

Friends, Novocastrians and Kinsmen, lend me your ears. We come together this day to celebrate the life of Ray Walker and to praise him. He was a good man and the collective memories of his goodness will live long after him and will not be interred with his bones.

I'm sure the Bard will forgive me this poetic licence as days such as this one are sad/glad days, and these borrowed words fit the occasion. We're sad at the passing of a loved one but celebrate a life well-lived and are pleased to be able to gather together to have an opportunity to share such memories.

Each of us interacted with dad in unique ways and we each hold special memories and it's impossible for me to capture them all in this space. However there will be time enough throughout the day for the sharing of memories and anecdotes; such is the nature of these gatherings.

Quoting Shakespeare to me, especially that speech from Julius Caesar, was a favourite of dad's; and he was wont to do it whenever I slipped into the bathroom, fascinated, to watch him shave...to swish that minty white stuff round and round in the enamel mug with the brush and then to have it plastered all over his cheeks. If I asked prettily enough he'd dab me on the tip of the nose with some of it and I delighted in the strangeness of the sensation.

For a man of Science to be able to quote Shakespeare and other literary pieces with relish might seem strange to some; but dad had the benefit of a classical education such that I was always able to go to him whenever I hit a roadblock in my learning; and, no matter what the subject, dad was always able to lead me towards finding a solution. That's because he understood the true meaning of the Latin roots of the word "education" ....e-ducere [L]: to lead out.

There will be people in this congregation today who are here, thankful that Ray Walker was their educator. He was always on top of his game in that domain having set the standard while doing his Dip Ed., by being one of two in his class of 100 to be awarded the top marks for practical teaching. Dad understood that it's not about cramming a head with facts and data that is important; rather that it's all about encouraging individuals to make the most of their talents and work hard to develop them. A favourite saying of his was that success in Life is all about the 1% inspiration and the 99% perspiration that an individual devotes to the journey.

Dad followed his father's footsteps in becoming a teacher; and as an academic he made a significant contribution to education in Newcastle both as a member of the Staff of Newcastle University, and as a long-time member of the Catholic Diocesan Education Board; a role he performed for 10 years.

His journey began in 1942 when he went to Sydney Teachers' College, and soon transferred to the University of Sydney on a scholarship to study Science, from which institution he graduated with Honours in organic chemistry and subsequently obtained a M.Sc. in 1952. While at his alma mater, he began his teaching career in 1944 as a Demonstrator. After graduation he taught in Sydney for a short time and was transferred (at his request when the opportunity arose) to Newcastle in 1949 as a Science teacher at Newcastle Technical High School which was then within the precincts of Newcastle Technical College.

He subsequently accepted an appointment as a Lecturer at Newcastle Technical College in 1950; and, in 1951, transferred along with Arthur Ritchie, Stan Baker, Kerr Johnston and George Haggarty (Geoff Curthoys joining them from Broken Hill in 1953) to the Science Department of the Newcastle University College which was formed under the auspices of the New South Wales University of Technology in order to deliver opportunities for students to pursue a tertiary education in Newcastle. His first lecture at the new college was in 1952 to the Engineering students.

Those original staff members were a dedicated bunch and I well remember what a close knit community the academic staff was in those days and have fond memories of the annual staff picnic always held at the lake with a keg of real ginger beer for the kids and a proper keg for the adults and any amount of fun games to involve us all. Beryl Nasher, for whom such notions as a glass ceiling never existed, sure took it to her male colleagues in the egg and spoon race!

I don't think any of that group are still with us which possibly leaves dad as the last member of that original staff; and a proud member he was, having spent thirty four continuous years on staff both during those early days in Tighes Hill at the Newcastle University College and later at the Shortland campus when it became a fully-fledged and independent tertiary educational entity. Dad's last

seventeen years on staff were as an Associate Professor of Chemistry; and upon his retirement in August 1985, very few could say that they had been members of staff for all of the period of the University's existence and all of the life of its predecessor.

Ray Walker's academic focus was originally in the field of organic chemistry as his original degree was with Honours in that field. However due to staff changes he transferred his focus to inorganic chemistry and he became an expert on the biochemistry of copper. On the completion of a thesis based essentially on copper, he was, in 1963, awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by the University of New South Wales. That was no mean feat with five young children complicating things and I well-remember the routine of parents putting us all to bed after which mum got out the typewriter to type up the drafts of dad's thesis. It was always a private joke in our household, that the conferring of that academic honour meant that dad was the only "proper doctor" in the Walker clan.

Also during that time he single-handedly stripped our high-set weatherboard house and he and mum painted it inside and out for it to be sold so that his 1963 sabbatical leave to the USA could be funded. It was then, late in 1964, that we welcomed into our family our little American sister Mary Kathleen born on December 8<sup>th</sup> and named after her spiritual and biological mothers.

From 1974 until his retirement in 1985, dad carried out extensive research into the application of copper compounds to the skin as anti-inflammatory agents. Along with his colleagues in both the scientific and medical fields, he believed that the wearing of a copper bracelet in order to alleviate the suffering of arthritis was but a myth and he set out to prove that it was so. However, he ended up proving that copper is a therapeutic agent for inflammatory conditions (much to my bemusement as a practitioner of complementary medicine) and I was delighted to take on the task of editing his book **The Copper Bracelet Story** which was published in 1999 outlining the timeline and intricacies of his research.

