

# Eulogy for Keith Kings – Graeme Rodwell

This is the story of a young boy who had a dream.

It took him on an amazing lifelong adventure and grew into a unique and very valuable transport collection and historic record.

He played an outstanding and seminal role in the world of the transport enthusiast, as a founder, leader and facilitator over the last 70 years and his legacy will long be remembered.

He made many lifelong friends and diligently corresponded with some over long distances, keeping in touch and up to date.

He was always known as a quiet, humble, hardworking person, a true gentleman, always welcoming and ready to help.

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This is the story of Keith Sydney Kings and we are here today to remember and honor him.

Keith was the only son of Charles and Lillian Kings, born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1928.

The family first resided at 24 Smith Road, Camberwell where as a young boy, Keith was able to watch the trams pass by the end of his street from his front garden.

In 1937 the family moved to 22 Hillside Parade Glen Iris. Keith attended the South Camberwell Primary School and travelled to school using the 1936 Glen Iris to Camberwell bus. This bus was later acquired and beautifully restored by Keith's good friend Charlie Craig who sadly passed away a few years ago. It is the bus you would have seen here today in the driveway when you arrived. It is now owned by Driver Bus Lines and we gratefully thank them for its provision at this service to farewell Keith.

After Primary School, Keith went to Gardiner Central School and later travelled by train and tram to Melbourne High School to further his education.

Whilst at Melbourne High School, World War II began and Keith's interest in many forms of transport grew, particularly that used during the war.

After a day at school, he would often visit the Victorian State Library to do research. He wrote essays on transport and began making miniature, hand painted scale models of fleets of ships, submarines, squadrons of planes, and yes, Trams. These are now housed in beautifully prepared display boxes at The State Library.

After leaving school, Keith worked in a clerical role at the Preston workshops of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board until February 1956.

By now he had become a keen still photographer and he also made amateur moving films. He first used his Dad's 116 camera, and later a cousin gave him a Box Brownie camera as a Christmas or Birthday Present. Some of his first photography was of my parents' wedding when he was just 14 years old.

When he was 21, all he wanted was to get Mum and Dad's permission to stay up all night to film the night works on the railway bridge down the road.

Keith documented everything very carefully and methodically and wrote notes in a series of little black books that the library now have.

He created a unique code system to record information about his photographs and movies. He bought many boxes of Weeties and Cornflakes to collect the plastic transport models inside. He was a thorough planner and good at thinking things through. He wrote lots of notes and attached them to items to remind him of things still to do. He had a great Beetles record collection along with recorded sounds of transport vehicles (whistles and bells).

Keith attended church in his younger days, was a quiet, kind and generous person, always keen to listen and willing to help. He had a particular way of expressing himself and often would say, 'Well, well, well' with a smile and a twinkle in his eye. He also had a wry sense of humor. He was a regular blood donor for many years and regularly donated to many different charities. He never consumed alcohol but loved a cup of tea and a vanilla slice.

Keith liked to listen to ABC Radio but never owned a television. He kept daily records of rainfall and always carried an umbrella in his bag. He loved his motor car with its personalized number plates KSK 290. The number 290 referred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cable Car Trailer to be preserved by the late Alf Twentyman.

Keith and his Mum and Dad were great friends of the Caldwell family from Brisbane. They used to call Keith 'Kingy' and they shared many happy times together over many years. Joyce, who is now 90 years old still resides in Brisbane and is represented here today by Robert Thomson who has also had a long association with Keith.

Keith had twin cousins on his Dad's side, Eric and Stan. They had also attended Melbourne High School and both became highly qualified dentists who had a practice at the T&G Building in Collins Street. Stan was awarded an AO.

On his Mum's side, there were also two cousins, Mavis and Stanley, my mother and uncle. Keith would visit with his Mum and Dad when my sister Helen and I were young. Later he would visit Mum for afternoon tea and she would tend to his sewing and mending needs and also drive him places when he was unable. He visited Stanley at his property at Yering in the Yarra Valley, the family home of Meryllyn, Neville and Rosalie. He was able to store his Studebaker Bus there for a

time, doing some restoration work. Stanley also enjoyed working on and restoring his Dodge Fargo truck and entered it in competitions.

In March 1956, a career change saw him working in the Assurance Industry with the General Accident Assurance Company in Melbourne.

