



String Bean – The man with a permanent smile

Brian Desmond Frazer – String Bean to us – was an institution amongst Sydney Hash groups & a foundation member of Botany Bay Hash, as a eulogy I don't think we could improve upon those given by son John (Grewsome) & daughter Lauren at his life ceremony so they have been included verbatim here:

First John:

I'm going to try and tell the story of Dad's life. I started to put pen to paper last week and wrote down the decades, 1940's 1950's etc. then realized after looking through some old photo albums that it would be much easier to break his life down into hairstyles, starting with the short back and sides of the 40's and 50's, then the long hair of the 60's, the 70's mullet, the 80's dodgy mo but then we reached the 90's Perm and got stuck.

Life started for Brian in Crown Street women's hospital on March 22nd 1944 with the world still at war. The family lived initially in Camperdown but just after his first birthday they moved to 22 Ferrier Parade, Campsie. We will have to make the assumption that he was a good baby as parents Ivy & Des were quick to provide a sibling Alan in 1945 and then Ruth (I could not possibly divulge the date, lets just say some time later).

School started at Age 4 just up the road at Clempton Park Primary and Brian was a good student working hard through his primary years and obtaining a place in the selective high school (Canterbury Boys) alongside future prime ministers. Childhood holidays were often spent with his Grandparents in Bonnievale, I have heard many stories of fishing, swimming and racing the ferry to the wharf.

Although a good student Dad's schoolboy passion was on the sports field meeting lifelong friends Peter Low and Ronnie Leeds, he enjoyed all sports but his standout was definitely Rugby League -whilst playing for the Clempton Park Rugby League in weight for age (I often teased him about playing kids 2-3 years younger and he always insisted that he played up a division), he went on to play Jersey Flegg for Canterbury Bankstown. I'll add now that although he played for The Berries he never stopped telling me that he was a 2nd generation Dragons Fan..

As the 1960's approached School Finished and it was time to start working, Dad established himself within the Leather Trade working up to a position of Production Manager for one of Sydney's leading shoe manufacturers. At age 19 he started dating Joan Miller and when he discovered that Joan would be spending the first $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1966 in England he quickly made arrangements to take a Sabbatical, sold his car to raise the funds and set off on the same 6 week voyage from Sydney to London. I have just discovered dozens of letters that he wrote to his mother during the trip and it is easy to see that this was the beginning of his lifelong love of travel.

It was around this time that Joan introduced him to her cousin and in turn her Fiancé John "Tubby" Wainwright. The two quickly bonded over a passion for Motor Racing and generally being mischievous, being born 1 week apart they managed to host many memorable double celebrations, notably raising the bat for a 100th Birthday in 1994 and then last year raising it again as they bought the 150!

Joan & Brian married in August 1967 and by 1970 they had bought a house in Alice Street Sans Souci, Dad had volunteered as a leader with the local scout group and I arrived in June 1970. Family life was good and I was quickly joined by David in 1972, A house extension was then undertaken and Catherine arrived in 1975. One of my earliest memories is attending the 1977 grand final where the mighty Dragons battled the Parramatta Eels. (7-7 on Final Day, then 22-0 in the mid week replay for anyone who can not remember)

Life up until now had been pretty straight forward but there was a fork in the road and Dad was not very good at staying on one path, career wise the 1970's had seen dad leave the Leather Trade to try his hand a fence building and then return to the

Leather business. He also found a fork in the relationship path and separated from



Joan, moving to Surrey Hills and renovating a Victorian Terrace with Margaret.

Early memories continued to be made and I remember being taken for my first skiing holiday in 1980, 1982 saw the arrival of Lauren, there were many Sunday afternoon family Barbeques and I have many memories of Lauren learning to climb the stairs. In 1983 Dad again left the Leather Trade and opened up a Fruit Market on King Street, Newtown. It was around this time he introduced me to Marrickville Golf Club, David & I were made sub juniors and I think Dad spent the Sunday afternoons watching from the Balcony.

It was also around this time that Dad was introduced to the Hash House Harriers, it is tradition that new runners are given a nickname and his wiry physique along with the fruit shop business resulted him being named Stringbean (Stringy), he became an active member of Sydney South Harbour Hash (The Larrikans) and was instrumental in establishing a new club, Botany Bay Hash House Harriers.

These two institutions have resulted in further lifelong friendships that are just too numerous to mention (I would be here until next Thursday).

