

Eulogy

Celebrating and giving gratitude for the life of John George Cassimatis.

John was born in Muttaborra on the 27th of Sept, 1935 and passed away in Mackay on the 10th of Oct, 2021 at the age of 86. He was the son of George Andrew and Stavroola Cassimatis and grandson of Andrew Andrew Cassimatis, owners of the General Store at Muttaborra.

John was the fourth child and brother to Anna, Florence, Andrew, and Mary.

From an early age John was fascinated by machinery and was given the nick-name of "Sparkplug". Though attending primary school at Muttaborra, he would "escape" whenever possible to "assist" his father George who was doing automotive repairs. Many times he was underneath the vehicle working on the bottom end of motors etc, while his father worked on the top side. They did many vehicle re-rings this way - along with many other repairs. At 14 he left school to assist his father and during this time he assembled his first Model T Ford.

One incidence demonstrates John's knowledge and skill with motors. He bought at auction an old Southern Cross "Hit and Miss" engine. As he unloaded it, he stated "If I can't get it going no one else will!" within ½ an hour the signature beat of that engine could be heard.

In 1951, when he was 16, he was employed as an "emu bobber" for Ginger Cuddy. The following year he started work with Reg Manning (an earth moving contractor), driving crawler tractors and towing scoops to excavate dams on grazing properties around Muttaborra, Alpha and Jericho. It was during these years that John became interested in collecting rocks and fossils found deep in these excavations.

Around 1953 John purchased his first car, an Army Jeep, which he converted from left to righthand drive so that it could be registered. This was his pride and joy. Three years later he drove himself to Warren, NSW, to visit Peter and Archie Kapsanis - his mother's brothers. He worked in their café and then travelled on to Sydney to visit his brother Andrew... during this time he worked as a tyre fitter near the harbour. On his way home he was given a fox terrier he named, 'Baby' dog. Right up until just recently he was still telling stories about the dogs he owned and how he wished he still had one to keep his feet warm during winter.

In 1958 John joined the Aramac Shire Council under the guidance of Geoff Arnold. He was part of a work gang concreting crossings over the Landsborough and Thomson River channels. Following this he became an end loader operator and finally a grader driver for the shire. This job he excelled in and loved until 1976. John was meticulous in the care of the machinery he operated.

In 1959 John set his eyes on Judith Broom who had come to Muttaborra as a teacher in 1958 - their common interest was fishing. On one of their first dates John even put the bait on Judith's hook! On many of these dates they were chaperoned by May and Ginger Cuddy.

In April 1960 John married Judith in the Garden Settlement Chapel at Chermside, Brisbane. They made a very handsome couple and the photographer had their wedding photo displayed in his window for over a year. Together they had four children all born in Muttaborra - Helen, Maree, George and Arthur.

For many weeks John camped alone on roads all over the shire while the family remained in their home in Bruford Street so the children could attend school. During school holidays the family sometimes went camping with John and enjoyed the camp-oven cooking, visiting dams that John had helped construct, and fossicking for petrified wood, agate, jasper and sometimes topaz.

In January 1962 he purchased a brand new EK Holden ute for the princely sum of 1, 060 pounds (a whole year's wages). **HIS ONLY BRAND-NEW CAR!**

In 1974, John took long service leave and the family had their first trip to Agate Creek fossicking for agates and crystals. This became an all-consuming passion.

In 1975, Government grants for road building were not forthcoming, and after 19 years with the Aramac Shire Council, John and many other local men from Muttaborra and Aramac were dismissed. The following year the family moved to live and work at All Souls and St.Gabriels School, Charters Towers - where Helen and Maree were already boarders. John was a bus driver, mostly transporting girls from St Gabes to All Souls for classes, but he also did maintenance, welding and building furniture. Judith taught years 2-5 in the Junior school.

In 1982 John and Judith purchased acreage on Woodchopper Road, Charters Towers and many very happy years were spent together at Woodchopper.

1988 was a very memorable year ... John and Judith took long service leave, and for 12 weeks and 12 hours travelled through the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia to fossick for gem stones - camping on the roof-rack of their 1980 diesel

Landcruiser Troop Carrier. They travelled over 12 000 kms and collected amethyst, agates, zebra rock, jasper, opals, quartz and smoky quartz – just to name a few.

