

EULOGY

David was born in the Royal Adelaide Hospital where his mother had done her Nursing Training. The depression was making life a struggle for many people and the family lived on their uncle Pat's farm at Mintaro in the Clare valley. When David's father Norman found work it was as Shire Clerk in Spalding and then Mount Barker. It was here that Dad had his first of many "near death experiences".

In 1938 we lived for a few months in Mt Barker, near Adelaide, on Hampden Road. One day I climbed onto the high rainwater tank at the back door to sail a small wooden yacht. The water level was well below the top of the tank. Somehow I fell through the hole in the top, trying to reach the boat, into several feet of water. I could not swim - we had never lived near any place to learn to swim. My mother happened to come out the back door and heard my boots kicking the inside of the tank. She quickly grabbed a rake, climbed up onto the tank stand and fished me out. I still have a newspaper clipping of the incident, and I think the toy yacht is in the shed somewhere.

Migration to Canberra

Even though the location of Canberra was decided in 1913, the call to attract people to live and work there occurred much later. Norman heeded the call and the family migrated in 1939 when Dad was 8. Older brother Frank also landed a government job and was able to pick out a great house for the family to buy in Reid. It was perfect for gardening and they grew much of their own food from the orchard, vegetable gardens and chooks. A couple of original trees remain today although dad never recovered his appetite for eggs due to the excess of eggs consumed in childhood. We spent years denying the presence of egg in homemade custard so that he could continue to enjoy it in large helpings.

Bob Parker, who we know as Uncle RG, remembers meeting dad at cubs at St John's in Reid not long after they arrived. Dad invited him back to play with trains. Bob is here with his sons but is not able to speak today. Growing up, we kids truly believed that RG and Dave were the funniest fellows on the planet.

Dad and his sister Norma attended Ainslie Public School, just a few blocks from here, and really enjoyed participating in the 75th anniversary celebrations held last year. Dad has always been enormously proud of his sister who repeatedly reached dux level throughout her school life. Dad remembers the day the Dutch B25 Mitchell bomber squadron came to

land at the RAAF base, flying in incredibly low over the school (sound likened to DC3 – if that helps anyone). That day, dad decided he wanted to fly.

In 1943 Frank was posted to New Guinea where he was a radio operator. Although he returned safely Dad said: “It is hard to appreciate *now* the stress of having a family member go off to war”. Dad’s very dear friend Bruce Gillan was killed in Korea in 1952. I believe that this had a profound effect on dad. His abhorrence of war, cruelty and violence meant that Dad was often unable to watch the news headlines let alone many of the movies made in recent times.

At Canberra High School, dad enjoyed all the usual things including basketball (he subsequently made the ACT rep team) and rugby (he was in the first XV) and made many lifelong friends.

1948 - After school, age 16

After school dad had a couple of dull desk jobs before starting a surveying cadetship which lead onto a fulfilling career. It was the perfect job for someone who loved traveling, being outdoors and appreciated the natural beauty of the country. A long time surveying friend, John Hyslop, will speak further re dads working life.

Apart from work dad enjoyed motorbike riding on the weekends with his friends. He recalls:

About 1950 a group of us set out on a Thursday evening on the regular trip to Bathurst for the Easter races. We were on several English motorbikes, each with a pillion passenger, and myself on my ex-army Indiana 600cc V twin - loaded with camping gear. It was about the worst piece of motorbike engineering ever built.

About half way to Yass the bikes ahead of me hit a pothole, hardly visible in the dark. John Murray, a pillion passenger on one of the bikes, turned around to see my Indian doing a spectacular front somersault. No crash helmets in those days. We put the bike back together - the battery had been jolted out onto the road - and I rode back to Canberra, with a few areas of skin missing. No Easter races for me that year.

A couple of years later, late on a Friday night, I was riding from Sydney, where I was working, back to Canberra for the weekend. Going along the northern end of Lake George, as I passed a large gum tree right at the edge of the road, there

was a loud explosion, a blinding flash of light and pieces of wood and bark flying everywhere. Nothing of any size hit me. On the return trip on Sunday afternoon I stopped to inspect the tree and found it blackened all down side by the lightning strike. Passing it many times on subsequent trips I always crossed my fingers.

