

DAD'S EULOGY

I'd like to start by talking a bit about Dad's memories of his early life.

The Dawson family of Dad's father Frank, his Mother Helen and Dad's older siblings Edna, Ron, Phyllis and Marion had farmed in Bannerton up in the Sunraysia district near Mildura, where Frank had worked in farming and was a skilled mechanic, farmer and contractor. Dad's parents had worked on a number of share farms around Seymour, Cohuna and Robinvale and his father had even spent time as a shearer. Unfortunately, his father's health was failing and so they made the decision to move to a more manageable small orchard in Wonga Park. It was there that Dad was born in 1932.

Dad was quite a bit younger than the rest of his siblings. Sister Marion, who was closest in age, was 8 years older than him. Being so much younger Dad was obviously spoiled and much loved by his older siblings. When Edna was ready to start secondary school, the family moved to Dandenong.

Unfortunately, by then Dad's father had been diagnosed with Encephalitis and later Parkinson's Disease and was unable to work, so his mother Helen worked 3 small holdings over the next 20 years in Gladstone Rd, McPhees Rd and Heatherton Rd. These ranged in size from 10 to 20 acres and his mother would milk cows and Dad would help deliver milk on horseback in the old large milk cans. He told me of a time when the horse bolted and milk went everywhere. When he finally gained control of the animal, he was wearing most of the day's product.

Dad doesn't have much memory of his father being able bodied and just remembered him being bed ridden for most of the time. Dad's mother Helen was a very strong and resourceful woman and managed to provide for the family on not much income. She was also an early version of a Tiger Mum. She was very big on her children doing well in their education and pushed them into studies and music. On Dad's first day of school at Dandy East Primary she took him straight to the Principal's office and insisted that her son start in Grade 2. She told the Principal how bright he was and she would not take no for an answer and so Dad skipped two grades on his first day of school. As we now know, later in school life this can backfire and socially Dad said he struggled. In Year 11 he was only 14 years of age and was with kids 2 and 3 years older than him.

Music was very big in the Dawson household and piano was the main instrument but Dad at the age of 9 wanted to be a Drummer. Unfortunately in 1940 he said a drum kit cost the equivalent of \$8,000-10,000 in today's money so that dream was never going to be fulfilled. However he was very excited when older brother Ron, who was serving in the Air Force in Darwin, returned on leave in 1941 and presented Dad with a set of drum sticks and a Ukulele. Dad was very happy with that. Ron also taught him a few chords on the Ukulele and Dad picked up the rest himself. He said he learnt mainly Hill Billy music and in his first year of High school Dad won the school talent quest performing his rendition of "The Martins and The Coys". He still remembered pocketing first prize of 2 and 6 which is about \$10 in today's money.

As Dad was not enjoying High school due to his young age he was able to talk his Mother into letting him apply a job at the SEC as an office boy on the condition that he attended night school. Dad was able to stick to his word and although he took his time, 10 years in fact, he did complete his degree as a CPA and had a successful career as an accountant.

Dad was very close to his sister Marion and they formed their first band "The Arcadias" with Marion on piano and Dad on guitar. I remember the name of that band because a few years later when I was about 5 years old I found a large wooden stage sign of the Arcadias under our house in Noble Park. In trying to lift and carry that sign I dropped it on my big toe, requiring stitches. This brings me to something Dad would always say to me when I did something dumb like that, which could be quite regular. He would always say the word "Consequences" every time something didn't end well or I had exhibited poor behaviour. I had no idea what it meant but as soon as I stuffed up he would yell out "Consequences!" That would also often be followed by a pulled ear. He loved a good ear pull. So to me "consequences" meant watch your ears. It also led to my sisters calling me "Elf Ears" as my ears got bigger and bigger.

Talking about ears, Dad had an excellent musical ear. He could play many instruments and was a very proficient and talented musician. When he formed the Night Owls he decided, rather than just play guitar he would also play saxophone to make the band more versatile. He decided to give himself 12 weeks to learn the sax before playing with the band. He took 3 lessons and within 6 weeks he was playing the sax live with the band. Our home was very musical and so were family "get-togethers" with the relatives. Impromptu concerts were performed with the cousins chipping in on different

instruments. The Trigg boys were always the brass section with Peter on Trumpet, Ian on Cornet and of course Robbie overpowering everyone on the trombone or the Ufo. Dad made sure my sisters both learnt and practiced piano on a daily basis. I wasn't allowed to watch TV until I had endured, over and over, a raft of major, minor and diminished scales followed by Fur Elise played to death each and every afternoon. As an adult I asked Dad why I hadn't learnt piano and he said he and Mum didn't think I would be able to sit still for long enough. When I was about 6 years old Dad got me a drum kit and his friend Syd Hand, to teach me. I think he thought I was more suited to hitting things. I learnt them for a couple of years and then he moved me on onto the Vibraphone. Dad took me to a private teacher when we lived in Perth. That lasted for a little while until I decided there was a limit to the number of times I could play Yellow Bird and Quando, Quando, Quando. I then moved on to learning Dad's saxophone at about age 11 which I was pretty good at. With my cousin Murray on the Oboe, and myself on Sax we would play at school assemblies in Year 7 accompanied by Auntie Marion on the piano. Murray and my sister Kerrie would also play piano at assemblies for the singing of the school song.

Shortly after however, Murray and I discovered the band KISS and we moved onto Electric Guitars, Marshall Amps and face painting. I'm sure Dad must have wondered what on earth this was all about. His musical influences of James Last and The Tijuana Brass were now lost for good but he never put our music down as he could see the enjoyment it brought us, and after all that it the purpose of music. Dad always more than supportive and was there to drive me around to rehearsals and shows.

