

Eulogy – Tribute Jim McDonald

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Link to video and photo tributes: www.johncrackermcdonaldtribute.com.au

John Cracker McDonald, a Kind, Strong, Gentlemen with a Great sense of humour and love of life....

Thank you for all the tributes and wishes to our remarkable Pop, Dad, Cracker, Jack and Mate - each of these has helped our grieving, by turning our mind to the celebration of Dad's life and the big footprint that he left.

This tribute is a compilation of stories and thoughts from family and friends and some special words from Mum, Jen, Geoff, Grant and Ree.

If Dad was here, he would definitely say "we don't need all this Fuss." Mate - You deserve it!

Born on the 24th April 1944 John Norman McDonald, was the eldest son of John Charles (Jack) a Printer from McDonald and Rosbrook Toowoomba and Theresa Elma (Tess) Berghofer – from a farming family from Middle Ridge.

Jack and Tess married on 3 April 1941 at St Lukes after Tess had won the boss's heart while working in the binding room, a story that would be replicated by my parents in years to come...

Our Grandfather Jack played Rugby Union for Australia playing tests against the All Blacks before being part of the 1939 Wallaby tour to England – unfortunately they didn't play a game due to the outbreak of World War II and they ended up filling sandbags to help the war effort.

Tess played basketball for Queensland and would proudly tell us that dad and his brothers and sisters got their sporting talent from the Mare's side.

61 Herries Street was where they raised their family of seven Norma, John, Jill, Peter, Bruce and twins Paul and David.

The children were my Grannies pride. Dad had found memories of visits to The Ridge and Mum Berg's to collect eggs and other supplies with Jill. Jill recalled back then, not many people had cars and we could jump on the bus and tell the driver you wanted to go to Mum Bergs and he would take us there.

Dad had a typical childhood. Jill recalled the ultimate tig/obstacle course was Grannies blossom trees across the top of the Herries St 6 foot fence with a flat top and we would get in trouble if we damaged any fruit.

Barry Coonan remembered He and Cracker would adopt the name of their latest favourite racehorse with Dad being the Sydney Cup winner Karaoke, at one stage, he was unbeatable.

All the children went to East State School where a sporting house is named after the McDonald family. Every year he could, Dad presented his award.

Dad went to the Toowoomba Grammar School, from 1958 to 1960 and the school has sent us a tribute which is partially included today's booklet.

The 1960 School magazine paid tribute, to our Dux, 'Cracker' McDonald, we offer our congratulations for having the ability to apply 'brains' to tricky situations during school".

John McDonald's legacy endures at Toowoomba Grammar School, where he is honoured on the Old Boys' Wall of Achievement, as is his father, John Charles McDonald.

Dad maintained a strong connection with the School, coaching athletics alongside Lindsay Jones and more recently cherishing visits, with Joan, where they spent quality time with their grandson, Mack, who is now in year five.

John McDonald embodied the School's motto, "Fidelis in Omnibus" – faithful in all things.

After School Dad started work at McDonald and Rosbrook

In 1962 the lovely Joan Murphy started work in the binding room in a job she really enjoyed. Following a dare by Neil Redpath,,,, Dad asked Mum out on a date and the history of my grandparents, began to repeat itself.

They went to the drive-in movies in the work Kombie on their first date. When I asked Mum why she said yes, mum said, "He was so Nice, he was the nicest person

she had every known for a girl growing up in Coonabarabran. He was a gentleman and always respected mine and my mother's wishes.

Mum and Dad's relationship is one that others should be exemplified by...A genuine love, based on respect for each other. After a four-year courtship they married on 16 December 1966.

The loyalty to each other showed us how to be a team in life and resolve problems **together**. This is Not blind loyalty but loyalty build on trust and having relationships with people you want to associate yourself and focused on a common goal. This taught us determination and fairness.

This was the same loyalty built with Ross Livermore and the stable foundation which was the basis of much success of the Queensland teams and the development of the game.

Likewise with partnerships with the RASQ CEO Damon Phillips and Vice President Billy Hedges.

Mum and Dad, have negotiated the trials and tribulations of life. They have been successful in many ways —wonderful hosts, both humble and unassuming. It is their example that has taught us great qualities and a strong work ethic, **but, importantly** - enjoy life along the way.

With sister's Jennifer and Julie and brother Geoff all born under 5 and then Grant and Maree 7 and 8 years later. Mum was the devoted housewife AND **devoted** right to the end. Mum did everything at home while Dad worked,, but each night as a sign of appreciation Dad and the kids would **always** clean up.

The only exception to the cooking duties was on the weekend when Dad loved to cook Bacon and eggs or one of his famous omelettes.