Apart from playing in the ACT rep basketball team, Dad was an active member of the YMCA skiing and bushwalking club and helped to build a ski lodge and the first ski tows at Guthega. Dad would often drive the bus which seated 26 people and they would sing all the way from Guthega to Cooma. He also enjoyed playing the accordion for sing-a-longs, although he said he usually relinquished it if there were any Austrians around. It was during this time that Dad met mum (1955). Incidentally Norma and Bob met during this time as well.

Mum and Dad - 1955

When mum returned to Brisbane in 1959, Dad decided to pay her a visit. He arrived, met the family and invited her out for *her* first flight in a small plane. Talk about impressive... dad proposed as they flew around the spectacular Glasshouse Mts. They were married in September 1960. Mum and dad celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary earlier this year. Even though in hospital dad managed to convince one of the nurses to bring him a flower from the garden outside the hospital to give to mum.

Susan was born approximately nine months afterwards and then it was off to New Guinea for four years where Peter and Fiona were both born. More lifelong friends made during this time.

We returned to Canberra as a family of five in 1965 and moved into Lawley Place, a wonderful cul-de-sac in Deakin.

1965 to 1982 – The Deakin Years

Dad went away on field trips quite a bit in the early years but one of the best things about that was that he bought home interesting things. Not the usual tourist merchandise... he came home with enormous trucks that had ladders and water tanks on them. It was always exciting.

In fact living with dad was always pretty exciting as he wasn't a fellow who could sit still for too long, well not indoors at least. From a young age we learned to ride bikes and fix punctures, ski and get back up the hill the hard way, bush walking (well more like a gallop really with dads long legs), play music by ear, mow the lawn, line up basketball shots, play

table tennis on the homemade table, sail, body surf, snorkel, eat spicy food, pitch tents, build a fire and drive a car. No matter the activity there was always a cup of tea involved somewhere. Sleeping in was frowned upon and dad would start the mower outside your window around nine if you weren't up. Television was called the box and frowned upon as a waste of time. You never said "I'm bored" when dad was in ear shot. Dad urged us to play team sports in a non-competitive way and to enjoy music as a communal activity as he viewed it as a medium for making friends in the future.

Slide nights were a feature of our childhood. Dad would set it up in the lounge room and we'd all settle in to what seemed like endless pictures of planes and the photos taken from those planes. It was always a bit of relief to move on to holiday snaps where at least one of us would make a point of looking grumpy.

Dad was always fixing things, especially cars. At one stage we had an old mini an awfully noisy tinny thing. People used to stand and watch dad unfold himself out of the driver's seat which was about two inches off the ground. This is the only car that really confounded him and that was mainly because he couldn't fit his hands in the engine.

He took us flying. That was exciting. He let *us* fly sometimes – that would sometimes change from exciting, to nauseating as we dipped, but it was always hilarious. Dad never panicked. He was unflappable...even when the luggage door blew open and things starting getting sucked out.

Dad encouraged us to reach our potential and enjoy the journey.

He did just that, when he began an Arts degree as a mature age student. He majored in the Indonesian language and geography, both of which were useful in his later work.

1983 to 1998 – The Adelaide Years

When dad was considering a new role in Adelaide it was agreed that mum would stay on in Canberra for another few months for Fiona to finish year 12. Dad found himself alone in a new town and at a bit of a loose end after years of study, work and family commitments. The old team sports and musical instruments adage kicked in and dad joined two groups: Cycling for Pleasure (was there was any other kind?) which gave him a weekend activity where he would get to talk, ride and explore all at once and, in the absence of a sociable group requiring an accordion player, he joined the local Woodville choir. It was a winning combination in terms of making new friends and settling in.

When mum arrived dad introduced her into both groups as well. Life got really busy and they realised that if they kept a close eye on the budget dad could retire. He retired at only 57.

