Information Sheet No. 35

Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

RAY PAGE – Page's Beach

1907	**- Born in Fremantle, WA.**
1945	**- Moved to Geraldton.**
1963-1973	**Geraldton Town Councillor.**
1963	**- Organised the development of Page's Beach.**
Early 1970s	**- Retired.**
1988	**- Died in Geraldton, WA.**

William Trigg. Photograph:
Cyclopedia of Western Australia.

Ray Page was born and educated in Fremantle. His first job was with a Hardware firm, followed several years later by a job with the North Fremantle Council for whom he drove a Chevrolet truck. Despite several years of service training with the Navy, Ray was unable to enlist at the outbreak of World War II as he was deemed to be in a reserved occupation. However, when the Japanese entered the War, things changed, and Ray enlisted with the RAAF where he trained as an aircraft electrician. Transferred to Pearce Air Base, Ray's first assignment was to fly a plane doing patrols from Busselton using a temporary airstrip. Due to a bout of flu Ray was left off this plane on its last mission to Timor, where it disappeared with all its crew, including Ray's replacement. After being posted to Victoria in order to do an advanced electrical course, Ray was then posted to Geraldton Air Base. Ray made a lot of friends among the fishing community while he

was in Geraldton and generally had such a good time that he was determined to return once the War was over. His next posting was to New Guinea where he ended up in charge of a section of electricians working

on Australian Bristol Beaufighter Bombers, notoriously difficult aircraft to maintain.

Posted home at last, Ray moved to Geraldton in January 1945. As accommodation was scarce at that time, Ray lived in a beach camp and again took up with his fishermen friends. In his own words, "...being a mug and not knowing much about fishing - I bought a boat called the *Maori Lass* - a beautiful boat but quite unsuitable for crayfishing". Learning from his mistakes he sold the *Maori Lass* and bought a more suitable boat, but health problems caused by the War led him to give up crayfishing altogether. Ray then started his own electrical business and struggled on his own until his financial situation improved enough to employ some staff. Once he had assistance the business rapidly advanced and Page's Auto Electrical was soon a firmly established success.

Ray successfully stood for Council in 1963. In the same year he was inspired to organise volunteers from throughout the community to build a beach north of the Fishermen's Wharf. The very popular West End Beach with its shallow, protected water was steadily disappearing under the new wharf and harbour works, where huge facilities for handling iron ore were being built. Ray wanted Geraldton to have a replacement beach just as suitable for families with small children. The area where Page's Beach is now was once an area of low scrubby sandhills and winding sand tracks, known variously as the 'Saddling Paddock' and the 'Passion Pits'. In July 1963, determined to see the project happen, Ray galvanised a large volunteer workforce and enlisted aid from the Chamber of Commerce, Amateur Swimming Club, Sunshine Ski Club and Geraldton Yacht Club and earthmoving equipment from Mr S Hatch, Mr L Eastough, Mr E Giles and the Geraldton Town Council among others. Over several weekends the volunteers cleared and graveled a parking area and erected shelters. Originally it was intended to plug a hole in the nearby reef which allowed turbulent water onto that particular section of beach, so 140 old car bodies were stockpiled nearby and plans were made to drop these into the gap using crayfishing boats. However, approval from the Minister for Works was not forthcoming so the cars were removed by volunteers again. It was another three years before work commenced on a groyne to make the swimming area sheltered and safe for small children. The groyne required 10,000 cubic metres of stone from the Blue Metal quarries at Narra Tarra. Page's Beach is now an enormously popular family beach and as the Geraldton Guardian of 20 June 1963 commented, "This is a fine example of what can be achieved in community service by one person endowed with foresight, enthusiasm and energy".

Deteriorating eyesight forced Ray to retire in the early 1970s, after which he enjoyed some travelling with his wife. Ray died in Geraldton in 1988, aged eighty-one.

References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 131.

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for $27.50 (plus $6.50 postage and handling).