It was fun growing up as a young McDonald — we could make a game out of anything, **and we still do**.

Card nights were one of Dads favourite things and we played everything but mainly 500, Euchre and when there was a big group, 31! so everyone could play.

Dad also loved the piano and Pianola singalongs, often with our lifelong extended family of Ted and Alison Thistlewood and crew.

We grew up in an era when we knew all the neighbours especially the Winters of Weller St, *the Brents in William St Harbord*, Stevensons, Imray's and Pemberton's in Leslie St.

Dad loved and encouraged family gatherings, with all the cousins at Herries St or Redcliffe. Herries Street was always a fun place to visit, regularly for Sunday Roast but also special occasions with buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken and stacks of Chinese 'tucker' he would say.

We also just loved of our holidays at Redcliffe

Games of

Eye Spy and singalongs on every road trip.

Who is first to see the water

Skim boarding on boards made by Dad;

Quiots championships every night.

Going Sommers to grab fresh caught fish, prawns and crabs.

getting oysters off the rocks

We also made road trips to Sydney and Coonabarabran to catch up with friends and family including Jill and Ian.

We all reflected upon the fun we have as adults the Races, the Footy, the Shows and the family holidays to Great Keppel, Hamilton, Couran Cove

Dad's wit, dry was often hilarious and often crack himself up to a big belly laugh and was infectious. Regularly, this was after a declaration of "We are not going to have a big go BUT self-regulation is now in place.

Everywhere we went, every man and his dog wanted to come and have a chat – Dad treated everyone the same.

The grandkids remembered many things but especially how Pop, always took great pleasure from seeing others enjoy themselves. He really lived by the motto, others before self. He also made the best hot chocolates and made sure everyone had one before he did. Pop always loved to play any games BUT he was usually the most competitive.

His love for Mum never waived and we will miss you getting fresh with mum whenever you could.

A big part of Dad's life was in running. He will now be reunited with his great mate Gregory Vincent Gabbett, and sharing many stories that we all know well. The Gabbett's Crisps, Moore's and Reaves have maintained a friendship with Mum and Dad. Crispy said of training with Cracker, we found a whole new group of friends and a fresh outlook on life.

Bruce Duncan (President of the Qld Athletic league) paid tribute.
John 'Cracker' McDonald, is one of the greatest, all round runners Australia has produced in the last 50 years.

The world record set in Bendigo in 1972 stood for 18 years - Athletes of the day said the long striding McDonald was not running in lanes like the previous record, he had to circle the entire field, covering a greater distance.

Dad never asked for appearance money and ran on his merits. The prizemoney for winning special invitation event would have been minimal. J.J Toleman , a World 2 mile record holder was so impressed that he grabbed a blanket and ran around the Bendigo Oval taking up a collection. Dad got enough for the trip home.

Cracker won numerous races in Queensland and NSW and was very proud of winning the first Gift in Mum's home town of Coonabarabran.

Dad trained a great stable of runners including Ray Moore who won the Chelmer Gift the richest race in the world at the time.

Many great friendships were built by Mum and Dad

Paul Whiteley shared many holidays and visits including significant birthdays and family events.

On the morning of the Grand Final John told me that I would be having a meal with the Prime Minister of Australia. I thought he must be joking...We walked into the venue and this bloke came up to us and said "G'day John how you going? John replied and they shook hands. John then introduced me to the then Prime Minister of Australia John Howard.

John was a very generous and proud man.

Proud of his wife Joan.

Proud of his family **especially Jim...**

Proud of his sporting achievements.

Proud of his family business

Proud of Toowoomba

Proud of Queensland and

Proud of Australia

Ralph and Janice Calvin

Former President English Rugby League

Whitehaven

Have also been great friends visiting each other's homes and sharing many holidays.

John had a good eye for recognising rugby talent, and a nose for a bottle of good red wine which we would enjoy.

Although Cumbria is a bit of an outpost John realised how important rugby was for the community and always used his influence to ensure the Cumbrian crowds always got a chance to see the touring Australian teams,

Rest in peace, love, your good Marras (Mates) from Whitehaven.

Some words from Sister Jennifer and Wayne to John:

Together with Joan, you were active in helping us care for the special needs of our Jack and Emma, including during some of the more challenging times. I know you saw it as opportunity for more involvement in their lives, but for us the impact on our welfare was profound. For many, many years it was the only means of us having a break beyond a night or two from otherwise relentless challenge.

If Emma could speak, she undoubtedly would thank you for your patience, tolerance and calm manner during the times you and Joan cared and interacted with her. She would likely thank you for the countless times she would take you by the hand and lead you about, as her obliging and trusty sidekick.

If they could articulate, Jack and Emma would thank you for being their pop, somehow finding time to turn up for **all their** celebrations in life, fitting it into your busy life.