Mum and dad took up cycle touring with gusto. Over the next 14 years, Mum and dad did six bike trips to Europe, as well as trips to Japan, Canada, New Zealand and many within Australia. They became experts at living out of two small pannier bags – especially difficult for dad whose spare shoes took up one of them. Dad would spend months planning an itinerary that would take them up valleys and down mountains (they found flat boring), off the beaten track and into small villages where they were more likely to meet the real locals. This was really living.

In between bike trips they were flat out with choir commitments. Dad enjoyed being one of the organisers, singing in parts, making friends and performing but sometimes I wondered whether his favourite part of the evening was ‘joke time’ held in the half time break. Indeed he would routinely classify any new jokes as being suitable or unsuitable for choir being sure not to offend the ladies. He may well have told the unsuitable ones quietly to basses I suspect.

Flying parachutists was a way to get in free flying time and he loved it. One day he took six parachutists up to 10,000 feet. He recalls:

They all jumped out as usual, into freefall. I started the left hand spiral descent and watched as the canopies opened. There were only five. Fearing the worst I straightened the aircraft to have a better look and heard a shout of ‘Hey’ behind me. There was just one leg visible up along the rear door post. The aircraft was trimmed slightly nose down. I undid my harness and crawled to the back of the cabin.

There was Louise Davis, a charming lady, parachute instructor, scientific mathematician, fiancée of another parachutist, under the aircraft, hanging by one leg strap from a seat belt bracket on the cabin floor.

I grasped her arms and tried to pull her up onto the cabin floor but, with the slippery jump suit and violent slip stream I could not lift the weight. The trapped leg suddenly swung free, I said ‘Are you OK to go?’. Louise said ‘I think so’, I let go, she dropped away and after a second the parachute opened. She landed safely, I landed safely. It made my day.

Dad’s love of bushwalking and mountain climbing inspired him to go with brother-in-law Bob to Nepal. Although both in their 60’s, they completed an inspiring trek to Everest Base camp. I’m not sure if the singing was as good as the YMCA bus to Guthega, but the photographs they returned with were spectacular. Dad and Bob have been attending reunions of the group each year since.

1999 to now – Dirrawan Gardens years

The move back east was a wrench at first but it didn't take long to rekindle old friendships, join new choirs and realise that not all the furniture was going to fit. Dad has really enjoyed being a part of the German choir, the University choir and the Sing Australia choir - each very different but all with wonderful people. We thank the Sing Australia choir who will be singing one of dad's favourite songs for us a little later.

But of course the *most* joy in returning to Canberra was the ease with which mum and dad could see their children and grandchildren. School holidays in Canberra became the default holiday plan.

Mum and Dad made it clear that they were never to be considered a free babysitting service as they were far too busy. BUT *really* that was a hoax. Dad would spend hours preparing bikes in ever changing sizes and finding helmets to fit before we'd arrive. He helped them all learn to balance. We'd go riding around the lake and always end up at the Castle for a game of hide and seek. Dad would spend hours in the park across the road pushing the swing, kicking a footy or throwing a vortex. He could find ways to coax them to walk up Mount Ainslie and back for a bit of exercise. He didn't mind maintaining the old hobie catamaran just so we could go sailing when we visited. A favourite for my kids, was when pop would take them out to the recycled building materials dump near the airport to see the giant diggers and trucks. He loved them so much.

Dad recalls taking granddaughter Caitlin to the castle at Commonwealth Park for a play. Being a friendly child she went around to each child saying: "My name is Caitlin, what's yours?". When another child answered she then responded with "And this is called Pop".

Over the years dad has also enjoyed getting to know the families of our in-laws: The Macleods, Gleeson-Whites and Abdurahmans.

Dad would always make time to send letters with copies of photos and book in time to help us too. With Susan and Ian in Taree, Peter and Sarah in various locations and Rustum and myself in Sydney, it is hard to keep track of how many houses dad helped to renovate, how many clean-ups, paint jobs and bookcases he built.