Dad had met Mum at the SEC in Dandenong and they fell in love and married. Mum told me she was impressed with him because he didn't smoke, gamble or drink. No wonder he became an Accountant. Mum also said she noticed that he had "nice teeth and clean fingernails". I always remembered that and I brush my teeth every day. I think my wife Janine was also impressed with my teeth and fingernails. Not so much my toe nails.

Dad, along with his mother and sister Edna each purchased a block of land in a new estate in Glen Waverley. Dad paid off the block and owner-built the house himself and that was where both my sisters Linda and Kerrie were born. Dad was always really good at building things. He knew how to concrete and he knew carpentry. He loved woodwork. He would spend a lot of time at the

factory of his close friend Arthur Shimmen, who was a cabinet maker. Dad would make all sorts of wood projects with Arthur with me tagging along. Luckily Dad kept all his fingers, as I remember Arthur was always losing his in the buzz saw. In fact, I think my Uncle Graeme, a plastic surgeon, actually had a crack at sewing a couple of his fingers back on. That also reminds me of the time that I cut off my own finger off whilst practicing the drums in grade 6. I jammed and severed my finger whilst folding up the metal stand because I was not paying attention but instead was watching the television. I heard someone say "Consequences!" so I quickly grabbed my finger and covered my ears before Dad drove me to PANCH hospital.

Whilst living in Glen Waverley, Dad had a car and was able to drive to work at the SEC and also to play cricket with the Methodist Cricket Club in Dandenong. Unfortunately, when the car broke down he could not afford to fix it so we went without a car for two years. Catching the train to work from Glen Waverley meant going almost to the city and then back to Dandenong so Dad and Mum bought another block of land in Noble Park and Dad owner-built his next house. This is where I was born. The greatest thing about this house was that it had a toilet and a septic tank. There were no mains sewerage connections in the area at this time so the neighbours would have to use an outhouse thunderbox can. Men with flat hats would come a couple of times a week to take away the full can and replace it with an empty one. Needless to say, I got good at holding on till I got home. The block had a really long concrete driveway and one Christmas my sisters and I all received new roller skates. Dad tied a rope onto the back of the Hillman and we would take turns as he towed us up the driveway. Needless to say, there were a number of "consequences" doing that.

Dad loved the building process of houses. Even when he and Caroline moved to Daisy Hill he organised to have a house in Melbourne cut into sections and then transported to the property. I asked him if it was cheaper doing it that way rather than building from scratch and he said "No, I just like the process of putting the house back together again"

Dad was a gun cricketer. He could not miss a game for anything. In fact he even married Mum on New Year's Day so that he wouldn't have to miss a match. Dad loved his cricket and at 13 was a member of the first ever team (an Under 18 team) entered by the Methodist Cricket Club. It started a lifetime connection with the Methos. He became a legend of the club. He was a very

textbook correct opening batsman and broke a number of batting records during his career. When he was in his 40s, we had a family wedding to attend which coincided with day 3 of a Grand Final he was playing in. Dad had already been batting for two days. He promised Mum he would be able to leave by tea as the match was won. He was on about 250 not out at 3 o'clock and was running out of time to make a triple century, so he went the bash. He holed out and was caught just before tea on 293. He was pretty dirty on whoever it was that was getting married. It might have been my sister Linda, I can't remember. Dad played lots of representative cricket and was Captain of the Country Week representativenn teams in the 1960s. He played competitive cricket till around age 70 when he was still competing in a veterans comp.

Dad had a great sense of humour and was King of the Dad jokes.

Unfortunately, as a child a lot of his jokes would go over my head and it would be years later until I got the punchline. He was always on to me as well. After dinner Dad loved his dessert. A meal wasn't complete until we had had "Sweets". It was a must. Even if it was just a tin of peaches. When we were living in a small duplex in Perth, the fridge was located in the laundry. After dinner one night I offered to clear up and as such took the ice cream to the laundry to put back in the fridge. Whilst in there I slipped the lid off and was about to help myself to seconds when Dad yelled "Stop eating the ice cream!" When I walked back in I asked him "How did you know?" He replied "Who offers to put the ice cream away and then takes a spoon with them!"

Dad was real "people" person and always took a great interest in talking to everyone and anyone. He had a genuine interest in getting to know them. He loved people and people loved him. He would remember names and details and endeared himself to all our Williamstown friends. Dad was also a gentle man. I never heard him raise his voice or argue with people. He was firm on discipline with us as children and good with an ear pull or the odd clip over the head but was always very affectionate as a father and my sisters and I grew up in a warm happy home knowing we were loved.

When Dad met Carolyn he was so happy. He dearly loved Caro and they have always had a close relationship. Carolyn has always valued family and she insisted that Mum always be present and a part of the family and there was never any animosity. It was Caro who was able to reunite our family and I'll always be grateful to her for that.

Dad loved spending time with my children and always got great enjoyment interacting with them. When he stayed over, if he took Marley's bed off her she would find gold coins left for her in the mattress a couple of days later. He also loved watching them play sport. He would ring on a Sunday night to check how they went on the weekend and would know exactly who they had been playing and where the team was on the ladder. Even just a few years ago, Dad could still hold his own with my boys in backyard cricket. I would hear him tell them "Front foot forward, left elbow up, Head over the ball", just as he had told me 50 years earlier.

Dad, you possessed so many great virtues which you passed on to us. You taught me honesty, respect, patience and love. You taught me that everything we do has consequences and to think carefully before you act. You passed on your love of music and sport. You loved life and you lived it fully. The last few months were so tough for you. You can now rest peacefully Dad. We love you.