Our Jack would likely thank you for including him in various events, including for allowing him to stand tall beside you on an occasion whilst you made some formal presentations at a football event.

Like our Jack and Emma, we will miss the quiet strength you provided and somehow imparted to us, your guiding words, and unquestioning love.

We will greatly miss your physical presence, but **know** that your energy will still always be with and about us.

Sister Maree said - Dad was simply the best.

My hero, cheerleader, protector, advisor, safe haven, friend – my dad. His impact on our life is immeasurable.

One of the most remarkable things about Dad was his unwavering availability. He made time for each of us, always ready to listen, advise, and support. His wisdom

was a guiding light, and his outlook on life was black-and-white – face problems head-on, reflect, acknowledge, and move forward for the better.

People listened to Dad because he had something meaningful to say.

As his children, we were privileged to call him our dad. His authenticity, courage, love for mum and love for rugby league, passion for people, and unshakable support for others' success was amazing. But what stood out most was his humility. He never sought the spotlight; instead, he shone through his actions and words, leaving a lasting impact on everyone he met.

His legacy will live on through all of us.

Brother Grant said of Dad

He was the best man I know **and** the kind of man I want to grow up to be - thank you for everything you have done for us and for the lessons you taught along the way, always by your actions never just words.

A **great bloke** to be around and a **great man** to have on your side.

These words from Mum some of which are contained in a note that is with Dad today.

You were always a champion in every respect.

You never complained about anything.

You were patient, tolerant and unbelievable kind to everyone, especially me, never raising your voice **or** hand to anyone. We had almost 57 years to get to know each other.

Goodbye for now my lovely boy.

Thank you to Dr Rob Greenhill for your care and support of Mum and Dad over the past few years.

Thanks to the Doctors and nurses and hospital staff and the Toowoomba Base hospital and thank you especially to the staff at St Vincents Lourdes who provided a quality comfortable stay for Dad's final days.

We saw Dad at his best and he was inspiring...

It was incredibly humbling that we saw Dad at his worst and he was still inspiring

Dad had a crack at most things in life and he did well at most. Dad even did dying well!

Despite his declining health, At his core Dad was still the kind, gentlemen with a great sense of humour.

He never complained, he just followed the Doctors and nurses requests and he gave visitors the opportunity to put a smile on their face.

When asked how he was feeling between 1 and 10? He would say 11, I am ready to go home. I'm 100%, when are we going home?

All he wanted to do is go home, but his body was letting him down.

Dad gave us the ultimate gift of being able to say good bye and he gave us the gift of not seeing him suffer for very long. Dad was only in pain for 4 or 5 days NOT 4 or 5 Months.

In his final moments Dad was surrounded by family, with Grant and Mum holding his hands...At 5.45 as Dad breathing was gradually slowing and he was near to the end, Mum saw that a tear had appeared in his eye, Mum wiped the tear...and he was gone.

That afternoon a splendid rainbow appeared across East Toowoomba and Dad's journey of life was complete...

John Cracker McDonald, a Kind, Strong, Gentlemen with a Great sense of humour and love of life.

We will miss you Mate

Rest in Peace!

John McDonald AM – Eulogy Tribute by Steve Haddan

Good Morning everyone; it's a magical thing when you get to salute your lifelong hero here at this famous and sacred place where I watched him play many times. Behind you at the southern end is the old player's race – they used to be at both ends of the stand rather than the current position in the middle of the stand. On June 13, 1968, I waited patiently and as he left the field John signed my Johnny Raper footy book, the first autograph I ever got, after John had taken the Clydesdales into battle against the Poms. I was ten. You couldn't move that day, my father Frank took me, 100 people perched on the rooves of the houses you can see on the other side of Mary Street. You never forget stuff like that.

The Sixties was a wondrous time to grow up in this beautiful city where the game of rugby league was front and centre. On those icy Sunday afternoons, the ultimate was the chance to watch John McDonald play. A whole generation of Toowoomba rugby league fans, may here today, feel the same.

John was a superstar. A giant of a man with a heart of gold. Just the way heroes are meant to be. That's the school where he first developed his love of rugby league, East State School; where he represented the Toowoomba and Queensland Primary School teams. He spent three years at my old school, Toowoomba Grammar and was a member of the schools' First XV, then left school at 15 to join his father's printing and stationary business, McDonald and Rosbrook, and become a compositor.

At his beloved Valleys club he was captain of the under 18 premiership team of 1962. Valleys icons like Herb Steinohrt and Duncan Thompson already had him marked as a future international.

