

BURNS, Bruce (Robert Bruce) – Year of '56

Extracts From a Eulogy Given by His Older Brother Grahame.

Robert Bruce Burns was born on a very significant day in world history, 1st September 1939. That was the day the Germans invaded Poland which precipitated the declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France two days later.

He was the third child to Alice and Bob Burns of St George in south west Queensland where our father was the Shire Clerk at the local council. Grahame and Malcolm were Bruce's two older brothers. On our mothers side her family had early 1820s convicts, they were our grandfather's grandparents. Whilst on our father's side they were Scottish free settlers.

St George was a hot, dry town of about 1,000 people supporting the surrounding sheep and cattle graziers. Today it is best known for the huge dam on Cubbie Station, the largest irrigation property in the Southern Hemisphere.

After 7 years at St George and 3 little boys to educate, our parents moved to Newcastle, after a short spell at Raymond Terrace on the way. Bruce and Malcolm went to the very good Junction Demonstration Primary School where in 6th class Bruce was the Dux. Grahame went to the also very good Newcastle Boys High where in the next couple of years his smart little brothers followed.

The move to Newcastle took us to Bar Beach to live, where we were only 10 minutes' walk from the beach and, a few years later, the Cooks Hill surf club. Although we couldn't swim on arrival, swimming and body surfing became a very big part of our lives. Until only a couple of years ago Bruce was a very keen competitor in ocean swimming. In the prestigious ocean swim, the Cole Classic, he had two firsts, five seconds and two thirds.

On leaving school Bruce joined the Commercial Bank of Australia and studied part-time, graduating in Commerce. After graduation he worked in Melbourne, Canberra and then Sydney at the Reserve Bank. After a couple of years there he was accepted for training in computer programming for one year. He then went to work for American Airlines in their New York office. By this time Bruce had married Carole and she fortuitously got a job at the United Nations high school teaching maths. They were in the States for 3 years returning to Australia after a further 2 years in the UK. With his skills he picked up a job with Computer Sciences Australia in Sydney, finishing his career with AMP.

Bruce was a private person who didn't take himself too seriously. He was intelligent, thoughtful, conscientious and very caring, with a great sense of humour.

Bruce's health problems were drawn out and this year he has needed full-time care. Where better than at home, rather than at hospital or a hospice. This could not have been done without the love, dedication and hard work by Carole who selflessly devoted herself to the full-time task.

Extracts from Speech in House of Representatives

The following are extracts from a speech in the Federal Parliament House of Representatives by Trent Zimmerman MP.

I represent an electorate which is bordered by our beautiful Sydney Harbour.

The protection of our Harbour has so often been the result of long struggles led by communities and individuals determined to ensure its heritage and natural attributes are retained.

Today I want to pay tribute to one of those individuals and a great Australian – Bruce Burns – who recently lost his fight with cancer but has left in his wake an enormous legacy.

Bruce and his wife Carole have been residents of the lower North Shore, particularly Waverton, for 45 years. And for much of that time they have been defenders of what makes the character of our area so special.

From fighting proposals for second Harbour crossings to the dedication of former industrial sites as parkland to the most recent affront – a giant marina proposal in beautiful Berry's Bay – the hand of Bruce has been so often present.

In a calm yet determined way he worked with the community to not just protect what we have but to in fact ensure that we improved our local environment. The magnificent Coal Loader park and sustainability centre are examples of this.

To Carole and their children, I extend my sincerest condolences. They have every right to be proud of all they achieved together for our community and indeed all of Sydney.

Email from John McKenzie 11 October 2020

Grahame Burns' youngest brother, Bruce, died on 8th October (cancer - Grahame said that he had a hard, brave time of it). Bruce is survived by his wife, Carole, who was Captain of NGHS in 1959. Bruce went from The Junction (where he was Dux) to NBHS some 2 or 3 years behind Grahame and the 1953 cohort. He did Commerce at Newcastle Uni and (as his career developed) eventually made his way into Computer Programming at a high level.