

## VRRDA Hall of Fame 2015

### BARBARA MITCHELL

Barbara initially became interested in Rock n Roll at the age of 14. It was her sister who taught her some dance moves, and they began attending local dances in their home town of Morwell. When Barbara was growing up, there were no dance lessons to go to, so they were basically all self-taught rock n roll dancers.

When Barbara met Barry, who was also a self-taught rock n roller, they would always get up and dance at any social gatherings. They both enjoyed getting together with friends and all of their parties at home would involve rock n roll. Barbara, now living in Geelong, discovered that there were no dances they could attend. So they made sure that their daughters would not miss out, and they taught the girls themselves. In these early years, their daughters rode horses, so most of their weekends were taken up with that.

In June 1998, Barbara had the opportunity to start up a Rock n Roll club in Geelong. She held her first meeting at the White Eagle Club in Breakwater with the huge number of 6 people (one of them being herself). It was here that they planned the club, which became the Geelong Jukebox Rockers. They started off with a Social night every Monday, and then introduced a monthly dance. Not long afterwards, they began offering some weekend workshops for people who wanted to learn how to dance. The club grew, and the number of people increased, and six months later, they started teaching their first dance lessons on Thursday nights.

Barbara and other club members spent a lot of time promoting the club at local festivals, social gatherings and schools, and performed demos to inspire and entertain others, with many demos held at nursing homes. The club and its activities have now been successfully running for the past 17 years. What an achievement!

One of Barbara's main aims was to create a social gathering where all lovers of Rock n Roll could come together and enjoy and celebrate their love of the music and dance. She was the main instigator for the development of the three-day festival held in Geelong every January. It began as a tribute to Elvis, and included an Elvis look-a-like contest, social dances, a rock n roll dance competition, a family rock day, and some hilarious floorshows by the Geelong Jukebox Rockers. It is now known as The Summer Rock Festival, and celebrated its 16<sup>th</sup> year last January.

A few years after starting up Geelong Jukebox Rockers, Barbara also served on the VRRDA committee for 3 years, in the early 2000s, to promote rock n roll to the wider community.

**Barb is renowned for her warm personality and generosity**, and has opened her home to numerous people over the years from interstate and overseas, and **at one point is known to have had 30 people staying at her home before a festival.**

**Barbara served as President of the Geelong Jukebox Rockers for 14 years**, and still plays an active role in many of the club events. She always encouraged families and young people to be active club members and would seek out opportunities for the club to perform charity dance demonstrations. While President, she arranged for one of the club's monthly dances to become a charity dance, and this continues to be held on an annual basis, usually in May each year. **One year, the club raised \$10,000 to donate a David Hart Walker to a young boy so he could learn to walk.** The walker is a frame that enables young children, often with cerebral palsy, to walk. **A terrific achievement!**

Over a period of 17 years, she has enabled thousands of people to enjoy the opportunity to listen to live bands, get up on the dance floor, and have fun!

**Some of Barbara's greatest achievements:**

1. Establishing the Geelong Jukebox Rockers Club.
2. Creating an opportunity for people to enjoy rock'n'roll through the club's weekly social nights, dance lessons and monthly dances.
3. Raising money through the club's numerous charity dances, and especially raising the \$10,000 for the Hart Walker.
4. Being able to turn her dream for a 3-day rock n roll festival into a reality.
5. Making sure that children had free entry to the club's dances and festivals.
6. And connecting with so many people from all walks of life...

**Ladies and gentlemen, the VRRDA is honoured to induct Barbara Mitchell into the 2015 Hall of Fame...**

Annette Niven  
VRRDA Secretary