In 1963, he made his first-grade debut for Valleys, and won five premierships in six seasons, and played the first of his ten Bulimba Cup matches for Toowoomba. Club grand finals, the Bulimba Cup clashes against Brisbane and Ipswich, and tour matches against New Zealand, France and Great Britain were the biggest shows in town and the feature act was a beautifully balanced centre and wing three-quarter who stood just over six feet tall and tipped the scales at a lean and lightning fast 81 kilos. His wife Joan said it best, "I fell in love with that body. He was my first and only boyfriend."

The swerve and speed he generated from his powerful legs and long stride were his trademark. Opponents tried, but they could never catch him. When they came at him in numbers he simply fed his supports through the gaping holes in the defence he'd created. When you saw John play you knew you were watching the best.

Fortified by an intense desire to make the most of life, John trained harder than any, bringing home the lead weights he used at his work so he could lift them at home. He set new standards with his professionalism. His great mate Doug Muir, who was with John in Bendigo in 1972 when John smashed the world professional record over 440 yards said this, "John had the insights of a champion, insights that mere mortals don't see. He had supreme confidence and a willingness to back himself. Everything he set his mind to he did it. That's what separates the ordinary from the exceptional." These would become the hallmarks of his extraordinary life.

In 1965, he played the first of ten games for Queensland and in 1966 the first of 13 Tests for Australia, all from the club competition in Toowoomba. By 1967, at the peak of his powers, John played all five Tests against Great Britain and France on the triumphant Kangaroos tour.

Sydney clubs were desperate to sign the hottest talent in the game and it was the shrewdest administrator of them all, Manly secretary Ken Arthurson, who fronted up the cash to get Cracker to Brookvale. His transfer fee, the money Manly had to pay the Toowoomba rugby league and Valleys to secure John's release, was a record \$14,000. Showing great foresight, Valleys used its share, \$9000, to secure the land at Pillar Street where the club now stands, which was last year named The John McDonald Complex. Today the land is worth in excess of \$9 million.

Speaking to the 94-year-old Arko yesterday, he was quick to send his apologies that he couldn't be here. "He was the best centre in Australia," he said. "Any club not chasing him wasn't doing its job. I always knew he was more than just a great player, that he'd be a great club man. His great asset was his wife Joan. The people of the area loved her. I have the highest possible regard for John. We were very close friends."

John's Manly teammate and Test forward John *Pogo* Morgan, who ran the famous Wilson Hotel for many years, shed tears as he spoke of a great leader and captain. A person who if something had to be done he'd put his

hand up. Over 20 of Manly's greats had rung Pogo in recent weeks to share their sadness at the passing of their teammate and friend.

After three seasons in Sydney and aged just 28, John hung up his boots, and returned to Toowoomba and the family business, helping raise a family of six kids with Joan, and embarking on a lifetime of passionate service to the game and the city he loved.

After successful stints coaching Toowoomba and Queensland teams in the Seventies, he was named Queensland's first ever State of Origin coach, a renowned captain's pick made by the father of Origin, Senator Ron McAuliffe. Rooming with John during Origin camp, Chris Close remembers a man of high intelligence and standards. "John played an enormous role in the birth of Origin and his contribution should never be forgotten. Arthur was captain but John ran the show. He managed that team at all levels because he was the best. He had the respect of the biggest names in the game and he did it without any fanfare and never expected anything from it."

Also in that famous team and with us today, Wally Lewis says if you ever wanted to get rid of someone, tell them to go find someone who didn't like John McDonald. You'd never see them again. He was QRL chairman for 20 years from 1992 and the first Queensland elected chairman of the Australian Rugby League in 1998. That same year he was named Queensland Sports Administrator of the Year for the critical role he played in negotiating an end to the Super League War. In 2008 he was awarded an Order of Australia for services to rugby league. In 2019 he was named in the Valleys and Toowoomba Teams of the Century and named one of the four icons of Toowoomba Rugby League, alongside Duncan Thompson, Tom Gorman and Duncan Hall.

You become a better person just trying to keep up with the standards set by John McDonald, where following his example is all a life well lived requires. The Valleys club motto – what we do we do well – seems to have been penned especially for John. Joan and the kids however, are his greatest achievement.

What's not always recorded are the thousands of people he's helped along the way and I want to speak on their behalf today. Looking for work in 1990, after losing a job at a radio station, I began work on my first book, a history of what was then the New South Wales Rugby League. I took the idea to John who gave me an introduction to then chairman Ken Arthurson, who welcomed me to League headquarters in Sydney to access the game's records. My career as a

rugby league historian had begun, and today it comes full circle. It was the sliding door moment. As Doug Muir put it so well, "John felt there were no barriers to what he could achieve and saw no barriers to what others could achieve." He has helped an army of people, many who are here today, to achieve their dreams. My family and I owe John an enormous debt of gratitude.

