

**Agio Pereira, Timor-Leste Minister of State and Presidency of the Council of
Ministers**

Obituary: Kevin Sherlock 8.3.1934 - 2.10.2014

Kevin Sherlock was a long term Darwin resident who led a double life. To those who didn't know him well, he was an unassuming former newsagent from Adelaide, who lived a quiet life in a small flat in the suburbs of Darwin.

To his many friends throughout Australia and Timor-Leste, he was a legend. He was a walking encyclopedia, and his flat was a compact library with shelving on every wall, crammed with books and files about the history of Timor.

Kevin's interest in Timor was sparked following a holiday to Díli in July 1974. On his return he visited the Darwin Library to do some research for another visit he was planning but was disappointed to find only a few records. After the devastation of cyclone Tracy, he returned briefly to Adelaide where he visited the South Australian library and museum and took copies of everything he could find on, what was then, Portuguese Timor. Such was the beginning of a life time obsession that led to Kevin learning Portuguese, traveling to conduct research during his annual holidays to Canberra, Sydney, and Melbourne and eventually to Portugal and Macau, where the Portuguese colonial records were held. Most of his research and trips were self funded and when he retired, he continued to fund his research from his aged care pension.

I met Kevin just before his first visit to Portugal and quickly realised how crucial his work was, and would be, for our people. The survival of our national identity was at stake so the information Kevin was collecting was vital for our struggle. Kevin's research collection consists of thousands of books, newspaper clippings and documents all meticulously indexed and kept in folders in individual plastic sleeves. He has records from the Northern Territory Times and Gazette that date back to the early 1900s, many of which he retyped on an old typewriter, and copies of every mention of Timor in the Northern Territory News since it started publication in the 1950s.

Kevin's research has been accessed by students and academics from around the globe as it is a rare collection of records about Timor under Portuguese colonial rule. I

regularly called on him to track down a vital bit of information that he would carefully copy on his photocopier that had pride of place in his spare room. He refused to go digital and continued to type up his notes despite offers of computers and training courses. He was also an expert on Timorese traditional music.

On one of my visits to Darwin I bought him a new television set to replace his ancient black and white TV. He was delighted, and told me he had never received a gift like that, and then immediately began to worry that it might affect his pension. Kevin was a thoroughly honest person, and was absolutely respectful of everyone he came across in his life.

Kevin survived cancer for many years and I suspect his deep and sincere passion for his Timor research project kept him going. His work for the Timorese people was formally recognized in May 2010, when he was officially honored by President Ramos-Horta at a ceremony in the National Parliament in Díli.

Whenever I rang Kevin, I always asked to speak to “Sherlock Holmes” and he would laugh as he knew it was me. He investigated Timor’s history with the intellectual vigour and commitment of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s fictional character.

While we mourn his passing, he will forever be with us as he has left his invaluable collection to Charles Darwin University, so future scholars, and the children of Timor-Leste, will be able to investigate and learn from our past.

He was a truly great man.

Kevin Sherlock died in the Royal Darwin Hospital on 2 October 2014.