

Eulogy – Bob Meyer.

We're gathered here today to pay tribute to Rob Meyer. Inspired and inspiring, Rob was a man who made the most of life. It's probably a fair call that if there are any Tasmanians not here today, they're in the wilderness somewhere, walking or kayaking down some river. Rob knew a lot of people, which is not surprising given the number of different things he was involved in and the fact that he was gifted with an inquiring mind from a young age, which sometimes meant tracking down people, he knew would already know what he wanted to know too.

It's a real privilege for me today to be able to welcome you all on behalf of Rob's family, son Josh and his wife, Sharon, daughter, Jess, and her partner Anil, and son Therryn (dec), grandson, Iggy and brothers, Bill, Mouse and Mick. Your presence shows your respect for Rob and his family and is a significant show of support for them at this time, which will be important not only today, but also in the coming days, weeks and months as they adjust to their loss.

Rob is loved by many and he'll be sorely missed. He died on 3 September at just 69 – Suddenly and too soon. Among you all, there will be disbelief, shock and painful grief – all the more intense because of the suddenness of events.

No one can fill Rob Meyer's shoes but Rob Meyer and life won't be the same without him. Grief at his loss might totally blind side you from time to time, making you feel helpless and disorientated and in the days, weeks and months ahead you'll find yourselves pulled up short by a memory, an urge to contact him, to tell him something you know he'd appreciate. An urge to ask him something and hear him tell you what he thinks you ought to know might come from nowhere.

I'd like to share some thoughts on grief, joy and love that I found recently, which I think capture the enduring nature of grief, but also the place of joy and love in grief.

As far as I can see, grief will never truly end. It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love lasts – forever. It's simply the way the absence of your loved one manifests in your heart. Some days the heavy fog may return, and the next day it may recede, once again. It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.

You had a unique relationship with Rob that no one else had. Every time the two of you connected, you changed one another consciously and unconsciously, conspicuously or inconspicuously, creating special moments that no one else shared with him. Your grief is as individual as your relationship with him. Be as compassionate with yourself as you are with others around you who are also grieving. Allow yourself the time and space to grieve in your own way and extend the same privilege to others who are grieving. Talk about Rob a lot.

The children in your life will be grieving for your grief as much as they will for Rob. They take their cues about how to grieve from watching us and can learn that grief and joy are both part of the journey. You will all experience moments of pure pleasure at having known and loved Rob and having been loved by him in return.

Meeting with the family on Wednesday morning, I came away in no doubt of the love and admiration they feel for this man and just how much his life and death mean to them. I am in no doubt that Rob has been a powerful force in many lives. You'll hear sentiments like these threaded through our tribute today: he was intelligent, magnetic, active, adventurous, even a bit of a pioneer at times, supremely capable and worthy of your trust. You could rely on him in a tough spot, but he would also give you space to deal with the things you needed to for yourself.

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Rob's life matters and you will carry some of him with you for as long as you have breath to say his name.

Tribute to Rob

Rob's passing reminds us that life is a gift, something precious to value and cherish and, sometimes, it's a time such as this that reminds us that our lives are in our hands – that the measure of our lives and what people will say about the way we lived it, is up to us. Rob lived a rich, full life and the lives of others became all the richer as a result.

Today's tribute is a joint effort with Rob's family. It presents insights into his life from Josh, Jess, brothers Mick and Mouse and one of Rob's dearest friends for roughly 37 years, Garry Dazeley. All of you will end up paying tributes to Rob many times over in the course of your lifetimes, as you share your memories of your experiences with him.

There's a lot to tell about Rob, because he was involved in so many different things and connected with so many people in different ways. The genesis of many of his interests were clear almost from the beginning. He was an exceptionally busy kid with a huge range of interests. Even as a young kid, his social skills were evident. He seemed to know what to say when and people were drawn to him. At school, he had a rich social life and his brothers recall that he always had girlfriends, while the rest of them were 'dorks' - their own words. Indeed, his social ability was a lesson for his brothers, and occasionally a test for the memory of his parents who would sometimes address a current girlfriend by the name of her predecessor.

He was a skilled communicator with a wealth of knowledge, who also developed high level technical skills in a number of different fields, from the Airforce, through an extensive range of outdoor pursuits. His various endeavours brought him into contact with many different people, a few of them perhaps owing their lives to his skills, so it was for good reason that people have said Rob carried an aura of someone who knew what he was doing. Many of the activities he chose involved a significant degree of risk at various times, but Rob never exposed others to unnecessary risk. He could read people's ability levels and would support them with a respect for their current levels, but without mollicoddling them - a consummate teacher and mentor.