It is the greatest honour to salute this fine man, but I don't want the magnitude of all he achieved to ever overshadow one fact - what a magnificent rugby league footballer he was. How this graceful and kind gentleman with his athleticism and courage enthralled the thousands of fans who would pack this ground to watch him play. I wanted to come here today and tell John's family and friends how John Norman McDonald, Cracker, my hero, affected so many lives and how much I loved watching him play.

JOHN MCDONALD MEMORIAL – Damon Phillips

FRIDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2023

On the 8th July 1980, my dad and I along with more than 33000 other passionate Queenslanders flocked to Lang Park to watch the first State of Origin match. Brisbane rugby league in that era was booming.

So many great players were coming through the Brisbane competition at that time. Wally Lewis, Mal Meninga, Chris Close, Paul Vautin, the Morris brothers Des and Rod. But we could never beat the Blues..... until that night.

It was the first time I saw John McDonald.

4 years later we moved to Toowoomba and purchased the Settlers Inn Hotel. My dad suggested I go and visit Mr McDonald. He had a printing shop and stationary business just down the street and he might have some old posters that we could put up in the bar. I came back with an armful of stuff. I don't know why Dad didn't go himself. I think he was just in awe of John and what he had achieved after watching Queensland getting beaten by the Blues for so many years.

In 1999, I was working at the local paper and doing some marketing work with the Toowoomba Show Society when the manager said he was planning to leave and suggested that being the CEO at the showgrounds would be a good job. He said that there was really only one event he had to arrange each year, there was a nice house to live in and that when it rained the driveway became so slippery, he didn't have to come to work. Sounded like my sort of job. He said that the committee was pretty good and that there was a new President coming in. John McDonald.

Sure enough, 3 months later, I was employed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland. The oldest show society in the state with 140 years of history.

John and Joan invited us to a welcome function on the first day that we moved onto the grounds. Cindy had to leave early. I said I'd be fine. It was only a short walk up to the house. The only problem is that there is a lake between the showgrounds building and the house. When I got home, soaking wet, covered in mud Cindy asked, "what happened to you?". I said, "I think I've fallen in the deep end". Little did I know how true that was going to be.

The first few months were a steep learning curve for both John and myself. I had never worked for a committee before, especially one which had a lot of control over the day-to-day activity of the business. Unfortunately, I was unable to make the simplest decision on my own and separate sub committees had to be formed.

There was a chain link fence below my office. Our groundsmen suggested it be removed as it was no longer required and made the area difficult to mow and maintain. Simple I thought. Let's get rid of it.

The suggestion was made at the next meeting to remove the fence. But no. A fence pulling down committee had to be established to confirm the logistics of pulling down the fence. The FPDC was to meet prior to the next committee meeting and submit a report. This went for 3 meetings. Finally, I decided I could no longer wait and pulled down the fence. The next meeting John said, "Can the fence pulling down committee please give a report". "Sorry we haven't met yet" was the response. "Well, you must have. The fence isn't there anymore" he added. As I said earlier, I had never worked for a committee before, and I was finding the situation difficult.

I mentioned it to John. How does someone work efficiently when you have 26 bosses. John opened the next meeting by highlighting my grievances. He then said "Does anyone want to move a no confidence motion on the CEO".

I just looked at him and thought "What have you just done". I have left a good job, sold my house and now I'm getting kicked out on my ear. Luckily no one said a word and with that John said "Good. From here on in the CEO reports directly to the Executive. He will take his directions from us and the rest of you stay out of his way and let him do the job he was employed to do". I could then start to breath.

John and I often said that the biggest mistake we made was to sit on our hands for the first 12 months. We were both new to the roles and wanted to take it slowly. Unfortunately, as the old saying goes "if you do something the same way you are likely to get the same result" And so it was. 12 months later the society recorded another \$100 000 deficit to follow the previous number of years with no real plan or vision to turn the business around. At times John and Joan, with other committee members had to guarantee loans just to pay wages.

This is when John's business acumen and people skills came to the fore. He challenged people to come up with ideas, share the vision and come along for the ride if they were prepared to work hard, actively contribute and own the outcome. To own not only the mistakes of the past but also the potential success of the future. The show society did not own the showgrounds he said. We were merely custodians of a great community asset, and we should feel proud and privileged to be given that responsibility. And what a responsibility it was. It really frustrated John that others did not see that. All he was trying to do was improve a facility that the entire community could be extremely proud of, whilst staging and attracting events that improved the financial and social fabric of the region.

