

Today we have the solemn yet significant task of honouring the life of our dad, Paul John Worthington.

On the night of his death, I said that Dad always knew what to say in situations like this. He'd have a scripture or some sound and wise advice. Not only could Dad capture significant life stories and wonderful anecdotes when he spoke...he often made them rhyme too!!

But today, we don't have him to provide those words of comfort. And no words or verse would ever be adequate enough to capture the significance and the impact you've had on all of those who knew you, Dad.

We start Dad's story in the post war era on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 1946, where Dad was born at the Rockhampton Mater Hospital to parents Art and May and delighted older sisters Kay and Arthea. Although a 'surprise baby' to older parents, Dad's closest sibling was already seven years old, Dad was loved to no end. As the youngest and the only boy in the family, he was definitely the most spoiled.

As Dad grew older in their Water St Home, he pondered the possibilities of displaying his faith as an altar boy, but his mother shot that down very quickly, stating 'no Paul. You'll spill the altar wine.'

Dad began school at St Mary's in the early 50s and when it came time to learn to write, Dad soon caught the eyes of the school nuns for all the wrong reasons. For Dad was...left-handed. A sign of evil back in those days. It was then the reason Dad became ambidextrous, to prove his unwavering faith (and also probably explained why he had such scrawly handwriting ever since!)

When it came time for high school, Dad studied at St Stanislas College, founded by the Christian Brothers as a boys' school, located in Main Street where Emmaus College now stands. In one of Dad's own reflections on that time he writes:

'Brother Brian Cummings and Dr Keven Castles were different to the other stern Christian Brothers. They were firm but fair, seemed more approachable and more interested in us doing well in life. Dr Castles so impressed me that I considered priesthood for a while. But a Saturday afternoon matinee a girl named Diedre asked if I wanted to sit with her. That was the end of my desire to become a priest.'

It was around this time that Dad met Keith Hamilton, more affectionately known as 'Chessy'. Chessy fondly recalls riding his bike with dad and the boys in the Kalka neighbourhood. Dad used to ride with the handlebars the opposite way in order to listen to the wireless radio attached to the front of the bike while they cruised the streets. This was the time before TV and through that Dad earned the nickname 'Hermin'. Little did Dad know at that time, Chessy would go on to be one of the groomsmen at his wedding. This was one of the many lifelong friendships that made throughout his amazing life.

After a period of dating different women, Dad realised the importance of being with someone who shared his beliefs and values. However, when he was asked to go to a ball and partner a girl, about whom he had no great expectations, he went along with a thought of 'what the hell. The girl he was originally expected to partner was short but so was his friend, so Dad instead was partnered with the taller girl. That girl was Colette Connor, a brunette bombshell he was immediately attracted to. After meeting up before the ball, then hitting it off again at the ball, he knew he had to see her again. Despite this, Dad was in a dilemma. His aimless socialising and dating were becoming tired and he was ready to settle down. But in his own words he recounts:

'I remember vividly kneeling at Mass kneeling in the back row of St Mary's Church praying the Our Father. As I prayed, 'thy will be done on earth' I am thinking, 'Your will's not doing much for me, when

will you find me someone?'...Almost immediately, I heard a response in my mind, 'I already have.'" This freaked me out. As my prayers up to that point had been one way traffic. Almost immediately this indecisive procrastinator made the best decision of my life – to marry that girl.

Colette and Paul were shortly married after in 1972. After 50 years of marriage, it is clear that this message was not just wishful thinking on Dad's part but God's hand at work.

In 1975, Colette went into labour with their first child on Christmas Eve. These were the early days when fathers were only just allowed in the labour room. The older nurses would shoo Dad away but he fought to be by Mum's side. Then on Christmas morning, Marie-Therese was born.

Dad so lovingly recalls in his own words, 'As I held her for the first time and saw my own eyes looking back at me, a verse from Genesis echoed in my thoughts, 'and God saw what he had made, and it was good.'

It wasn't long before MT was joined by a new sibling, Michelle. Then there was Juleen and a fourth little girl Lisa. Despite Dad's birth announcement after Lisa that there were no plans for a fifth, Mum fell pregnant again in 1985. People would ask Dad if he was hoping for a boy. He would simply say, as long as the child is happy and healthy, that's all I ask.' That was probably the best, as his last born, a girl, Natasha was born in April 1986. With so many girls in the house, Dad would be forgiven for occasionally forgetting our names, but when asked why he always called Mum 'Biddy', he would always say it was because he sometimes forgot her name!

