

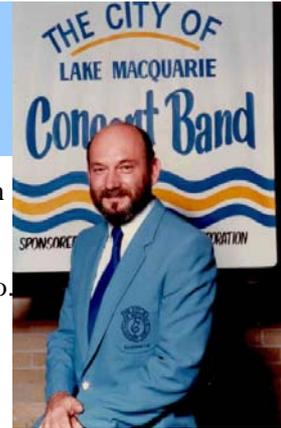
Mr Algirdis (Geat) Ulanas

1946-2000

Geat Ulanas was born Algirdus Ulanas in 1946 in Germany of Lithuanian parents who had fled their worn- torn country.

The family arrived in Australia in 1949 and eventually settled in Boolaroo.

Geat attended the local Catholic primary school and then went to Booragul High School, where he excelled in athletics and field events.



He wanted to be a teacher, so although he had the choice of several varied scholarships, he decided to go to teachers college. On graduating from Newcastle Teachers College, Geat was posted to Whitton Public School, a three teacher school in the Riverina. After three years, he returned to Newcastle, and a few years later he left the Department to work and travel extensively in Africa. Upon returning to Australia, Geat rejoined the Department of Education.

At Valentine Public School, Geat formed a concert band and the rest in history.....

The following article has been taken from the nomination of Mr Ulanas for “The Lake Macquarie City Bicentenary Volunteer Awards 2000”

In 1975, Mr Geat Ulanas volunteered to form a concert Band at the school where he was teaching, the *Valentine Public School*. A year later, the *Valentine Public School Concert Band* won the state championships in Sydney. Obviously this did not occur without an enormous amount of hard work and dedication from all concerned but it was Mr Ulanas who provided the expertise, the impetus and the commitment to put the time into rehearsals, before and after school, in the evenings and at weekends.

Two years later, in 1977, as keen players began to leave primary school, Mr Ulanas answered their call for another band for older students and together with a group of interested parents formed the *City of Lake Macquarie Concert Band*. This was, at the time, the only ‘town band’ in the Newcastle region and it attracted a number of mature age players as well as the school students.

In 1982-3, Mr Ulanas with a number of other band people was behind the formation of the Hunter Region Combined High Schools Band, better known as *The Marching Koalas*. As a director and conductor of this band Mr Ulanas has led these students from all over the Hunter Valley to achieve successes and acclaim for our region all over the world.

Mr Ulanas was willing to take all standards of players into his bands, including mature age novices, because he believes that anyone who wishes to play music and is willing to work at it should have the opportunity. At school he has frequently taken so called ‘difficult’ children into the band because he believed it could help with their social development and he has had many successes over the years.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, this attitude, the bands have continued to enjoy success in championships and have been very active over the years in playing for charity functions, council events and many community and cultural events. Many of the students have gone on to make music a career and there are many music teachers, members of the Defence Force and other bands and even players in symphony orchestras who owe their beginnings in music to the influence of Mr Ulanas.

This commitment to banding took up an enormous amount of personal time and effort in addition to Mr Ulanas' normal work load. The vast bulk of all this work has always been voluntary and Mr Ulanas has done it without complaint and without expecting reward other than the joys of the successes of his bands. These three bands could not have flourished as they have done, or given so much to the local and wider communities without the unpaid time, the hard work and the dedication that Mr Ulanas has been prepared to put in. We, as members of *the City of Lake Macquarie Concert Band*, therefore wish to nominate him for a Volunteer Award in the Bicentenary Year.

In January 1984, Geat along with three other people were chosen as Lake Macquarie Council's Australia Day Citizen of the Year.

This was a great honour awarded for his contribution to musical development, particularly instrumental music, in the Lake Macquarie region.

Geat's wife Margaret is still involved in the community and *the City Of Lake Macquarie Concert Band*.

Geat has three daughters and loved golf.

The profound effect Geat, or "Mr U" as he was better known had on so many people and their families over a period of 25 years is difficult to calculate.

Geat came to band until he was dying, conducting the *City of Lake Macquarie Concert Band* at the East Coast of Australia Band Championships on June 2000, his last performance, just four months before his death on October that year.

Do I tell you my problems? You come to band unless you're dead or dying!" And he did. Geat's ability to inspire was remarkable and he considered members of bands "musicians" regardless of their level of ability.