John could communicate with all levels of people. In the early days he arranged meetings with the Premier Peter Beattie, Mayor of Jondaryan Shire Peter Taylor, Mayor of Toowoomba Di Thorley and our financiers to broker a financial restructure to save the society. Without John's tireless energy during this period, I doubt the society would exist today. And he did it all with a no-nonsense approach.

John didn't suffer fools, but he never let anyone feel like one. He believed people who had responsibility should be given the opportunity to fulfill that responsibility. If they failed, so be it. Just learn by the mistake and don't do it again. If they succeeded, fantastic. Enjoy the accolades. They were not his.

He was only in the background offering support and guidance. I am sure that the first Queensland team would have been told exactly that. "You have been picked for a job. Just get on and do it. You have a responsibility not only to the jersey but to all Queenslanders. More importantly you have a responsibility to yourself".

John and I enjoyed this sort of working relationship for over 16 years. I trusted him to provide guidance, direction, support, impeccable stewardship and immense friendship. He delivered them in spades.

John was elected to the RASQ Committee in 1995. Prior to that he and his good mate Greg Gabbett had assisted as stewards in the Wood Chopping and organised the Beer Barrel relays. Now that's hard to imagine. McDonald & Rosbrook had been printing the show schedules for decades prior. In 1998 John was elected Deputy Chairman and in 2000 Chairman. A role he held with great distinction for 16 years making him the second longest serving Chairman in the

societies 163-year history. He also took on the role of Chairman of Ag Show, promoting agricultural innovation and excellence.

John mixed with Prime Ministers and Premiers. Governors and Governor Generals, Royalty and leaders of business and industry. But it was his approach to those in the community that he will most be remembered for. The common man.

During the show John wanted to get around to as many sections as he could, help the relevant Committee person and meet as many competitors as possible. In the early years it was my responsibility to get John to where he needed to go but I eventually gave up because wherever we went someone wanted to stop and talk to him. I could never get any work done. One year it was suggested we get John a golf buggy so he could quickly get from presentation to presentation and fit them all in. That was a great idea until someone said that John had a set of miniature "Cracker" number plates that we could attach to the buggy. It was the show public holiday and the crowds were teaming. I sent John off in the buggy for the 90 second drive to the Wood chop arena to present the Queensland title. 20 minutes later I looked out the window to see that John had made it less than 30 metres down the road. Everyone had seen the "Cracker" plates and stopped to talk. People just seemed to gravitate towards him. It was simply that he cared about people and was so generous with his time.

He was completely devoted to the society and respected the fact that so many people gave up their time to be involved. He very seldom changed a day or time of a meeting unless it was an absolute emergency. I recall a meeting that seemed to go a little longer than usual. John gave everyone the opportunity to be involved and have their input. As the meeting closed, he apologized that he had to leave as he had somewhere else to go. I enquired what was the rush.

"I just need to get to Brisbane to name the Queensland team" he casually replied. And with that he was off.

The RASQ Wine Show was always a highlight in our calendar. I don't think John missed one. John with his great mate and Deputy Chairman Bill Hedger would come out for the Public Tasting and that was usually after we pulled up very late the night before for the presentation dinner. I was always able to secure a couple of Gold Medal winning reds and we would find a quiet table in the corner of the Glenvale Room. Here, together, we would solve the problems of

the world. Ironically, tomorrow morning, we will start judging almost 180 wines at this year's show. On Sunday afternoon you may find me in a quiet corner of the room, a couple of glasses of Gold Medal winning shiraz, with my mate, in spirit, again solving the problems of the world.

John and Joan were also invested in the Showgirl Competition. There were many occasions when we would be at their house or at a venue in town recognizing the achievements of the many young women who have embraced the Showgirl Competition and given so much back to both the Show Society and the community. Like everything in John's life, Joan has always been the constant. Whatever John gave, Joan matched it. So many times, it was a smile, a laugh and then an "Oh Johnnie", "Cracker", or a fantastic rendition of "The Gambler".

During John's time at the RASQ we became very good friends. We talked regularly. Shared stories about family, business, and football. He was always genuinely interested. One morning we had an Executive meeting scheduled. I had pulled my hamstring the day before playing footy with the kids. John saw me hobbling around and asked what happened. When I told him he said "lie on the floor and I'll look after it" That was one of the strangest committee meetings I've ever had. I recall talking about the financials with my RM's pointing towards the ceiling.

There will be many stories about John's time as the RASQ Chairman. The most important, I believe, was the growth in the showground's assets, the significant reduction in debt during that period and the ownership of the challenge that the committee embraced.

During John's tenure, the value of the showground's assets trebled. The infrastructure added to the facility was massive. The number of activities on the grounds was phenomenal. In John's last year as Chairman, more than 465 events attracting over 175000 visitors with an economic value to the region of over \$55 million occurred through activity at the showgrounds. There was no other Not for Profit community organisation that contributed as much to the Toowoomba region. And almost all done by volunteers such as John and Joan McDonald.