Rob's connections with so many people developed partly because he was a natural leader – when he became involved in an activity, others would also be drawn to it – but also because once you became part of his life, you were always somehow in his life even if you weren't often in touch over the years.

Today, we only have time to offer a few snapshots of Rob's life, however it's likely that Rob Meyer stories will be aired among you many times over for years to come: some of the stories have already achieved legend status by now, having survived many, many retellings.

No one else has the insights into Rob's early years that his brothers Mick and Mouse have and I'm going to share some of them with you now.

Where did it all begin for Rob? On the 8th July 1947, baby Rob was born in Victoria and would be the third son of Una and Max Meyer, living in a household, which, at its peak, of 8, contained on two females; Una and the cat. His arrival did nothing to level out the gender imbalance in the Meyer household; at its peak the only females in what would become a household of eight were Una and the cat.

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Max, a railway engineer had developed a passion for the bush from an early age with most holidays involving walking trips to remote parts of Victoria, NSW, and particularly to Tasmania. A photograph of Cradle Mountain taken in 1935 can still be found on a wall of the family home in East Brighton, Victoria. The connection with Tasmania predated the epic pre-war expedition through Cradle Mountain by many years, because Una was born and raised in Wynyard before her family moved to Melbourne in the early 1920s. Una's family line stretches back to the early days of Hobart, to Thomas Bock and his wife Mary-Anne and several other convicts of sound artisan stock. On the Meyer side there were teachers, jewellers, and watchmakers, so the omens were promising for Rob's future career.

Rob was introduced to the Victorian bush, perhaps with a little misplaced enthusiasm on the part of his father, by such events as rides up the 2000 ft of Mt Donna Buang on heavy steel frame bicycles when Rob was about 11; trips that might rate on a Tour de France route. His father, too frequently recalled that, frustrated with exhaustion Rob would throw his bike away but forget to get off it first. Rob suffered the telling of this story throughout his life, with commendable stoicism. Family summer holidays in the Melbourne walking club hut near the top of the mountain reinforced his introduction to the wilderness.

A natural sportsman, Rob's skill at Australian Rules football emerged at the East Brighton Football Club, an affiliate of St Kilda; the pennant marking the 1962 under 15 premiership is still in his collection at his house. As a member of the Victorian team in the National Schoolboy championship in Hobart that year, he even featured in the sports pages of National press.

It soon became evident that Rob could also play rugby rather well. Following his success in the Victorian championships in Australian Rules, the senior master at Melbourne High School put pressure on him to leave his club, in the belief that such a talented student – one who had previously gone unnoticed - should play for his school instead. Rob's view of loyalty was clearer, so he remained with his club and played rugby for the school instead, achieving at State level once again, being selected to play in the Victorian Schools rugby team.

His involvement in the scouts further developed Rob's outdoors skills. Being invested into the Queens Scouts at Government House in about 1964, he eventually became a leader, which would be no surprise to those who knew him. The pinnacle of his scouting career was trekking the Overland route though Cradle Mountain that same year.

A love of aircraft also developed through his teenage years. He constructed and flew several model aircraft, and the sound and smells of the model engines often filled the air outside the kitchen window of a weekend.

Sport, girls, bushwalking, dances all competed with his academic life and Rob had had his fill of school by the time he turned 17, so he left through his leaving certificate year promising that he would find a job. He did, as a bank teller, only to realise that it wasn't a good fit. His father, and indeed some career counsellors, suggested technical trades might be a better fit, and he enlisted in the Air Force soon after. When he was 18, he was posted to Edinburgh, SA, to begin his training. Trained as an instrument fitter, Rob was equipped with a skill set that served him and others well for the remainder of his life, even up to recent times when he was able to help Mick with the CSIRO wood heater monitoring project. His instrument skills were much appreciated, because the equipment was complex and its maintenance beyond the skills of many technical staff.

A number of significant personal events occurred in the period from 1965 to 1972, while Rob was in the Air Force. He married Pam Guy in 1965 and was posted to Vung Tau, Vietnam, for approximately

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12 months, a short while later. In 1970, their son, Therryn was born, arriving a day before the litter of kittens Pam's cat was carrying at the time, which the cat proceeded to deliver on Pam and Rob's bed. Their second son, Josh was born in 1974.

