



future.

Many thanks to the people who sent in contributions over the past four months. Please do not hesitate to send in material, as the newsletter is a great vehicle in which to feature items that may not normally see the light of day. We are always interested to hear news of changes relevant to our members in each State and Territory. Job vacancies, conferences, lectures, workshops, seminars, legislative updates or comments, reports from State Executive Committees and short reports of interesting projects are just some of the topics that the newsletter is interested in covering.

Contributions can be made to newsletter@accai.com.au.

PS. See you at the bar at AAA!



Obituary: Jim Davis: A Full Life but a Muddy One! *Susan McIntyre-Tamwoy*



Figure 1. Jim taking a break from the sieves (Photograph: Kelvin Officer).

For many of us the past week has been a sad one with the death of Jimmy Davis at his home in Berkeley, Wollongong. Kerry Navin, Kelvin Officer, Mary Dallas and myself, joined several other archaeological colleagues, Jim's family, his friends and professional acquaintances at Jim's funeral. Many AACAI members

and others who have worked in the Illawarra knew Jim. He was the sort of person who engendered an immediate fondness in those he worked with. Many archaeologists will know him as the official spokesperson of the Wodi Wodi Elders, but to many of us he was much more – a loved and trusted friend. He was only 69 when he died after a period of declining health and I can't help feeling that the world has been short changed with his passing.

Jim's funeral was held on Friday 16 September at Kembla Grange Lawn Cemetery. The graveside service was attended by many of his friends and relatives. I think Jim would have liked his own funeral which was a mixture of accolades, amusing anecdotes and heartfelt tears. His wife Muriel said that they had chosen his burial spot for its bush aspect as he would have wanted to be in the open with the birds and the trees.

Even for those of us who knew Jim fairly well, there were surprises revealed which made us laugh and some which engendered admiration, in the anecdotes about his life, the varied work experiences, and the evidence of commitment to his people.

Anyone who ever visited Jim and his wife Muriel can attest that their home was always a sanctuary to various friends and family members and no matter how crowded their house or how tight their budget you were always made welcome with a cup of tea and some of Jim's witty banter.

Any of us who worked with Jim will know that he was better than any commercial anti-depressant for maintaining high serotonin levels. During excavations the sieves were always the centre of uncontrolled laughter as Jim produced an endless stream of jokes and puns. Ahh yes! ... and then there were the practical jokes! How many of us have been at the receiving end of those? After the funeral Trish Saunders recalled to me that Jim sometimes produced a concrete skull (from a garden statue) and that he caught her out, as he has probably done several other archaeologists, by burying it in an obvious place in the survey area so that just the crown of the skull was visible and then calling her over saying 'Trish Trish what do you make of this!'.

Everyday events in the field took on a comedic aspect with Jim. I can remember carrying out a survey with him and Kerry Navin during which we had one of our many amusing close encounters with a fence. I was holding up a strand of barbed wire so that Kerry could get through a fence, when 'gentleman Jim' decided to help by lifting the electrified wire with the crook of his walking stick. Unfortunately he brought it into contact with my hand and I yelped and let go of the barbed wire which sprang down on Kerry's back hooking into her shirt and effectively trapping her half way through the dual barbed wire and electric fences. She was in real danger of doing herself an injury because it started us all laughing hysterically and none of us were fit for sensible action for some time.

And then there was the time that for some reason I had to reverse Kerry and Kelvin's 4WD with trailer attached. Well Jim always seemed to know what he was on about so it was only natural that I listened to his

instructions, despite Sean Suddery (his son-in law) frantically signalling me to ignore Jim and listen to him! Suffice it to say that we got the trailer into such a tight angle that the only way to extricate it was to disconnect it and manually move it!

One part of me didn't want to go to Jim's funeral as I could then have just pretended he hadn't really died and that one of the rare 'characters' that have blessed our lives wasn't gone. I could have pictured him as I last saw him sitting at his kitchen table in Berkeley. However, I am glad I went and got to share in his send off with his family and friends.



Figure 2. Jim Davis time.

Jim never pulled punches, he could not abide bullshit but he always kept his sense of humour and could draw a laugh in any situation. These qualities sometimes made him a target of less honourable people who would have preferred him to play their game. He was a man who was comfortable in his culture, who had no need to invent 'heritage'. He was a man that was confident in his knowledge about his heritage and saw no conflict in learning new things and tapping different techniques to reveal information. This is, of course, the sign of a mature and confident person. Unlike many less secure people, he did not waste time with the overused rhetoric that 'archaeologists are trying to take over our heritage' etc. Instead he was keen to learn from specialists whether they be anthropologists or archaeologists or historians, although this is not to say that he always agreed with them, nor was he reticent about challenging them! He has passed his strong sense of identity and an appreciation of his heritage to his daughters. They tell me that they are going to carry on his work and stand up for integrity in the Aboriginal community in general and in

the heritage industry specifically. I wish them good luck and hope that Jim's spirit lives on through them. It was an honour to have known and worked with Jim and at some distant point in the future when his daughters are old and retired, if they too can look back on a lifetime of integrity and commitment to Aboriginal issues like Jim's and are held as close in as many hearts, then they will truly have nurtured his legacy.

Jim's family have found a unique way to raise money for a headstone/memorial to Jim. If you would like to do something practical to help them and at the same time have a permanent memento of Jim you might like to buy one of the Jim Davis mementos from Sincere Memories. There are a range of items and a portion of the proceeds go to the Wodi Wodi Elders Council for Jim's headstone fund. Enquiries to Jim Turkington (02)