I visited John several weeks ago in hospital. He seemed frustrated. He kept asking what he should be doing. Maree just said "Dad, you just need to wait for

the doctor and eat your lunch” He told me he thought that was a waste of time. Surely, he could, and should be doing something more. When I left I shook his hand, held it a bit longer and said “Johnnie, you look after yourself” “I will brother” he said “I’ll just keep doing what I’m told”

On the night of John’s passing, I asked Cindy if in one word she could sum up John’s life. After some silence she said “Safe”. I thought this strange but then realized this was perfect.

As a father and husband, that is the greatest attribute you can give. To make your family feel safe. From my point of view, I knew that John always had my back. He encouraged curious thoughts and embraced bold decisions. When things were difficult, he made you feel safe. It was like when John was around everything would be OK.

John McDonald, with Joan by his side, gave so much to the Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland, as they did for so many countless other organisations. John & Joan welcomed us into their home, their family and their lives. John led the society with passion, enthusiasm, drive, honesty, hard work and commitment.

The Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland would not be the organisation it is without John’s contribution.

For me I will always remember John for his guidance, leadership, unwavering support and great friendship.

I, like all of you here today, will remember him as our mate. Rest well Cracker.

EULOGY - 9 mins.

Mum delicately and lovingly wiped a lone tear falling from Dads right eye as he took his final breath.

A beautiful rainbow appeared in the Eastern skyline and in the distance St Peter at the pearly gates was saying....

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls please welcome the most successful coach in State of Origin history by percentages with one game, one win and a 100% record - Mr John "Cracker" McDonald AM.

Thank you Jim, Steve and Damon for sharing reflections of Dad in such a personal and inclusive manner.

Dad was an entrepreneur, a business operator and a wonderful community citizen who blended skills obtained from all parts of his life to the benefit of all he served.

It was my privilege to work alongside Dad as my boss, work colleague, business partner, teammate, teacher and above all of this he was my Dad, our Dad and for that we are forever grateful.

The comprehensive list of awards and achievements in the service booklet tells a story of an extraordinary life yet Dad would never see himself as extraordinary.

Cracker is best summed up as an Amazing Human Being and our lives have been richer because of him.

Community

Dad grew up in a family where community service was in the DNA.

He was a product of what was good from the environment he was raised.

An extract from a story about Dad's father - Jack "Cracker" McDonald on his passing in 1983 said.....

"He was also involved in numerous sporting and educational clubs, either as member, patron or executive member. Always regarded as a fair-minded man at all levels of his life, business and sport, his attitudes, loyalty and sense of humour made "Cracker" a man whose friendship many treasured."

In many respects Dad was his Father's son however it was the things Dad did when very few were watching that made him the person he was.

- diligently judging the Sports Darling Downs awards with Wayne Beeston and Pat O'Shea
- organising the Kilderkin Relay at the former Showgrounds just up the road with his great mate Greg Gabbett
- running supplies between bars at the Jimmy Barnes concert or changing league posts to soccer goals game morning at this venue while Chairman of the trust.
- participating in Mum's pioneering aerobic classes at the Rangeville State School Hall in the mid 70's when he was a member of the National Fitness Committee.

- preparing the Woodchop arena for the Toowoomba Royal Show, unloading the blocks, mowing, tidying up, making absolutely sure everything was right to go and in true Cracker style - all completed seconds before start time!

Business

Dad signed up for his five year apprenticeship in the trade of Hand & Machine Compositor at McDonald & Rosbrook on 2nd January 1961 as a 16 year old.

While Mum and Dad were living in Sydney, Cracker worked at Harbord Printing, returning to the family business at the end of 1971 to the city he adored.

Dad was part of the fourth generation family at McDonald and Rosbrook which commenced its trading history as J McDonald Printing and Stationery in 1901.

In October 2001, we purchased the print division of McDonald and Rosbrook and in December that year purchased Harrison Printing Company which was founded in 1906.

Combining the two long established local family businesses provided opportunity to rebrand and it was an easy decision to call ourselves Cracker Print and Paper. Our McD&R and Cracker staff became our extended family and remain so today.

Cracker Print and Paper was inducted into the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce Business Hall of Fame in 2016 with Dad quick to acknowledge everyone that helped make this possible over the year.

A couple of left field business ventures that proved to be more socially valuable than financially advantageous.

- Dad assisted Mums brother, Uncle Mick Murphy in his vision of grape growing and aquaculture in Hodgsonvale in the early 2000's. No doubt Uncle Mick has a list of ideas ready to pitch to Cracker.

