

## **Vale Wallace Weaving**

**From Pam Garnsey (with some added and fond reflections from Neil Lamming, Mike Benton and Kent & Sheilagh Brooks)**

As we sadly noted in our last issue, **Wallace Weaving** passed away in November, a few days after his 81<sup>st</sup> Birthday.

He is well remembered in the AllStars community primarily for his role as the ICL Australian national sales manager in the hardware division.

However, his career with the company and its earlier forebears began long before this.

In fact, Wallace joined LEO Computers in the UK and came to Australia with English Electric LEO in 1963. Quickly becoming the Victorian Manager with colleagues such as **Neil Lamming** and **Owen McKenzie**.



**Great landmarks ... plus the Opera House:** Wallace (right) with Mike Benton and Pam Garnsey, in what was a regular get-together to mark the shared October date of their Scorpion-centric birthdays. Says Mike, "Pam, Wallace and I knew that, as Scorpios, we were special people. Wallace certainly was".



**English Electric LEO colleagues:** Owen McKenzie, Neil Lamming and another great EE trouper Sean Ferguson.

Of those early Melbourne LEO days of '63, Neil recalls: "Pat and I had reached Sydney in January and moved to Melbourne in May, joining **Alan Sercombe** who had arrived from UK in April. So Wallace made it three in the Victorian office where, soon after, **Geoff Nicholas** arrived to make it four.

"Alan and I went on site to Shell and Wallace and Geoff went on site to CML.

"Christmas of '63 was the first festive season in Australia for all four of us and we spent it at the Weavings at their new home in Grosvenor Street, Brighton. "Along, of course, with Simon Weaving (then 5), Hugo (3) and Anna (1).

"Pat and I stayed with them and I clearly remember Anne picked that Pat was pregnant with our first child, something which we had not mentioned to a soul.

“This group really became our Australian family and we did a lot of great stuff together. A camping holiday at Ocean Grove, a golfing long weekend in Mount Gambier, theatre, bridge and much, much more.

“We were joined in Melbourne by several other families as the Shell and CML projects grew, particularly **Owen and Marj McKenzie** and **Mike and Janet Shapcott**. They too became part of ‘the family’

“Like the rest of us, I know that Wallace looked on these as fantastic and fun times that embodied lots of laughs, lots of great memories and lots of hard and very productive work.”

After a couple of years down south, Wallace was transferred to Sydney to join **Peter Gyngell** in what was the EEL Head Office.

Soon after that, he moved to South Africa to replace Leo Fantl as General Manager of English Electric LEO Computers in that nation.

A position he was holding when the 1968 merger with ICT happened and ICL was formed. Wallace worked with ICT’s Norman Aldborough to very successfully integrate the two companies before returning to UK.

In the old days our champion took on a number of senior ICL commercial management roles, including those in the retail and distribution sector.

Adds Neil: “Pat and I kept in touch with the Weavings throughout this period. Indeed we stayed with them in Sydney, in Johannesburg and finally in Bristol”.

After Neil became Australian MD in 1975, he was quick to offer Wallace the opportunity to return to Australia, an offer which the entire family jumped at.

In fact, it’s recalled Wallace came in advance of his family so the children could finish their UK school year. A scenario that saw Weaving-senior living with the Lammings for quite a period.



**In conference:** Wallace with Senator Archer at the 1977 annual computer division national sales conference in Terrigal.

Neil readily confirms that there were many superb memories from this latter day period at ICL. But says: “one particular memory of the time was at an early Atlas Club in Fiji where John Singleton was our inspirational guest.

“Wallace displayed his creativity and thespian skills in a brilliant and very funny sketch in which he was a French chef marketing a new brand of baked beans named ‘Zippo’.

“Singo was very impressed!

“Our great colleague obviously had magnificent theatrical genes which he has passed onto his children and to his grand-children. A number of who are also making their mark on stage and screen.”

Indeed, when the October birthday-sharing gang convened last year, **Mike Benton** reports that “Wallace was particularly delighted that his grandson (Hugo’s son) had just completed his course at NIDA (the National Institute of Dramatic Art).”



**Like father like son like son:** Wallace's son Hugo Weaving as Agent Smith in the film *The Matrix*.



**A striking resemblance:** Simon Weaving ... a photo taken while he was director of the Canberra International Film Festival.

But Fiji and baked beans were certainly not the only instance where Wallace brought his thespian talents into the business world. "To ICL's great benefit", as Mike recollects.

"I once mentioned to him that of all the sales conferences and courses I had attended over the years, the 2903 one in Surfers Paradise – that he directed oh so well – was clearly the best.

"The secret was a single objective, which was to sell more 2903s.

"The astute Weaving method, based on his stage mastery, was built on a sole focus and highly motivational humour.

"So each presenter, I think **Brian Michael** was the first, dramatically took off their shirts to reveal a 2903 tee shirt. A seemingly small sort of thing, but one that delivered a great impact and really set the stage."



**Birthday boys:** A 1978 celebration of ICL's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday in Australia. With Wallace (front) are Owen McKenzie, Frank Linton Simpkins (*The Australian*), Neil Lamming, Peter O'Connell, Jerry Montgomery, Bill Williams, George Webster, Dave Cunningham and Tony Weber.