It is probably no secret that dad loved recycling and repurposing things. The excitement of coming *back* from the dump with something *useful, for free!* was contagious. We almost had a day of mourning when it became illegal.

The last 8 years

The first melanoma appeared on dad's shoulder in February 2006, seven and half years ago, probably a product of many years working in the sun without a shirt on. It was small but

required removal. The usual tests indicated clearance had been obtained and dad was out of the woods. However, dad had joined a research program that required his results to go through additional testing in the US. These results indicated that a minute amount of melanoma had in fact entered the bloodstream.

Dad remained symptomless for almost four years until the first brain tumours appeared in November 2009. We were devastated and thought we were going to lose him. I was *angry* that *cancer* would take him. Falling off a ladder or crashing his bike seemed far preferable. However, we did not *yet* appreciate just how strong Dad's immune response was or what a wonderful surgeon Dr Charlie Teo was. Dad was doing crosswords within hours of major surgery.

Although dad had several melanomas appear and be surgically removed over the next few years, he remained symptom free. As a family we felt so lucky to still have dad around and made the most of it by sharing family holidays together at home, down the coast, and a wonderful easter at Yarrangobilly Caves, a place we had visited numerous time in our childhood.

In Jan 2011 scans revealed that dad had multiple melanomas in both the abdomen and brain. Dr Teo noted dad's condition as non-operable and terminal but said that the power of positive living on the body's immune system may provide some hope. In the follow up testing six months later there were *no* tumours showing up.

Dr Teo was very excited to see dad again two years later in January 2013. He took a photo of himself with Dad and asked whether he could use dad's case in his research. He removed another brain tumour and dad made another great recovery.

In March this year, Peter and I had the honour of singing 'Canberra's calling to you' with dad and others in the rose garden at Parliament House as part of Canberra's centenary celebrations. Dad was the oldest one there by a decade. I felt proud and blessed to be there with him.

Mum and dad had a wonderful trip to South Australia seeing friends and family in March this year. Dad was *well* and it truly felt like a holiday. When asked how he was he would reply 'If I was any fitter I'd be dangerous'.

Over the past few months our family have benefitted immeasurably from the love and support shown by each of you in your own ways. Dad was still able to hear right to the end and enjoyed visits. Although he lost mobility he did not lose his mind. This was important to him. Last week Dad and I watched 'The Gods must be crazy' at the nursing home. It was a lovely thing to do together and now I say 'The Gods must be lucky' to have a man like him with them.

Pre - dad years : Norman Cook and Ruby Mabel Jacka

- Met in France during WW1 where Norman, an engineer, was re-building destroyed roads and bridges and Ruby was a nurse.
- After the war Norman headed to Cuba where he was an engineer for Havana railways and Ruby nursed in Adelaide. The romance blossomed by correspondence and they married in Sydney in 1923 and set up home in Cuba. Frank was born about 9 months later.
- Upon return from Cuba the family were briefly based in Newcastle where Norma was born.
- The depression hit, jobs dried up and the family returned to Mintaro in South Australia where Mabel's brother, Pat, had a farm.
- Dad was born in 1931

The early years were tough years for all but many happy memories. Dad recalls:

Mum spent so many hours making family clothing at the sewing machine at our Uncle Pat's farm – no electricity but it was treadle operated - while Dad worked outside for two years digging an 8 metre diameter stone walled water tank in the backyard which, with a hand operated pump, was the house water supply for years afterwards. The original house had no bathroom, just a large china bowl in the bedroom for hot water. Norma had learned sewing and made her uniforms for school and university and teacher's college. I filled in sometimes sewing hems around pieces of rag to make handkerchiefs. And Norma helped around the house at age 7, by milking the one and only co-operative cow for the house supply (see small photo).

During this time Frank attended Mintaro Primary School -an occasional 3 Km walk in bare feet when we had no money for shoes. He later attended Clare High School where his name was listed on the school Dux board for some years (boarding with Mrs Horrocks across the road). I don't know whether it is still there.