

WATTS, Ian – Extracts from Eulogy by Ian Johnson

Memorial Service, Armidale 21 May 2019

I am in no doubt that, together with his family support, Ian's religious beliefs gave him the strength to fight the good fight for as long as he did.

When I visited Ian in hospital in Sydney a month or so ago he offered me, and wished to discuss, a 5 page summary of his life that he had prepared. He believed that it would assist me in preparing to give this eulogy. The pages contain the information that, on graduation and admission to the Australian Association of Accountants, Ian believed that he was highly qualified but knew little.

Ian's 5 pages also refer to our time at Boys High, which was Newcastle's selective boys school. He proudly recalls that Boys High had produced 3 test cricketers, 1 Wallaby rugby player and 1 Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist. He mentions no scholar or student of note, only sportsmen; which is what Ian was, especially cricket and soccer. A wicket keeper in cricket, he played at a high level until late in life. I wondered how many knee bends this required and he told me 200 a game. A wonder. It is no surprise that Ian's favourite sports were team sports as that was his nature on and off the sporting field. This brings me to his top team: Caroline, Cameron, Stewart and their families. Ian and Caroline's shipboard romance when they met on the Oronsay was obviously a love affair, but my observations are that as well as that, they were best mates. To Cameron and Stewart, you are blessed to have parents that set a fine example of marriage that was a joy to see.

In preparing for today I have struggled to find a word or phrase that sums up Ian Watts. Perhaps I can get there by recalling a story from school.

On several occasions in our final year when boys unknown committed some serious misdemeanour, the Headmaster handled it thus: He assembled the senior years, about 200 boys, gave us the usual lecture on upholding the good name of the school and then asked the offenders to own up by raising their hands. No one ever did. The Headmaster then asked Ian and me, as Vice Captain and Captain, to resolve the issue and left. I then asked for the raising of hands. There was silence but Ian, standing next to me, would take over and smilingly identify where a group in the know would be looking at the offenders. Ian would say, "Come on Jonesy, or Smithy, put your hands up" and, so identified, they would leave to be caned by the Headmaster. All of this was done in good humour and there were never any hard feelings because of the way Ian handled it.

So here we are. I have settled on the word 'popular' to describe Ian Watts; it's a bit trite but it best describes him. He was liked by all. For 5 years at school and more that 60 years since, I have yet to meet anyone who knew him, who was not a friend. That is an achievement of few.