"Then there were sales presentations artfully presented as games where teams had to use a particular key 2903 marketing message the maximum number of times during a sketch.

“Again hilarious, but singularly effective.

“So objective achieved – the 2903 was, as we remember, a runaway success.”

However, as Pam reminds us, our legend’s stage talents extended far beyond work.

“For ever so many years down under, he was a regular theatre goer and performed personally in some enormously successful productions with *The Turrumurra Players*”. Jerry and I joined the Weavings at a great many productions of the Sydney Theatre Company and the now defunct Nimrod company. Enjoying many, many happy evenings. Indeed we are still subscribing to STC with Anne.”

In a similar context Mike reflects: “Wallace was no mean actor who I will particularly remember in a Sydney production of *California Suite* where he played the lead.”

Theatrics also played their part on the home front. So as **Kent Brooks** recalls, “after **Sheilagh** had left

ICL to take on a new role as the mother of our first son, we kept in touch with Wallace and Anne socially and shared some great times together. One that comes to mind was a quite formal lunch at the Weavings’ at Christmas of 1978.

“Being hosted by quite the thespian, we were not really surprised when the repast was served by a dinner suited son Simon and daughter Anna dressed as a maid.

“Just as desserts were being served, Hugo arrived home with a mate, Tommy Lewis, the noted aboriginal actor and composer of *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* fame.

“Tommy was quite taken with our newly born son Rhys’s shock of bright red curly hair and picked him up and rushed out the door with him and Hugo.

“Sheilagh looked a little unsure at the sight of this dark complexioned gentleman, whom she had last seen three months ago at the movies running seriously amok with an axe, exiting stage left with our first born.

“Wallace immediately patted Sheilagh on the arm and offered words of comfort. ‘Don’t worry dear, I don’t think they’re going to eat him’.

Theatrics aside, KB equally stresses just how much Wallace was a ‘people person’.

“He was extremely kind to the both of us, being instrumental, together with **Warren Hodges**, in my moving from a support role into equipment sales in 1975/76.

“But after a more than fecund period there, I then moved from computer division to head up the application software group within ICLDS. Which meant that I was now engaged to be married to the secretary (then Sheilagh Bisset) of that division’s general manager **Tony Weber**.”



**Remembering the real ‘people person’:**  
Ann Nish (left) and Sheilagh Brooks (Bisset).

“An obvious potential for conflict of interest.

“But a situation very quickly resolved by Wallace very graciously taking Sheilagh on board to replace a departing **Anne Nish**. He was simply that sort of a person.

“And just for the record, and as with the Lammings, Anne Weaving also told Sheilagh that she was pregnant (with Rhys). In this case though, before either of us knew that this was the case.”

On leaving ICL, Wallace became CEO of Rank Basic Four, a reseller marketing the US-based MAI mini computers. And before long he took on the role of MAI's Australian manager. Incidentally, **Pam Garnsey** was among those to Join WW at RB4. Likewise **Col Beardmore**, who joined the same team from ICL Brisbane.

Pam makes the point that Wallace brought to Basic 4 his view that business should be for both profit and fun, never forgetting his inherent acting bent.

In that context, he entered the company, and Pam specifically, in the 1980 AmCham (the American Chamber of Commerce in Australia) 'Salesperson of the Year' award.

As Pam explains, "I was the nominated entrant, encouraged by that AmCham stalwart **Bill Pringle**, but we had a great cast of four, to compete for best company sales presentation.

"Wallace and I wrote the script, a wordplay on the word 'four' describing some imaginary software packages such as Rank Basic Foreplay for lovers, Basic Fore for golfers, and so on, with subsequent supposed comments from a market survey.

"It was very *Two Ronnies* style. And we won our heat against three others including Jim Hardy of Hardy Wines. We went on to win in NSW for which IBM was also a finalist. It was then a tour around the states, with the last final in Sydney."

"And we won – they had to rename the trophy to Salesperson from Salesman of the year."



**Well it's good night from me and it's good night from her:** Wallace (second from right) with Bob Shaw, Bette Lakin and salesperson of the year Pam Garnsey. Seen at a Christmas gathering in Sydney a few years ago.

Turning the clock right back, we would have found WW as a mathematics graduate of Bristol University, where he met his first wife Anne and where he excelled in amateur dramatics.

His first career was with Seismographic Services, where he travelled to work in French Camerouns, in Southwest France and in Nigeria (where son Hugo was born). All of this to do with projects for major oil companies.

But by this time, and with a young family, he elected to settle in England ... in the computer industry with Texas Instruments.

Fast forwarding to more recent times again, Wallace and his second wife Natalie nestled into retirement on a property at Wootton, NSW, near the Myall Lakes.

After 10 years they returned to their Turramurra (Sydney) house and the pull of family ties. Between them they have 7 children and 18 grandchildren.

Despite the size of that clan, Wallace did find time to enjoy a men's book club, a Probus group, and he was working on writing a stage play.

He was a good and loyal friend and a true gentleman. He will be sadly missed.