

# Who and What am I?

## Members Profile - Eric West - Part 2 of 2

*By Eric West*

*(Continued from June magazine - Part 1)*

### **My name is Eric West, and I am a Jaguar Addict!**

I bought my first new car with the proceeds, a rather lovely little four door sports saloon called a Mazda 1500 SS. These were never sold in NZ, but if you imagine a Triumph 2500 TC which has been shrunk by a Witch-Doctor you will get the idea. They are highly sought after in Australia today.

I then got a flying job back in Sydney and sold the Mazda. I decided that I would buy a brand-new BMW 1600, which at the time would have set me back \$4800.00 a substantial sum, but within budget. A mate drove me out to Granville to make the necessary arrangements. However, it was well past "beer o'clock" and the Bath Arms at Burwood sang its siren song. A couple of Resch's New hit the spot and we were about to get underway when I spotted "Thompson's Performance Cars" just up the way, so a look at a few flash cars seemed in order. There, resplendent in the middle of the forecourt, was a maroon 1962 Aston Martin DB4, priced at what seemed a reasonable, but non-negotiable, \$4,200.00.



I performed all the necessary young man's due-diligence, by simply asking myself, "Which of a BMW or an Aston Martin will pull the most birds"?

Since I was 23, a pilot, and randy, and this was about the time of "007 and Goldfinger" it did not require a membership of Mensa to work it out, and I have to say that the following 9 months were spectacularly socially successful!

Unfortunately, my mother became very ill, so I sold the Aston for \$4,250.00 (feeling I had done alright out of it) and returned to New Zealand. It was another of my rather less than discriminating decisions, as the next time I saw the car, at the Adelaide Grand Prix some 25 years later, it had just been sold, by my buyer, for \$189,000!

Thinking that I would soon return to Australia, (which I never did), I bought a cheap car, a Humber 80, and drove that for a few months until I got a job as an engineering rep, jobs in aviation proving almost impossible to find and highly contested, and consequently drove a series of company vehicles of no great distinction. Then I happened to have an encounter with a Traffic Officer just north of Warkworth. I think he was a bit bored and wanted to talk to someone, as he did not give me a ticket and we got talking about his job for about 30 minutes, during which time I decided that his job offered a lot more excitement than did selling ball-bearings!

For the next 7.5 years I drove motorcycles and black and white cars throughout South Auckland, dealing with everything from fixing flat tyres for old ladies, to some horrendous scenes of carnage. On one occasion I ticketed a lad who richly deserved it, but who then went home and butchered his landlady with a machete, over an argument about unpaid rent!

Although I did not spend a huge portion of my working life as a Traffic Officer, that is still how I identify myself, a trait I share with all my former colleagues, and we still meet regularly as a group. In my off-time I drove a Fiat 125, which, despite the Fiat reputation for rust, was a great car. In 137,00 miles I replaced the clutch once, did routine servicing, replaced the brake pads twice and replaced a headlight. That was it! However, it did eventually start to dissolve in the rain, but by then I had returned to the civilian world and worked for the next 20 years for Tait Electronics and then an agency for Motorola in Auckland driving company cars.

The most prestigious car I drove at that time came when the owner of a competitor rang me one evening and asked me what it would take to get me to come and work for him. As I had already more or less decided to change jobs, I named an outrageous salary and told him that he would also need to give me a BMW car to drive. His response was, "Would that be a 3 Series or a 5 Series"? so I spent my last days on the road for a living, driving a BMW 528 and earning rather more than I felt I was worth!

In August 1985, my habit of fixing tyres for ladies caught up with me, on the Southern Motorway near Manurewa at 1.30 in the morning, when I stopped to help a lady in a little Mitsubishi who had a very flat tyre. We got into a conversation which, as it turned out, lasted for the next 37 years.

We married 8 months after meeting and had only one major bone of contention until she passed away in early March this year.

