



Newington Medallist 2009

Sir Peter Barter (ON '57) Kt OBE

Peter Barter attended Newington from 1952 to 1955, starting in Wyvern House. His 1952 Student Report records the Wyvern Housemaster stating that Peter had: '...a very fine "Newington" spirit'. Sir Peter's servant attitude began to display itself whilst there as it also describes him as a '...excellent assistant in the Book Room'. He played cricket and rugby in the 14C teams in 1954, and was involved in Cadets and the Camera Club.

Sir Peter's first job was as a volunteer pilot with the Franciscan Catholic Mission in Aitape, Sandaun who operated a small C180 and a Helio Courier. He then joined Territory Airlines (later TALAIR) as a pilot and established a Tourist Division known as Talco. He was

very successful in attracting major international tour operators to bring their clients to Papua New Guinea (PNG) thus starting the PNG's tourism industry. Just after PNG's Independence in 1975 he sold everything and purchased the assets of Talco and changed the company name to Melanesian Tourist Services Pty Ltd (MTS) originally operating from under their house in Madang. The old Hotel Madang was later acquired and progressively over 40 years it was transformed into the Madang Resort and an adjacent property known as Kalibobo Village. The complex now consisting of more than 200 rooms, cottages and villas is one of the largest and best known resorts in PNG. MTS also operated the Malagan Lodge in Kavieng and Kiburu Lodge at Mendi on behalf of local owners and began operating tourist houseboats up the Sepik River, the houseboats later were replaced with the Melanesian Explorer, the Melanesian Discoverer and now the new Kalibobo Spirit which is operated as a private motoryacht for charter.

Sir Peter's political career began in 1992 when elected regional member for Madang Province, initially in the opposition then later as Minister for Health. In 1995 he took up the position as Governor of Madang until the Prime Minister asked him to take up the Provincial Affairs & Local Level Ministry.

In 1997 Sir Peter returned to his business and in 1983 established the Melanesian Foundation for the purpose of allowing passengers of the Melanesian Explorer, (later the Melanesian Discoverer and Kalibobo Spirit) to donate funds towards projects in villages as a means of thanking the people and leaving some tangible benefits for the community. The Foundation then set about building 8 health clinics in rural areas. The Foundation has manufactured and delivered over 25,000 double school desks to schools in PNG. Sir Peter's Foundation works with both Catholic and Lutheran Churches to undertake major maintenance to a number of Health Centres.

In 2002 he was re-elected and was appointed Minister for Health and Bougainville. He acted as Minister for Finance, Treasury and at one stage was the Acting Governor-General of PNG. He is currently Chairman of the PNG National Events Council and Chair of the National Aids Council which he describes as a real challenge.

Sir Peter was awarded an OBE in 1997 and a Knight Bachelor for his services to PNG and was given an honorary doctorate from the Australian Catholic University in Canberra.

Rt Hon Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare GCL GCMG CH CF KStJ Prime Minister & Parliamentary Leader of National Alliance is quoted as stating “The people and government salute Sir Peter Barter for dedicating much of his public and private life to the development of Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guineans will remember Sir Peter more for his untiring efforts in trying to find a lasting peaceful solution to the Bougainville crisis, and for lifting the profile and commitment of the public health sector. He has also been a true Papua New Guinean at heart and has represented the country well internationally. But I will remember Sir Peter as a colleague who was always there when his people needed him urgently. His mercy flights with his helicopter to help an expectant Mother, an injured youth or victims of a natural disaster are well documented. On a personal level, Sir Peter pushed for the health sector to be given greater attention. Some of his achievements include real increases in budgetary and aid supports for HIV/AIDS, more orderly procurement of drugs and other medical supplies, and the efforts to recruit doctors from Cuba. More often than not, he has also expended his personal resources.

On behalf of my family, the National Alliance and other coalition parties, I say ‘Bikpela Tenkyu’ to Sir Peter for his contribution to the future growth and well being of Papua New Guinea. He has been a humble yet true achiever for his people.” In 2007 Sir Peter was made a Paramount Chief Masalahana (peace) of Bougainville. The Divine Word University Madang currently enjoys Sir Peter’s strong servant hearted style of leadership as a Council Member. He is also an active member of Petromin Limited, the PNG state owned company established to ensure PNG benefit from the Oil, Gas and Mineral Boom taking place in PNG at the current time.

His wife, Lady Janet reside in Madang. Sir Peter’s Son recently relocated to Darwin working in the aviation industry but retains a strong link with his family in PNG and Sydney. The Barter family have attended Newington for 3 generations.

Sir Peter Barter is an inspirational Newingtonian who has truly gone above and beyond the call of duty in the areas of community service, international relations and philanthropy.