In 1986 the long hours involved in running the fruit shop (I remember working for him during school holidays and every day started with a 4am trip to Flemington Markets and rarely finished before 7pm.) resulted in his relationship with Margaret breaking down, he moved back to Campsie for a short while but was then introduced

to Libby in 1988, I was just told the story of them meeting last week, his mate Truck Tyres drove him out to Bondi so Dad could throw pebbles at the window to get Libby's attention and ask her out.

Libby & Dad shared many great memories travelling the world to attend various hash events (Phillipines, Thailand, New Zealand, Tassie) and they seemed to spend every spare winter weekend skiing.



They lived together briefly in Randwick before buying a house in Yarra Bay, there were grand plans to redevelop but they settled on an extension to make the place ready for the arrival of Lachlan in 1991, his arrival did not really slow this couple down, Dad & Libby continued to travel the world skiing but now with a toddler in tow.

The 1990's saw children growing up - he made a great speech at my wedding welcoming Moira into the family and reminding her that she was not just gaining a husband, she was gaining 2 brothers, 2 sisters, 2 mothers & 2 fathers. The Dragons seems to be making annual trips to the Sydney Football Stadium in September and Dad started hosting Grand Final Parties, unfortunately we were not celebrating any victories though. The ski trips continued, I recall there being a holiday that was

meant to include skiing in Canada and a visit to Disneyland in LA - Passport issues meant that flying was not an option so he stepped off the Long Haul flight and straight into a large car to drive the family from Calgary to LA and deliver Disneyland as promised.

He had been through a few career changes in the 90's the fruit shop was sold and he returned to the Leather Trade setting up his own business wholesaling shoes for a few years before moving into the building trade. Unfortunately there was another fork in the relationship road and Dad moved in with us for a few months in the late 90's.

In the early 2000's he bought 99 Unwins Bridge Road in Tempe with Clency, A true "Fixer Upper" - I had moved to Scotland for a couple of years so did not see every aspect of the renovation but understand that there is only around 6 foot of original



house remaining with the whole place rebuilt keeping the heritage style.

Dad remained very active with the Hash House Harriers, holding a number of committee roles and spent almost every weekend on the fairways at Marrickville. There were back issues that restricted him working in the building trade and a friend recommended him for a driving role at AAPT, he shuttled staff between offices for

meetings and really enjoyed the social interaction but not as much as the annual golf days at Terry Hills. The job changed to 3 days a week and a terrific transition to retirement.

The end of the 00's saw Grandchildren arriving, he had said he was not ready for grandkids in 1995 but I guess he did not expect the drought to run until 2008 when James arrived. James was followed by Cameron in 2009, Mathew in 2010, Lawson & Andrew in 2011, Benjamin in 2012 and finally a Grand Daughter Charlotte in 2013.

The impact of Grandchildren was nothing short of amazing, I had been living in Scotland for 8 years and had regular phone calls discussing plans for him to visit, play golf, explore the Frazer heritage, drink whiskey etc. But it was not until a Grandchild was produced that he managed to get himself organized, he bought his mum on the trip (Aged 86) and Nana was admired everywhere she went, no body could believe this was her first long haul holiday and all hoped that they would be up for that kind of adventure when they were 86!

We managed to get a few games of golf in and I took him out to St Andrews to play the Old Course - he handled the big stage with ease, escaping any bunkers on his first attempt and nailing his drive right over the old railway sheds on the famous 17th (Jack Nicklaus described this as the toughest possible shot, not for Dad).

With 7 grandchildren to focus on Dad decided that it was definitely time to retire, work was definitely starting to get in the way of the 3-4 games of golf each week and the now regular trips up to 10Mile / Feehan Acres a few miles short of Tenterfield in far northern NSW.

Dad had spent many spare weekends turning a run down shack into a habitable farm house that would comfortably sleep a dozen mates looking to get away from it all. Typically the work party (Laundro, Grange, Truck Tyres, LeCoq) would set off in Kombies on Thursday afternoon for a long weekend, we were lucky enough to spend a weekend up there a couple of years back for the Deepwater Races. The first chore was a mow a cricket pitch and then enjoy the weekend swimming in dams.

Last year Dad made his last international trip. He was blessed with great timing and when he was invited to a friends wedding in Korea, that just happened to coincide with the Rugby World Cup being played next door in Japan. Funnily enough he had no interest in getting tickets for the Wallabies matches but seemed to move heaven and earth to get tickets to see Scotland, his adopted nation.