Keith's Dad built another house at 135 Through Road Camberwell where Keith lived with his Mum and Dad and looked after his parents until they passed away.

In the early 1990s, at the beginning of the computer age, Keith decided to retire.

In the early 2000s he moved into a unit at a retirement village in Station Street, Burwood located close to the tram service.

His collection was housed in cabinets and storage units that fully occupied the space except for his small writing desk and a very small chair. He had drawn a grid floor plan and made scale models of items to decide how to best fit these into the space available. There was just enough room between the storage rows to squeeze open the doors to inspect the contents. Truly a testament to the quality of the building foundations and how much can be housed within a small space!

Keith had dedicated most of his life to the documentation and preservation of the history of transport, in particular trams, trains and buses in Melbourne, country Victoria, Interstate and New Zealand.

Several years ago, Keith donated his extensive photographic collection, books, papers, journals, charts, models and memorabilia to the State Library and his film collection to the National Sound And Film Archives.

Keith also had a collection of historically significant vehicles, two of which are fully restored and have won prestigious awards. His MMTB Studebaker Bus is regarded by many as his crowning achievement and was featured in the wartime mini series 'The Pacific' filmed in Melbourne.

Keith published a number of books, has written many articles and presented the 2002 RMIT Lecture on Urban Transport.

Keith and his close friend Robert Green were involved in an outstanding project, working together and collaborating with the newly appointed state artist Harold Freedman and others during 1972-1977 to support the production of the 'Transport Mural' at Southern Cross Station (formerly Spencer Street Station) and can still be seen there near the shopping precinct. It depicts the history of all forms of transport in Victoria over the first 100 years.

Keith was a cofounder of TMSV (Tramway Museum Society Of Victoria) and devoted his time over many years towards the establishment of the Tramway Museum at 'Bylands' which houses various types of trams and his Bus Collection.

He was Secretary there for a considerable time as well as being the local COTMA representative (Council Of Tramway Museums Of Australasia).

Keith also cofounded BCSV (Bus And Coach Society Victoria), which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last November, AETA (Australian Electric Traction Association), ARHS (Australian Railway Historical Society) and is a Highly Esteemed Life member of 'The Puffing Billy Preservation Society'.

Keith's founding and ongoing membership of many different societies and interest groups as well as active involvement in committees and providing help in practical ways, all made a remarkable and very significant contribution over more than 70 years.

Five years ago Keith moved to an Aged Care Facility in Vermont South, near the tramline, where he enjoyed a quiet and comfortable life.

Sadly, Keith's health began to decline in February and he passed away peacefully in the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> of March.

I would like to offer a very special thank you to my wife Louise for her loving care of Keith over the last 10 years, visiting him, taking him shopping, on outings, to doctor's appointments, etc and in recent months often helping to feed him. A truly wonderful effort.

On behalf of my family, I would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to – Keith's friends, especially David Webb for his enormous effort, also Robert Green, Brian Weedon and so many others for their assistance, help and guidance which is very much appreciated.

Special thanks to The State Library of Victoria for acquiring and preserving Keith's Collection (which in time, will be made available for the general public to view) - to Madeleine and Tim and other staff from the State Library for always being helpful and considerate – to the Staff at Victoria Grange Aged Care for their great care, assistance and cheeriness - to Reverend Mark Hanson for his help in planning and leading the service today, Le Pine Funerals for their professionalism and support at this difficult time and again to Drivers Bus Lines for providing the Federal Bus which will later follow Keith on his final journey passing by his childhood home, where his dream first began.

At his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration, Keith stood up to thank everyone 'present, past and future'. The Tramway, Bus and Train Community were like family to Keith and it has been a great privilege for us to get to know his friends and colleagues and be made to feel so welcome. This has greatly enriched our lives. Thank you for the respect and high esteem in which Keith was held.

Keith wrote the obituary for Wal Jack. Clearly, he had touched Keith's life and inspired him. In his humble way, Keith has also touched people's lives and was an inspiration to many.

We will all miss him greatly but his legacy and example will live on.

We acknowledge those who were unable to be here today and thank them for their messages of condolence.

Thank you to everyone for your friendship, support and for coming here today to celebrate Keith Kings' incredible journey over the last 90 years.

Following the service, we warmly welcome you to join us for afternoon tea and please be sure to record your attendance here today in the condolence book

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