Throughout our childhood we were extremely blessed to have not only a loving family, but a community of loving families who supported, nourished and cared for one another. Mum and Dad had met couples like Karen and Lyal Page through Majellan (a faith group for young couples)); and Ros and Bruce McCarthy who introduced Mum and Dad to Engaged Encounter where they would meet a huge network of other couples and families who became like and extended family. So many of these friendships have stood the test of time. For example, the Boyd family who are here today offering the gift of their beautiful voices and musical talents.

In 1970. Dad started with the CREB working as a computer programmer. And to quote from a poem we wrote to him for his 60<sup>th</sup>:

'25 years of work can all seem the same,

Especially when your workplace keeps changing its name.

The workplace is Ergon – CEB and Capelec no more,

Its still the same building, you're just on a different floor.'

Dad was always very generous with his time and would be highly involved with the Ergon social club. With Friday nights drinks, trips to Great Keppel Island, and Christmas parties held at Emu Park or the Capricorn Waterslide where Dad would often play Santa. At the Ergon Christmas luncheon, Daryl Lansberg would rope Dad into the skits, In Dad's own words, 'acting in public gives me the...opps, frightens the hell out of me.' which is a reminder that Dad was always mild-mannered and we never heard a swear word out of his mouth. Even in moments of true frustration, the worst he even heard was, 'Strike me handsome.'

Even though he says he didn't enjoy acting, it didn't seem to take much convincing to get him up on the stage and he loved any opportunity to dress up. While it would seem like he'd left his costume to

the last minute, they were always well thought-through...including the time he smeared black shoe polish through his distinctive silver locks for an Elvis inspired 50s look.

He was an avid football supporter, enjoying many a Sunday afternoon whiling away the hours with Pagey. We remember fondly his favourite catchphrase of 'Get on the deck', closely followed by Mum's favourite response, 'You know they can't hear you, Paul!' The friendly Qld vs NSW rivalry was established between the Worthingtons and the Pages very early on, with new arrivals Finters and Jacksons joining our mix later on. Knowing that Dad would never miss a state of Origin match, we are sure that he was watching with great joy the victory last Wednesday night.

As a family, we will be eternally grateful for all the things Dad has taught us. Once an accountant, always an accountant. Dad taught us the value of money and the importance of being thrifty. Dad would spend hours researching every tiny purchase so I blame him for my own need to research everything which occasionally looks like an inability to make a decision.

We all remember fondly visits to the library with Dad and him reading us bedtime stories, turning us all into voracious readers. Dad had a great love of lifelong learning and his passion for education was something that he has passed on to each of us. When MT's further studies led to become a fellow of a higher education authority, Dad's proud comment was 'finally a fellow in the family.'

We may be pleased not to have entirely learned our cooking skills from Dad. He was known for his experimental recipes which includes vegemite to most things, and creative leftover toasted sandwiches. However, we could never ask for seconds because each creation was a unique combination.

Dad has also passed on many skills to his beloved granddaughters – Ava is now a keen gardener, and they were both proud as punch when they could pick their first pumpkin together. For Thora, even from a distance, she has managed to inherit her Pa's look of concentration which apparently requires a tongue hanging out the side of the mouth. But we know that Dad's willingness to share his skills and knowledge was not limited to the immediate family. Our neighbour Jan recalls Dad teaching her oldest son Troy to change a bike tyre or help to start a mower.

He was exceptionally patient and was always willing to learn from and to teach those around him. He taught not only all of us and Mum to drive but also people in the wider community. I think his patience finally ran out when his final pupil wrote the car off after a crash thorough the fence – just clarifying, it was none of us.

Even in retirement, Dad was never one to sit still. He began DJing at Keppel FM, and started a regular card game with his mates. But his strong faith, and passion to share this, was renewed when he joined the Prison chaplaincy. For Dad, this was not another 'job' but became his true vocation. To quote Dad's own words"

'Every day now I pray and reflect because I don't know what life will throw at me with those we help or what situation I'll encounter. As I travel out to the jail, I pray to the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom, to help me find and minister to the most needy on the day.'

Similarly, his role with Vinnies grew after his retirement, holding many positions including Diocesan Vice-President, Treasurer of the Rockhampton Regional Council and member of the St Camillus Support Centre and the Sacred Heart Conference.

As we wrote this eulogy, we used many of Dad's own words as inspiration, and as we bring this eulogy to a close, we couldn't find any better words to sum up our feelings than Dad's own:

This reflection's now through,

Perhaps a word of wisdom is due

We come into this world alone

We go out of this world alone

But good times, good friends and family make the time in between

Wonderous and joyous, but I'm sure you know what I mean.