As a result of this research and after many clinical trials on animals to examine efficacy and lack of toxicity, a veterinary product called *Dermcusal* was marketed in 1983. The product rapidly gained acceptance by the racehorse and greyhound trainers for joint problems with animals. Many notable animals

were treated with *Dermcusal*, including Kingston Town and the 1986 winner of the Tokyo Cup.

Following on from that success *Alcusal Gel* was brought to the market for human use in the middle of 1987. This was done with the aid of several colleagues: Professor Barry Boettcher, Professor Colditz, along with Drs. Beveridge and Whitehouse. Some of you will remember its launch on the Mike Walsh Show. It sold out within days!

The company which manufactured and marketed the products, Medical Research of North Rocks, then won several notable awards.

In late 1987, the company was the Winner of the Smaller Business section in the Newcastle Small Business Awards, and secured a Highly Commended Award in the NSW competition.

And, in 1988, (after judgement by medically qualified experts from Switzerland, France and Belgium), *Alcusal* was awarded the Gold Medal in the medical section of the 16th International Exhibition of Inventions and New Techniques, in Geneva.

Being an academic and not a businessman, dad essentially walked away from further development of the product. However it would be fair to say that all copper-based skin applications for inflammation cite his research; and for that we can be proud.

During his professional career, dad published more than 70 research papers and his quest for more knowledge in his field of research took him in the last 20 years of his academic life to several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and Scandinavia. In 1957 and 1958 he was Chairman of The Newcastle Section of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. Additionally he was a member of the International Association of Bioinorganic Scientists and an Abstractor for Chemical Abstracts for the American Chemical Society.

Closer to home he was active In the Newcastle and District Association of Science Teachers, and the Chemistry Education Committee of New South Wales.

Those of you who knew Ray well would consider him to have been a bon vivant; a man who liked nothing better than to be in the company of friends able to share a joke and have a good laugh over shared food and drink. He was a people-person and was, for many years, very active in the Marist Old Boys' Union which he chaired for several years. It would come as no surprise to you then, to learn that he was instrumental in establishing the University Social Club in the early Tighes Hill days. It was behind organising the annual graduation balls and the end of term staff parties which brought together the fledgling faculties of Arts, Science and Engineering; much fun and comradery being the order of the day.

When the university moved to Shortland dad was President and subsequently Secretary of the Staff Union. Neil and I were the first to hold a wedding reception at Staff House and Brynn Newton-John was MC.

His long service to the University also included an interest in rugby. In fact he was the president of the Rugby Club when it won the Newcastle Premiership for the first time. The team was coached by his brother Tony Walker and Nick Walker was the ballboy. It was the order of the day in our household every Saturday to have oxtail soup for lunch and then off to No. 2 sports ground to cheer on the team capably headed by Boxhead O'Shea well-known for his famous double-shuffle kicking style which was more than a reliable team asset.

Dad knew how to enjoy downtime; he was a crafty card player (his skill at Solo having augmented his stipend during his undergraduate days) so that and fishing were favourite pastimes. When he was younger he enjoyed playing cricket and could bowl a mean leg break. He also enjoyed playing squash and was a daily swimmer well into his 80s and it was at Bar Beach after mum's death that he met and forged a close lifelong friendship with Pauline who was his companion from then on.

After his retirement, dad was a long-time member of the Bar Beach Bowling Club and was a well-known attendee at the races where he enjoyed a beer and a punt using his famous Ray Walker betting formula which always meant he came out in front. Listening to the races was always part of his Saturday afternoon activity if he wasn't at the track.

So we can all agree that his was a life well-lived. It was a rich and fulfilling life which has afforded us many precious memories. He always chose wisely whenever there was a fork in the road and he made a difference to lots of people. His path through life touched that of many which is why you've all come here today and we thank you for that. However there are several we need to especially acknowledge and thank for walking alongside him for a while.

Pauline, thank you for being his constant and loyal companion; Sr. Florence for taking him the sacrament of Communion when he could no longer go to Mass; Neil Jones, John Duggan, the Staff at Souths and Newcastle taxis for making the going to the club a meaningful and enjoyable experience up until the end of last year; Adam Frost for keeping his health on track (91 is an excellent innings); Carmel for helping him to keep the house tidy after mum's death and Paul and Jo Koch for being caring neighbours; Nick his hairdresser and the Catholic Care ladies who did a splendid job of enabling him to stay in his own home for so long until we were able to persuade him to go to Sandgate where the care continued and was delivered lovingly and competently until his last breath.... and Debbie and Rick, there are no words from the rest of your sisters which could adequately express how grateful we all are that you were there for him for over 30 years.

Ray Walker was a great family man and there are musings among his papers where he states that: "In my early childhood I firmly believed that there were only three important families - the Holy Family, the Royal Family and the Walker Family" As a Walker he was a proud Novocastrian; a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Walker following on from his great grandfather George who came from Aberdeen, and sailed from Edinburgh to Newcastle as a ship's captain in 1837. From all accounts he was Scottish to the hilt and a lover of life; and dad once told me that George, after winning a bet, was offered the land that DJs stands on or a bottle of whiskey. He took the whiskey!

We are a clannish mob and so I think it only fitting to look to Scottish folklore to conclude this eulogy as the Gaelic *Tribute to the Departed* is eloquent and apt as it describes a man whom we hold dear in our memories; a good man.

**His equal will never be among us again.**