Later that year, John's health deteriorated, and they moved and retired to their block in 1989 after John's first heart attack. Over the next 33 years he had 3 more heart attacks, bi-pass surgery, stents in blocked bi-passes along with many complications from diabetes. He contracted Q Fever in 2011, leaving him very lethargic and without motivation to continue his previous hobbies. Then in 2017 he lost the sight of his left eye due to Glaucoma.

John was a prudent man and found pleasure in recovering a useful piece of scrap metal from a dump or snatching up some gem from a garage sale or auction. He enjoyed repairing small engines, watches and clocks, he maintained all his own vehicles, pumps and motors up to the age of 82.

Although in his younger years John supplemented the family income with roo shooting for skins and pig shooting, in his later years he enjoyed watching the roos that grazed around his home and found it a challenge to gain their trust.

Special memories of John ...

Helen ... *"In June this year I was given a very unexpected and invaluable gift. Mum was hospitalised and I looked after dad '24 x 7' for almost 3 weeks. It was an opportunity to demonstrate our love for each other. During that time dad and I shared many stories, usually in the middle of the night, he would be holding my hand for most of it. We laughed a lot as he regaled stories from his life. And he repeatedly expressed his gratitude. Dad loved good food ... fresh king prawns and fish, a good meat pie (not the ones like cardboard), lamingtons, fruit cake and Anzac biscuits. He also had weakness for soft drink, hot chips and a greasy kabana or Chinese food including spring rolls".*

Maree ... *As a young child, I was Dads shadow, I loved to watch and learn things mechanical. I remember helping fix an old clock, being under the car learning to use different tools, learning to do an oil change and helping clean car parts. Always asking what some part was and how it worked.*

When fossicking I always followed Dad, if I tried to get ahead of him, he'd always tell me to hop behind, I loved to tell him every time I found something he missed, I still love fossicking.

In May and June this year I also visited Mum and Dad. Like Helen I got to have those precious moments with Dad, telling old stories of things he got up to with friends and sharing memorable events from past, we all had a good laugh, it was like in those moments he was his old self.

George ... *One memory I have is of the times Arthur and I wrestled with Dad on the floor at Muttaborra- both of us trying to hold him down, with one sitting on his belly holding his hands and other holding his legs. He'd have one of us in a head lock between his legs and the other screaming in pain from him squeezing a finger. I can still hear his laughter, enjoying our efforts to try and beat him. One afternoon, when I was around 9, Dad went fishing at Little Kanaka. It must have still been muddy after the river had gone down as he went off by himself. It was after dark when he came home carrying a huge string of fish. Amongst his catch was this Jew fish. In my childhood memory it must have been 4 inches round and 3 ft long!*

In my early teens I wanted Dad to weld up a go cart frame for me. He showed me a few welds, explained a couple of things and then he handed me the handpiece and said "Here you do it!" He then sat on the steps and watched me as I did my first lesson in welding. I'm thankful for a Dad that provided for us as a family. He gave us an opportunity to learn in all areas of life, a safe home to grow up in and advice and correction when needed. He was a grandfather who looked in the eyes of his grandchildren and asked them 'are you listening to your dad and mum'? A man with strength to the end. A man with compassion. A man who lived a life free from the law and guilt toward men. A man who pondered God's doings. A thorn bush with a heart like a rose. Thanks Dad.

Arthur ... *When I was thirteen, I gave Dad a bit of cheek. I could tell he was annoyed so I took off running and yelled out 'you won't catch me' ...only to find him hot on my heels! I did get away ... but Dad's comment 'she'll be right, you'll come home' let me know it was just a temporary victory!*

Dad loved good tools, new or old, and he gave all of us a love of them too. He would cheerfully state when showing off another tool he'd acquired, "Good thing that".

John was known as one who...

Paid cash for everything.

Never borrowed or liked to lend anything.

A handshake was his word.

He was generous wherever possible (free agistment for neighbours' cattle).

Enjoyed lasting friendships and many laughs and yarns with friends such as Kevin Cuddy, Kevin Thompson, Manie Humphries, Gordon Gray and new friends made in Charters Towers.

In his working life he set high moral standards for co-workers or teenagers in his charge at All Souls and St Gabes. He gave 110% to the job.

John had empathy for those less fortunate.

When undertaking a task ... it always had to be done perfectly.

Choosing a new tool to buy was a time consuming and scrupulous event.

Physically very strong for his stature.

Johns one claim to fame was as an extra in the Australian movie 'The Irishman'

John will be remembered and loved as a trustworthy, careful and loyal friend.

He will be sorely missed by his loyal and loving wife Judith, brother and sisters, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.