And Lauren:

Thank you John. You have been an amazing big brother to us through this time and just a tower of strength for everyone here. Dad would be so proud of you.

I also want to thank Libby - Lib, you are the salt of this earth. Your care for dad in his final weeks is nothing short of amazing. Thank you for being there for him in his most vulnerable moments, affording him dignity and honouring his independence. He was loved and respected right until the end and at the end of life that is absolutely all that matters.

Now, Our Dad. As you all know, Dad was a social butterfly, a keen hasher and golfer and a lifelong friend to many. But behind the outgoing exterior, Dad was a man of passion with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He loved to read, you would most often find him on a chair in the sun, legs crossed with a cigarette, coffee and a book in his hands. He'd look up at you and say 'well this is just fascinating' and proceed to tell you all about it. He loved to read tales of wars, journeys, hardship and bravery. He was a passionate historian - he would retell the battle of Normandy, the landing of the First Fleet, and the history of the Frazer clan. But true to form, everything Dad loved he took to with gusto - he didn't just love French history, he organised Bastille day celebrations. He didn't just set out to recce a hash relay in the bush, he studied local maps for days and then knocked on farmers' doors to negotiate crossing their property for a shortcut. He didn't just love golf he played four times a week and made it his mission to travel to the holy grail of golf - St Andrews. He didn't just love his Scottish history he wore tartan kilts to parties, researched our family tree and told anyone who asked where we came from.

Dad taught us there is meaning and history and amazement in everything. Dad loved to notice names of streets, history of pubs and buildings, old factories and businesses. When he travelled, up to Sandy Flat or down to the snow he would always chat to the local barman, read plaques on old buildings and learn as much as he could about where he was.

Dad was born and bred in Sydney, and is old Sydney through and through. He would often talk about the good old days of playing cricket in the street until the lights came on, and catching the tram to town. Dad had a love hate relationship with progress. He was fascinated by building and engineering, but hated the new apartments going up across wetlands in Sydney. He didn't go for new fancy places, he preferred tried and tested watering holes across the inner city with tried and tested mates - Lowey, TT, Tubby, Laundro, Jim, Jean Pierre, Nick Petropoulos, Jukebox and the rest... he loved to get together with old friends and discuss the state of affairs these days. He hated that nowadays people walked along looking at their mobile, not taking in their surroundings. He wanted people to look up and take notice. So today, let's look up for Dad, and take notice of what's around us.

Dad loved his kids and grandkids and was so proud of all of us. As a father he taught us a lot over the years. He taught us to cooe, to swim at Bondi beach and to ride a

bike on Nana's lawn, to set up a tent and light a fire in beautiful Bundeena, to catch crabs with kunge in stockings, to play golf and drive a car, he taught us to ski, to read maps, to know our times tables, to name the rivers from the QLD to Victorian borders, and learn the first verse of his beloved Man from Snowy River.



Although not the most conventional of teachers, he taught us the valuable lessons of perseverance and grit. Dad's catchphrases were 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again' and 'there's no such word as can't'. He taught us that sometimes in life you just have to toughen up and get on with it. I remember being 8 years old at the top of Crackenback mountain in a blizzard, too afraid to ski down to the bottom of the next slope. Dad was down there shouting at me to come on! I was crying thinking I couldn't do it. But I did, and we skied together to the bottom. Dad wasn't soft and he had high expectations of us but I will be eternally grateful for that, as it made us who we are today. Sometimes life is hard and you need someone to believe in you and remind you that you've got what it takes to go on.

Dad had similarly high expectations of himself. He didn't whinge or complain if things were hard, probably got that from Nana. I remember last year he was having regular eye treatments which involved the Ophthalmologist injecting things into his eyes. He was reading a book on the Burma Railway at the time and told me that the staff said he was being brave during his treatment and he scoffed at them and said 'Brave! This is nothing compared to what those men on the Burma Railway had to endure. If they could do that, I can do this'.

Dad, you were brave to the very end and you have taught us all that we can be brave too. Thank you and we love you.

Nothing much could be added as an adjunct to the above eulogies except to remember him as we always did, that fabulous smiling face, friendly to everyone, I bet he was even smiling at the end. You'll be sorely missed Stringy, you've certainly improved all our lives for having known & experienced your friendship.