



## Pot Pourri with Sue Wallace

# Pam Stone:

**PAM Stone was reluctant to move to Wodonga 37 years ago..... now she wouldn't leave for quids.**

She thought "struggle town" was an apt description of the place when she first arrived in Wodonga with her late husband, Les.

There was no sewerage and even the main street wasn't sealed.

But it's a different story now.

Pam Stone has become as much a part of Wodonga as Wodonga is part of her.

She's proud of the city, its progress and confident of its future.

Pam said she had always been involved in the community and entering local politics was a natural progression ..... and she just loves it.

She loves the involvement, the responsibility and the learning.

There's been many firsts for Pam, she was the city's first Mayoress helping her late husband Les, when he became the city's Mayor.

She was the city's first woman councillor in 100 years and the first female mayor and she has enjoyed it all.

Pam said she was always interested in local government because of her husband and after his death she found that she missed it.

Two years later she followed in his footsteps, stood for election and won.

"I missed not knowing what was going on in Wodonga, when Les died I was only 45 and I thought I could go on for another 40 years, so I had to be interested," explained Pam.

"All my friends thought it was a wonderful idea and I must pay tribute to so many women in Wodonga who rang and said we were always available to help and will support you."

That was 12 years ago and Pam has covered a lot of ground in that time.

The highs?

"Probably getting the former corporation building for the TAFE College and the development of inner housing, around the city."

And the low points?

"When 11 other councillors can't see your point and you know you are right..... I know I just have to accept it but it's hard sometimes," she quips.

Pam said she met little opposition when she became Mayor, although she did lay down the law at the first council meeting, telling members that she would not take any nonsense, and they listened too!

She would consider standing for Mayor again and she feels it was a wonderful experience and a great learning process.

These days Pam is on many committees, trusts and boards and admits she has little spare time.

She has not played golf for two years, but she does make time for her two great loves, to read and to travel.

She has travelled all over China including Mongolia and says she hopes to travel more.

Whenever she gets the chance she talks about Wodonga.

She thinks it's been very well served by its council and staff.

"No one can say we have never made a mistake but on the whole I think the council has done a pretty good job.

"The role of the local government has changed over the years, people pay their rates, and realise the council is there to help

and there's been an upsurge in personal services.

"I'm proud of this city, it's been a marvelous success story.

We've done pretty well to keep pace with the growth.

As soon as one thing is finished it's onto the next and that involved a lot of forward planning."

One thing Pam won't give up is the one thing she considers the area lacks, a university.

She wants to see one University for Albury Wodonga and says what's 'four kilometres'.

She believes in the power of the people and says politicians do take notice, particularly if their seats are shaky.

On the problems of today's youth, Pam feels the government has got to start training young people at grass roots level, "It's no good having all chiefs and no indians."

Pam was born in Swan Hill and later moved to Prahran and attended the Windsor Convent.

She married Les, a teacher and moved to Tahara, outside Hamilton, then to Derby, near Bendigo, then Cornish-town, between Chiltern and Rutherglen, then Les was offered a promotion in Wodonga.

After 12 years on the Wodonga City Council, Pam aged 59, said she's very grateful for the opportunities she has had.

She loves people but said she has to have time to herself.

Mention local government and Pam loves to talk.

"That's one thing you



learn when you are involved in local government- you can talk to anyone else involved in local government, no matter what the country.

"Like the time I just

started talking to a man in Honolulu, who turned out to be the chairman of the local Honolulu Ratepayers Association, well we just couldn't stop talking," she laughed.

Pam Stone leave Wodonga now?

NEVER!

"If I say I'll do something I'll do it, if I can see I can't win, I have to accept it."