

BARRY JAMES GIBSON On the occasion of his 70th birthday

I have been nominated to speak this evening about Barry.

My wife Gillian is Barry's older sister and I am his brother-in-law. I also had the privilege of being his Best Man on the occasion of his wedding to Carol. Many of you were present on that splendid occasion and also at his last large scale birthday party here at Airlie Beach 10 years ago, his 60th.

On behalf of so many members of his family who are here tonight, we welcome you to this auspicious occasion and we are conscious that you have come from far and wide: Japan, England, New Zealand, and from all over Australia. It is wonderful to have you join us.

Gillian asked Barry earlier this evening if he was enjoying his party to which he replied that he had enjoyed every day of the past 70 years. That is a typical Barry response of course. So long may that continue.

I first met Barry on the Gisborne Railway Station when he was 15, or 55 years ago. I have thus known him for longer than anyone else here tonight with the exception of course of Gillian and his younger brother, Ross. The Gibson family, all six of them, the wonderful Chas and Joyce, and their four children, came to greet me with their typical warmth and hospitality, when I first visited them. It was the beginning of my much beloved second family.

Barry was fully occupied at the time with doing up an old motor cycle. He was, as he is with all the many projects he undertakes, obsessed with it. The end result was magnificent, all chrome and too much speed. So imagine my surprise yesterday to arrive in Airlie Beach and be immediately introduced to Carol's 70th birthday gift to Barry, an ancient BSA motor cycle, now partly and beautifully restored in his garage.

It is the perfect illustration of Barry's great love of projects and of how well he delivers on them. He is truly gifted at restoration and at 75 myself, I am wondering if he can help me out. He also showed me over his beautiful old wooden yacht, the Ariki, which he has restored and which many of you have been sailing on.

Barry is an entrepreneur and an innovator. He has the happy ability to create the new out of the old. He can turn his talents to many tasks, including of course being a gifted cook.

But of more importance, his great charm and wit and storytelling has meant that he has always been much loved by women ... and none more so than by Carol, who in turn is unquestionably the love of his life. Carol has brought Barry great happiness and contentment and it is our joy to have her as such an integral part of our family.

Barry is multi-talented but what we will all have experienced with him is his great generosity and kindness, his willingness always to help others. My enduring memory of this is from the time of the Kobe earthquake when he carried some of the old women ... and he says younger ones too ... down the stairs of their building to safety with no concern for his own safety.

It is these qualities, his wit and a feeling for others, his kindness and generosity, his roguish charm and hugely amusing storytelling, his positive attitude to enjoying life and living it to the full, that underpin his numerous friendships and explain why so many of his friends have gone to great lengths to be with him this week and especially tonight.

This gift for friendship is matched only by his love of his family, and a wonderfully extended family at that. Earlier this evening when we were having a photo taken of the immediate family the most telling happening was all the people who wanted to join us, all thinking that they were really also part of Barry's immediate family. And to him, they were. That is his secret, a gift for deep and lasting friendship, and for forming close bonds with others. We all love him and we wish him many more Happy Birthdays and may he and Carol continue to enjoy life as fully in the future as they have done in the past.

Roderick Deane

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