Retiring from the Airforce in 1972, Rob applied for two jobs, one at General Motors and the other at Comalco, Bell Bay, both of them in instrument work. GM was quickest to respond to his application, so he began work there, however, he was invited to an interview at Bell bay within days and about two weeks later he accepted the job at Comalco. He was working at Rio, Comalco's reincarnation, when he retired in 2007.

Let's take a few moments now to take a deep breath and relax as we view some of the significant moments in Rob's life.

After he retired from the Air Force, tragedy visited Rob's family when Therryn, his son with Pam, was killed by a car in March 1981 when he was walking home from school. Pam died the same year of an asthma attack.

When Rob married Jen in 1983, Josh gained a stepsister, Em. Their youngest child and Rob's third child, Jess, was born in 1986.

Rob's life was shorter than expected, but he crammed a lot in. His outdoor activities including bushwalking, skiing, diving – he was a Dive Master - and kayaking. He was a member of the Launceston Walking Club through the 70s and 80s, and walked with Mick through the Walls of Jerusalem, the Labyrinth, Fallen Mountain, Precipitous Bluff, Vanishing Falls and Mount Bobs.

On one trip with his father, Max, to Frenchmans Cap, Max suffered hypothermia in the appalling weather. Rob found him and got him to safety, protecting his father from serious injury. Max spoke many times of Rob's competence in that situation. Far from being spooked, Rob never doubted that all would be ok. He was the best of leaders: the comfort and health of the party outweighed achieving any other goal. That's how it always was. One trip he led is still considered an epic journey in bushwalking annals. No one became ill or lost in the 14 days spent negotiating heath, horizontal scrub and rainforest.

Rob's leadership in outdoor activities also benefitted the wider community. He was involved in Search and Rescue and became a volunteer fire fighter. He was also part of the mob that built a chalet on Ben Lomond. Nothing was out of reach for Rob.

Approaching retirement, Rob found the block at Huonville, or as Rob would say 'beyond the flannelette curtain', and began planning his house. Typically, he oversaw the design and build and eventually moved to Huonville to live.

Here's a story from Garry Dazeley, one of Rob's really close friends.

One of the stories that I sometimes tell people is about the time Rob and I brought a boat together. It was when Anne was in hospital having Jemma so Rob and I thought we had a license to do what we liked - so of course we brought a boat between us. We thought it was a good boat – a 16 foot fibreglass half cabin with a 50 horsepower Johnson motor on the back - and that it would help us catch a lot more crayfish when we went diving. We even checked it out before we handed over the cash and took it for a test cruise. It cost us \$4,250 plus another \$1,000 on life jackets etc. Anyway it turned out to be a bit of a lemon. It only ever got up on the plane once: that first time that we had it out before we paid for it.

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Our first real trip was down to Fortescue Bay with the two families for the long weekend in November 1987. I think we caught a crayfish between us but were very proud of it and could see the potential. We only ever caught about 4 crayfish all up from it and Anne used to take great delight in telling Rob and me that each crayfish cost over \$1,000. She was never overly impressed with it but that was mainly because of her first experience in it. Rob thought that it would be good for Anne to come out in Fortescue bay and relax in the sun while we did our dive - it was just so calm. She reluctantly agreed and brought baby Jemma with her. We had a good dive so were happy – we were pretty good dive buddies because we always knew where each other was if we needed each other. Anyway, despite it being oily calm on the surface there was an almost undetectable swell on the surface but it was detected. Anne was not a happy camper when we returned to the boat and never came out in it again.

Anyway the story I wanted to tell about Rob and our boat was the time we went diving off Hebe Reef at the mouth of the Tamar River. It was a bit choppy, but nothing our boat couldn't handle. We anchored over the reef and jumped in to explore the two wrecks. Again it was a good dive and we were swimming around for about 45 minutes. When we came to the surface our boat was gone. We swam around for a while trying to see it, but nothing. So, decided it must have either sunk somehow or the anchor rope broke and it drifted away. We pooled ideas about what to do next. We had three choices. One was to swim out to a woodchip ship anchored about a kilometre away and try to get their attention. The second was to swim to Greens beach – over 1 km away and the third was to climb up the navigation pylon on the reef and hang there until someone missed us and sent out a search party. We decided the third option was the best so we swam over to it and climbed up. And you guessed it, once we were higher out of the water we saw a lonely little half cabin boat a couple of hundred meters away bobbing about in the chop and in good condition. We were so relieved.

