



From left, Peter Rigg, Antony Wentworth and Des Adams celebrating the pharmacy's 60th anniversary in 2009. This week, Life Pharmacy celebrates 70 years in business.

Coast business celebrates 70-year milestone

Believed to be the Hibiscus Coast's longest standing business, Life Pharmacy Orewa marks a unique milestone this week – 70 years of serving the community.

Originally known as Orewa Pharmacy, it opened at Hilltop in 1949, long before any other shops were around. In 1955 it was relocated by Peter Rigg to Hibiscus Coast Highway, Orewa (which was called Main Street at the time). Back then, Orewa featured only a few other businesses, including Harry Holder's Bakery and a dairy, on the highway. The pharmacy was taken over by Des Adams in 1973 and has been owned by pharmacist Antony Wentworth for the last 15 years, although Antony has been with the business for 25 years altogether.

"The small community has grown up a lot," Antony says. "The dirt roads and farm paddocks have long gone and while progress sometimes means giving up some of the peace and quiet, this is a fantastic community to be part of."

With literally hundreds of staff through its doors since it opened, Antony says there are endless stories and connections with the Coast and its people.

"There has always been plenty of fun and activity – a tank was even rolled in for a special War on Prices promotion in the 1980s," Antony says. "Staff had

a lot of fun driving the tank around town, and there were a number of near crashes because the driver couldn't see too well."

Another memorable occasion, in the early 1950s, involved the removal of a large macrocarpa tree from behind the pharmacy, then located in Hilltop. Another local, the late Guy Hopper of Hopper Bros, was given this job. Guy, with his bulldozer, and landowner Edgar Hansen had a chat and an hour later the tree had been blown out with dynamite. Hopper Bros were repairing windows in nearby houses for some days after this, due to damage from flying wood and rock.

Antony says that it was pharmacy owner Peter Rigg, together with Mac Cole from Waiwera Thermal Pools, who were behind the renaming of this area.

He says in the 1970s, Peter and Mac decided that a more exotic name for the growing region was needed and came up with 'the Hibiscus Coast'. The pharmacy went a step further and commissioned Bob and Carmen Urban's nursery to propagate hibiscus plants – every Spring, for a few years, customers were offered a free hibiscus plant if they spent a certain amount in the store.

"Over the years we gave away thousands so that we could justify our area being known as the Hibiscus



Coast," Antony says.

The late 1970s were a time of many wonderful bargains. The store sold items such as tomahawk axes, socket sets, canary cages, 10 speed bikes and salad sets. The bikes were particularly in demand – 100 of them were sold within 24 hours, even though purchasers had to put the bikes together themselves.

These days, Antony's wife Alyson also works at the store, and as with most family businesses, the three children have done their part too.

Antony says four of his staff have been with the pharmacy for more than 20 years, and one of them, Jenny Parish, will have been there 30 years next month.

The store celebrates its big birthday this week, with giveaways and special offers.



From top, In the 1970s, Orewa Pharmacy sold more Coppertone sun lotion than any other outlet in NZ. Back in the day, promotions pulled out all the stops – this tank was driven around town to promote 'War on Prices' discounts in the 1980s.



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