'Cinema House' is still well remembered as a significant social occasion and a celebration that seemed to embrace the whole town and then some. A flat-bed truck provided the outdoor stage for the launch as the music played, champagne flowed and celebrities of the day, Barry Crocker, Ricky May and Jacki MacDonald, added a touch of glamour to the festivities – their hand prints can still be seen stamped into the concrete at the front of the cinemas.

Photographer, Ian 'One-Shot' Murray, was on hand to record the event, taking photos for the newspaper of the day, the Noosa Citizen, owned by The Noosa Journal's former owner, Lindsay Bock, in the 1980s.

Another early entrepreneur, Len Daddow built the Mobil service station in 1972 – he remembers buying the land - ten blocks for \$6000. Another block became available for sale next door with an asking price of \$2000 which Len thought too expensive. Fortunately for Len, he was reassured by local estate agent, Max Walker, from

Walker's Real Estate that it was a viable deal. Len took his advice and went on to build the service station.

Len also remembers the sandy road finally being upgraded to bitumen saying the locals couldn't believe it. The council then put land around the Junction up for sale and there were blocks for sale from \$2000- \$4000. Len erred on the side of caution with this land offer, choosing not to buy as he thought Noosa Junction was on the wrong side of the hill. As Len tells it – 'how wrong can you be?' – demonstrating what so many of us realise, we'd all be a great deal better off with the benefit of hindsight!

Most locals of the time agree, if there was a turning point – something that changed the face of the Junction, and the daily lives of many locals, it was the introduction of major supermarket, Coles and the shopping centre of Noosa Fair. The name behind so many subsequent development projects in the Noosa area, Lyndon Simmons, literally delivered a range of fresh produce and consumer goods previously unheard of. The Noosa Fair shopping centre opened 1982 with Coles as its flagship attraction.

Many have confessed to dressing up to go to Coles to shop as it was a central meeting place to catch up with friends and if you were lucky, catch a glimpse of a favorite celebrity.

Noosa Junction was also a place to dream up grand ideas and be inspired to launch new business enterprises. 'Marine Land' a local aquarium, was not your everyday Junction business – certainly those that lived here were surprised by the size of the venture during its construction. Was owner Rick Bennett ahead of his time – perhaps this was a precursor to the Underwater World of the future? More than 180 glassed tanks with small fish collected from the Bay were on display – back then anything was possible even if only for a short time.

A passion for the environment is a bond many old and newcomers to the Junction share to this day. Countless tall trees are still standing because of people like Kevin Freeman, who would regularly lie down in front of bulldozers to stop the felling of a tree. According to wife, Emma, they'd hear chainsaws and they'd run. Emma remembers passionately campaigning with friends including renowned writer and conservationist, Nancy Cato, and another equally passionate environmentalist and 'anti high-rise' campaigner, Marjorie Harrold. The trio spearheaded actions that saved scores of large local trees and some still here today because of their work.

Described by many including his own son Kym, as a larrikin who personifies the Junction spirit, Frank Everett was a hard to miss character driving around the Junction in his beach buggy with his plastic guide dog strapped safely into the passenger seat.

Frank's dream was to build a gymnasium – a dream he realised in 1979 when he built 'Frank's Gym', still as popular today as it was in those early years. The gym Frank describes as for everybody, was a place where millionaires & knockabouts mixed together – from the local 'tradies' to celebrities. It was, and still is, a beautiful blend of everybody.

A five thousand dollar investment bought the block of land where Frank was to build his gym. His original thinking was to incorporate a car park before the concept for the elevated work out area became a reality. According to Frank, lots of people come and go in business, but like his 42 year old beach buggy, he's here to stay. His travelling companion has been updated - his 'guide dog' after its fair share of scrapes including being catapulted through a store-front window pane 'naughty dog', has been replaced by a pair of large gorillas relegated this time to the rear seat.

Another much liked Noosa larrikin, Dook, opened the infamous Dook's Wine Bar in the 1970s with partner in crime, Dick Thorne, on the site where the cinema now stands. Just the second wine bar in Queensland, one month behind the first, opened by long time Noosa restaurateur and foodie, Leonie Palmer and Ken Morrison.

According to local accounts and excerpts from an article published in 2000 by Living Legend writer, Dick Tombs, in The Noosa Journal, Dook, was one of the genuine wild men of Noosa and his bar and the exploits of patrons was quite renowned.

"Hollywood Bob was our cocktail barman," Dook said in the article. "He was a character and everybody liked him. He would wear outrageous gear, but in those days nobody blinked an eyelid that's how liberal Noosa was then.

Dook said he " bought the car yard next door and leased the land to do the bar with partner, Dick, now a car salesman in Surfers...We were both inexperienced businessmen at the time, although we thought we weren't, and we got our manager up from Sydney - Toupee Tommy, ex-car salesman. He hitch-hiked into town and flew back in a Lear Jet after managing our businesses for us."

"It was quite common at that time for \$50 and \$100 tips to be given to the girls for just one drink. That was because we employed every pretty girl in town at the wine bar. They worked in sarongs and bare feet... it was a garden bar and got some good write-ups at the time.

"When we opened the wine bar, they televised the opening and the film was confiscated by the police because they wanted to see which villains were attending who had come up from Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand.

Rumours of shady characters may have been plentiful but all agree they were more interested in enjoying the Noosa lifestyle than causing trouble.

Of his time in Noosa Dook was quoted saying "Like a lot of Noosa people, I made a lot of money, lost a lot at that particular time and had a lot of fun along the way. I think more did that than not. We gave more away than we sold, but anyone can go broke in the downturn. We went broke in the middle of the boom."

*We look forward to the next chapter...with more characters, laughs and community spirit that makes the Noosa Junction everyone's favourite local.*