

Age no barrier to Jim's research

BY NICOLE LYTTLE

In his Mt Claremont home surrounded by wildflowers, 87-year-old Jim Barrow continues to publish research papers.

The University of WA agricultural researcher has published seven more papers this year, creating a collection of 59, despite retiring in 1992.

"It's just what I do," he said.

"I've never figured out how to stop."

Dr Barrow said researching had become a passion and a great way to keep his mind busy when he's not writing about WA wildflowers.

"I'm not very good at cross-word puzzles," he said.

Dr Barrow said he began his research career in his 20s at CSIRO as a technical officer, conducting agronomy field work and gaining experience in laboratory and theoretical work.

Eventually he made his way up the ranks and was promoted to Chief Research Scientist II.

Dr Barrow said recognition initially drove him to write but now he just researches for fun.

"We all like to do things that we are good at," he said.

Over his 40-year career, Dr Barrow came to learn that research is ever-changing and unpredictable.

"You do all kinds of funny things just because they are interesting," he said.

"Eventually you end up doing something completely different from what you proposed.

"You never quite know what



Jim Barrow, 87, shows no signs of stopping his agricultural research.

Photo: Paul McGovern

is going to happen."

But the temperamental nature of researching led to one of his greatest theories, about phosphate's effects on soil, which goes against conventional teachings.

"I was able to kind of ride on that and try to convince people [of my theory] for 40 years," he said, laughing about how he was still trying to get people to listen by publishing more papers this year.

"A couple of them say 'Hey, you're wrong,'" he said.

"There's a real disconnect with the science and what is

taught in schools and universities."

Over the years, Dr Barrow noted the vast development of technology changing the way he was able to work.

"Computers were a lot slower," he said.

"Stuff is instant these days; you can do stuff by emails.

"I'm doing stuff now that used to never be possible."

This improvement in technology has allowed Dr Barrow to continue to work efficiently with researchers all over the world.

■ 64 years of abiding love, page 70

Lin and Jim's 64 years of abiding love

Jim and Lin Barrow met when Jim, a scientist, visited Armidale, NSW, for a job interview.

Lin was a teacher at Armidale Demonstration School and their paths crossed at a dance.

The couple married in Sydney on September 1, 1956, and on Tuesday celebrated their 64th anniversary at Mercy Place Mont Clare in Claremont.

Essendon-born Jim was awarded his PhD from the University of New England in 1959 and, soon after, they set off to England, together with their daughter who was born in in Armidale, on a post-doctorate scholarship at Rothamsted Research Station, just outside London.

Jim was offered a job in Perth with the CSIRO in Floreat and the family moved to WA in 1961.

He officially retired in 1992 but has continued with his research work. He is currently an honorary research fellow at the University of Western Australia.

“We had our first daughter in Armidale, our first son in England, and our second son in Perth, so that very much reflects our travels in the first few years of our marriage,” says Jim, who lived with his family in Wembley Downs for nearly 30 years and then Mt Claremont for nearly 30 years.

“When we lived in England for 12 months it was not practical to do much travelling because we had two small children.

“But later, when the children had grown up, we were able to do much more.”

The couple were fascinated by WA wildflowers and became ac-

tive members of the Wildflower Society.

Jim is a past president of the society and their contribution to the society was acknowledged when they were given the Wildflower Society Award.

Today they have eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, with another due in November.

Jim says the strength of their marriage comes down to patience, tolerance and a strong, abiding love.

Mercy Place Mont Clare acting service manager, Mark Flores, said the entire Mercy Health team were keen to congratulate the couple on such a special milestone anniversary.

“Jim visits Lin every day here at Mercy Place Mont Clare, and it's clear to see they have had a truly committed and dedicated marriage; reaching such a milestone anniversary is a wonderful achievement,” he said.

Mercy Health is a Catholic not-for-profit provider of care, founded by the Sisters of Mercy.



Jim and Lin Barrow mark their anniversary on Tuesday and, left, their engagement portrait.