- Well before the influx of betting services, Dad assisted great mates Pat O'Shea and Earl Carter with a horse tipping service named "First Past The Post". The service included a weekly publication and phone tips with Mum and Cecile O'Shea operating the "call centre" on a Saturday morning with subscribers phoning in for the tips.

Dad would demonstrate through actions that he would **FIRSTLY**, never ask anyone to do something he wouldn't do himself **AND SECONDLY**, bring people with him on the journey.

Memory Items - Briefcase

Dads final carry briefcase for work. In the bag was his speech to the Toowoomba Grammar School Assembly, although not date marked, other items in the bag suggest it to be in 2017.

In the speech Dad spoke about his guiding principals of....

1. Be true to yourself
2. Be grateful for what you have
3. Be determined to do your best

4. Be aware of the needs of others

Dad went on to explain the principals.

Siting his role in the Super League negotiations to demonstrate the principal of being true to yourself.

Dad said, "This wasn't just about rugby league this was about the moral issues of putting individuals or corporations above the game.

The negotiations were tough, I lost some friendships but fortunately gained many more. At the end of the day an agreement was reached suitable for all parties and importantly along this journey I was happy looking into the mirror."

In an effort to prompt us all to remember fondly those who have passed.

I will be concluding with a simulated horse race penned for Dads 60th birthday celebration held in the John Cracker McDonald Function Room in the Duncan Thompson Stand.

The horse names are listed inside back of the booklet.

Given prior warning I am sure Dads Cousin Barry Coonan could have framed a market.

While you contemplate your pick.

I want to particularly thank Maree our youngest sibling. Maree has dug deep into her event coordinator kit bag and with the support of those listed on the back of the program pulled together this fitting farewell.

Thank you Ree and thank you to Ellie, Jess and Mack for being right beside your Mum helping Nan and loving Nan and Pop in such a special way.

Finally, our collective and my personal thanks to Dad's number one protector our Mum. Joanie you have been the one to provide Dad with the best possible final years of his life. The love you and Dad had for each other was beautiful to witness.

Three cheers for Joanie

HORSE RACE....This race was penned for Cracker's 60th birthday celebration...

Cracker Sayings Open Handicap

Moving in quickly now for the running of The Cracker Sayings Open Handicap.

In goes IT'S TERRIFIC a relatively new comer but has been well trialed.

Pre-race favourite HO HO moves in fit and ready.

WHERE'S THE BRIDE has found her mobile phone but will leave it switched off.

SHOW SOME FRIENDSHIP looking frisky trying to stay focused.

SELF REGULATION is fractious in the barrier and seems a little distressed.

Standing tall waiting to be unleashed is NOT GOING TO HAVE A BIG GO.

HAVING SAID THAT moves in with purpose.

And the last to go in proving to be a bit stubborn is NO, NO, NO, NO, NO.

Cracker to his desk.

Mouth starts to open. Racing now!

WHERE'S THE BRIDE is left behind doing Nana's hair, She better ████████ brace herself 'cause SHOW SOME FRIENDSHIP is lingering near.

NO, NO, NO, NO, NO is fast away disputing a decision.

SELF REGULATION joins him and they set the early pace.

IT'S TERRIFIC sits behind waiting to respond.

Forth beer to wine is NOT GOING TO HAVE A BIG GO.

Hang on - he's moving toward the cumquat liqueur.

Oh, there's been a tumble,

NOT GOING TO HAVE A BIG GO stumbles.

HO HO yells loudly behind avoiding a collision.

Staying out of trouble is HAVING SAID THAT two statements from the lead.

WHERE'S THE BRIDE can't seem to shake SHOW SOME FRIENDSHIP and they are closing the gap on the field

Around the final bend they travel.

NO, NO, NO, NO, NO is drifting wide and pushing SELF REGULATION off the track.

IT'S TERRIFIC hugs the bend with HO HO and HAVING SAID THAT on his back.

What's this on the outside?

Here comes WHERE'S THE BRIDE with SHOW SOME FRIENDSHIP by her side.

100 to go

IT'S TERRIFIC, HO HO

HO HO, IT'S TERRIFIC

You can forget HAVING SAID THAT.

Leading the charge up the hall saying I am heading off to nest from last to first is...

WHERE'S THE BRIDE with SHOW SOME FRIENDSHIP trailing closely behind.

The favourite HO HO finished third beating IT'S TERRIFIC by a couple of octaves.

HAVING SAID THAT faded in the final stages.

Then came NO, NO, NO, NO, NO after drifting wide at the bend.

SELF REGULATION still trying desperately to get back on track.

And the last to get home passed out in front of the TV is NOT GOING TO HAVE A BIG GO.

“BE KIND TO EACH OTHER”