That bone was the purchase of a Jaguar. I had first seen an X Type at Archibald & Shorter when they were initially released, and I fell rather hard. It was just the look of the thing, particularly the front end. You look at that and just know it could not be anything else but a Jaguar!

Of course, since a reasonable car was one of the perks of my job, buying one was not a serious consideration, beside which, had I done so, I would have been qualified to start in the following year's "Gelding's Cup", my darling wife would have made the required adjustments!

Once we settled into semi-retirement in Tauranga the matter again reared its head, especially when a customer of the shop where I have a part-time job offered me his at a very reasonable price, all he had been offered as a trade-in. The gelding shears were once more produced, as though they were to be used, and that opportunity was also passed by.

Sadly, Pearl was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2017, (I rather wish Parkinson had kept it to himself) but needing to nurse her for the last 5 years has rather put a damper on my aspirations as far as Growlers and Leapers are concerned. Regrettably she passed away earlier this year and since our cars were getting old, I decided to sell them, (we had three), and buy just one good one. The make and model were obvious.

## With my 2009 Jaguar X-Type



Now, I have heard all the tales that an X Type is just "A Ford Mondeo in Drag" but looking into it, the Ford parts are really the floor pan, block and things like the HVAC and some electrics, and frankly, nobody would ever say that the Mondeo is not a good car anyway! Let's face it, if the X Type is good enough to be Queen Elizabeth's favourite "self-drive" car, it should be good enough for me.

It is funny that nobody mentions that a Bentley is built on a VW floorpan or that an Aston Martin DB7 is mostly Jaguar, or that the door handles inside said DB7 come from a Mazda MX5! X Types get a bit of a rough time of it.

So, late in March I bought myself an early 75<sup>th</sup> birthday present, in the form of a glorious, immaculate, black, 2009 X Type, thus fulfilling a lifetime dream of Jaguar ownership.

And do you know, I think my wife would even approve. Throughout our life together the number 34 has made a constant appearance in our lives, on all sorts of silly levels.

For instance, we lived at No 34, we moved to 17, (half of 34), and now live at 68, (twice 34), just as simple examples.

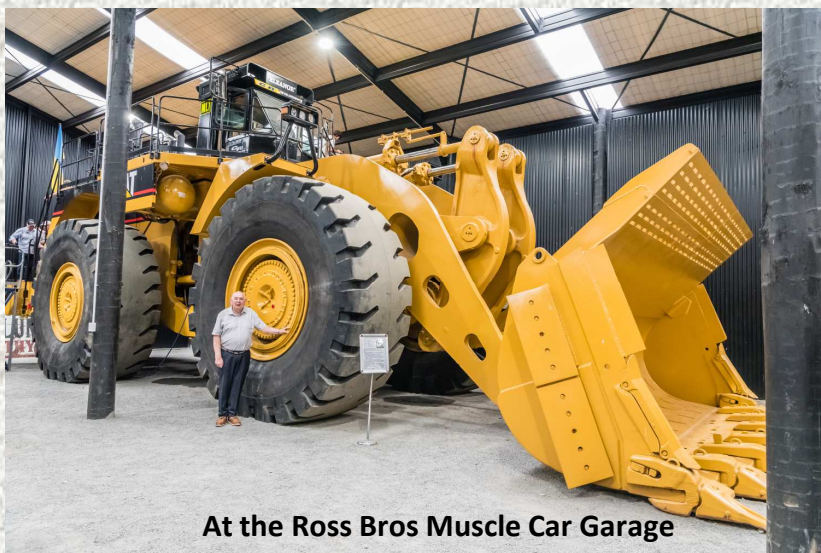
There are many others. The registration of my X Type Jaguar is PEW 34. Surely this can only stand for "Pearl and Eric West 34".

I really look forward to enjoying the car, meeting new friends with it and some fantastic Jaguaring!

(Yes, that's a word, and if it isn't, it should be)!

That's all for now, Noels "few words" turned out to be precisely 2980 of them!

*Eric*



**At the Ross Bros Muscle Car Garage**