Anyway, we took our boat out quite a few more times after that but each time we had to spend quite a bit of money on it because something always broke. Eventually we made a decision to sell it and just go diving on other people's boats. We got \$4,500 for it from a man in a pub. The sale made other family members happy, but we were a bit sad. Rob and I used to still have many laughs together about the times we had in our boat.

And a tribute from Jess:

I love this story so much. It became legend in both our families. There were so many of these stories (as you would expect from such an active outdoorsman) where things would sometimes go wrong but dad would somehow get you out of trouble. What I've come to realise is, there was a level of trust there that is so profound. Not just with his children but with anyone who spent time with him. No matter the problem, dad would be there to help and once he was there, you kind of just knew things would be OK.

However, while he was always there to catch you, he certainly wouldn't wrap you in cotton wool. As Mick mentioned, Dad was very involved with building one of the ski huts up Ben Lomond. Josh, Em and I all learnt to ski in those tricky conditions. I remember going for a beginner's lesson when I was about 7 - prior to that it was all about toboggans. After a brief lesson, dad proceeded to take me to the top of one of the hardest runs on the mountain, let me go and tell me to go for it. He appreciated the value of being thrown in the deep end.

Dad was a very technical person. He thought that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing well. It didn't matter what the task...building a house, cooking a Sunday roast, or one case, completing a 10 year old's homework. I came home from school one day tasked with making a

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crossword puzzle complete with clues and answers. Mum was usually the one to help with English related schoolwork but on this occasion Dad pipped up that he was the man for the job. While mum looked on dubiously, Dad and I sat down at the computer (a relatively rare household item in those days) and methodically drew up a grid. Over the course of about an hour, my homework task became something worthy of the New York Times puzzle page, complete with a few cryptic clues just to “keep it interesting”. Needless to say, my teacher was not fooled.

A tribute to his father from Josh:

Dad was an amazing source of information. If there was anything I wanted to know about something he would stop whatever he was doing and give me a very long and detailed explanation. There was one particular occasion where I was helping Dad out whilst building a very large and ridiculously over engineered retaining wall which involved (on my behalf) a lot of moving rocks from one pile to another. Getting a bit fed up with my task at hand, I thought I'd distract Dad (and give myself a break from the rock hauling) by asking him how an aircraft altimeter worked. Well.....after about an hour of intense instruction which included a lesson in atmospheric pressure, bellows, physics and a lot of drawings in the dirt with a stick, I began regretting my chosen topic of discussion and was pretty keen to get back to my rock piles.

Another occasion was where Dad and I had started going through some stacks of building timber that had recently been delivered. I was about to cut a steel retaining band that was securing the stack of 4x2's. Dad started going off at me for standing where I was, pointing out that had I cut the strap, the stack would have fallen straight onto my foot and crushed it. Being Dad, a simple verbal lesson wasn't going to cut it and he proceeded to stand in the exact same spot as I'd been standing to give a more in depth demonstration. To my astonishment, he then cut the strap! The stack fell straight onto his foot just as he said it would, breaking his toe. I stood there stunned, trying my hardest not to laugh and fearing for my life a tad if I had whilst Dad danced around in flurry throwing the tin-snips into the bush and delivering a poetic barrage of expletives.....Dad didn't mind a swear.

I'd like to share a beautiful reading with you now that has been chosen by Rob's family to conclude this part of our ceremony.

At every turning of my life
I came across
Good friends,
Friends who stood by me
Even when the time raced by me.

Farewell, farewell
My friends,
I smile and
Bid you goodbye.
No, shed no tears

For I need them not
All I need is your smile.

If you feel sad
Do think of me
For that's what I'll like.
When you live in the hearts
of those you love
Remember then
You never die.

The time has come for us to say goodbye to a man who has touched you all. Please stand now in honour of a remarkable man.

- Rob, we are all so grateful for having you in our lives.
- Thank you for the gifts that you have bestowed on your family and friends– for showing us a life lived with joy and passion – a wonderful, rich life.

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- Thank you for your humility in sharing your inspiration and courage with others, inspiring them in turn and enriching their lives.
- Thanks for your generosity in wanting only the best for your family and friends. May we not go with loss and lack in our hearts, but strength and love and the knowledge that we loved you well and you loved us too.
- Take a leaf out of Rob's book – go confidently in the direction of your passions to live the life you imagined.