

Eulogy for Ross Denne 15/04/2009

My name is Tony Denne. I am one of Ross' 12 nephews and nieces. My dad was Bruce Denne, Ross' younger brother.

- My family's enduring memory of Ross is a man sitting high on his tractor (the old Allis Chalmers) wearing a beret (old army) and smoking his pipe.
- I well remember many trips on the trailer behind the tractor either to Variety Bay for fishing picnics or with drums of water to dip sheep at Waterview courtesy of Cecil Lowe. Ross and Uncle Jack were often seen repairing the roads on North Bruny using the drag with Ross driving and Jack angling the drag to profile the gravel on the road.
- Ross (and dad) shared a passion for cricket (along with all the Dennes including his sister Lucy Correy) and Ross was well known as a batsman with several double centuries to his name and was a good leg spin bowler. He scored over a 1000 runs in one season the NTCA for South Launceston when he worked on his uncles' farm. He also held the record on Bruny for throwing a cricket ball 90 yards.
- Ross and dad also enjoyed fishing and growing pink eyes. My brother Paul reminded us of two stories relating to both interests:
 - Dad and Ross were digging spuds at Variety Bay when an old fisherman pulled ashore for some spuds and noticed Ross smoking his pipe. He asked Ross "could ya give me a plug of baccy" to which Ross obliged only to see the old fishy plunge his thumb into Ross' tobacco pouch and take out a huge chunk. "That's the last time I give tobacco to a fishy" declared Ross.
 - On another occasion Ross arrived at Variety just after dad had pulled some cray rings. Dad's education took a leap that day when Ross declared "it's not often that you see cray rings baited with real trevally Bruce".
- Ross in his youth was a close friend of his cousin Brian Denne whose grandfather was Darcy Denne of 'Sunnyside' at Trumpeter Bay. Two of Ross' favourite stories were:
 - The time he and Brian were staying at Darcys and he asked them to string out two cotton grab-alls to prevent the pigs of his cousin, Murray Davis, from eating his vegie patch. Needless to say they woke the next morning to find the nets full of large holes. Murray's pigs had won that battle!
 - Darcy had a border collie sheep dog that he revered in old age. He told Ross they were the best dogs and could round up anything. He demonstrated this by having Ross open the two tilting flour bins in the kitchen and in went the dog to emerge covered in flour, with a rat in its teeth! This started a lifelong love of border collies for Ross.

- My brother Andrew also recalled that:
 - Ross always had interesting dogs starting with Jock and Matt who were working dogs and followed by Ben, Tip, Butch and Nipper. Ben was the standout though and could fetch a stick, ball or Frisbee unerringly. He was also the only dog that Ross allowed to sit up front in the ute with him.
 - Ben was always stealing the show and would push himself into the middle of a photo line-up sitting to attention just as the camera clicked! Great timing for a border collie!
- Ross has always been present in our lives along with Aunty Jo.
- Mum recalls how he helped she and dad build their first house at Cheverton Parade. This was when he worked in town, boarding with Jo's parents, Mr and Mrs Paton, in Davey Street. This was after the war in the mid 1940's and they dug all the trenches and mixed all the concrete by hand!
- Ross was skilled in just about everything he did and although not as interested in guns, like dad, was a crack shot.
- He often went out in his eighties at night with the torch and .22 rifle to despatch a possum that was ravaging his fruit trees or vegie patch and always with a clean shot. He recently renewed his gun licence for another 5 years? That's positive thinking!
- As with most people growing up through the depression Ross did not like throwing anything away, and that meant anything!
- I remember Jude and I had cleaned out the old house and done up the rooms at Great Bay. We loaded dad's old truck with all the 'unwanted items' and were about to head for the tip when Ross arrived for a cup of tea. In the time that it took us to put on the kettle Ross had unloaded almost half the load as "some items might come in useful"!
- He also was a person with great determination and spirit.
- When he was recovering in hospital after a quintuple heart bypass and subsequent stroke he was allowed out on 'day release' only if he could climb a set of 12 steps.
- When we arrived home for lunch, Ross jumped out of the car, climbed the required 12 steps before we got out of the car!
- When he was finally 'due for release' we arrived to pick him up at St John's Hospital for the ferry trip home to Bruny. Ross was so eager to leave he had left his toilet bag and other items behind in his haste to get going and was waiting in the foyer.
- The final example of his determination was when we were fitting out the new place at Great Bay and the excavator, grader and trucks were completing the access road with Bull Bay red gravel.

- Jo had left Ross with us while she headed south to Ralph and Perry with strict instructions not to lose him.
- We set Ross up outside in a comfy chair to ‘supervise’ all the work. Half an hour later he was nowhere to be seen. An hour later, after searching everywhere we found him half a kilometre away in the adjacent paddock (in slippers and with his walking stick) having climbed through through the fence and was checking some trees that he had planted several years before! We managed to get him back just before Jo returned!
- Ross may have been a quiet, resolute man but he impressed all of his family (and friends) with his strength of mind as well as his strength of body.
- We loved his stories, which he told like his father told them, with history and humour.
- We missed those stories in the latter years but he always remained the person we proudly called our “Uncle Ross”.

I would now like to read a poem I wrote for Ross:

“Ode to Ross Denne”

We’re gathered here to share this day
With our friend, Ross Denne who’s passed away

Born on Bruny 94 years ago
A farmers son with seeds to sow

He grew up tall, wise and strong
And fought a war to right the wrong

On returning home he toiled with pride
And in ‘52 he found his bride

With Jo’s three sons he they forged a life
On Bull Bays shores, he loved his wife

Sheep, cattle spuds from the soil
They did it all with sweat and toil

Homemade butter, homemade bread
From Jo’s fine kitchen kept them fed

As years went by the boys left home
And Jo and Ross were on their own

But friends and family came and went
For “Lauriston’s” fame was far from spent
As the passing years took their toll
The body faded, not mind nor soul

So farewell Ross you've earned our love
We all salute you both here and above."

Anthony Bruce Denne 15/04/2009