

OVERVIEW OF A RICH LIFE

Towards the end of World War II, around December 1944, Iris Marcella Weatherhead (whom everyone called 'Pat') and William Alexander Anderson (known as 'Lex') had a romantic liaison. So when little Darryl Roger was born on 14 September 1945 it is perhaps no surprise that he followed tradition and was henceforth known as ROGER.

After being born in Melbourne, he returned with his mother to Camperdown in the Western Districts of Victoria. Camperdown was important. It was the home of both of his parents' families. His early childhood was spent there with his mother and her family since her family had shunned his father. He also lived there twice later in life, once as a constable after joining the Police Force, and later as district commander as a Chief Inspector. His son Andrew and his partner Steph currently live close by near Warnambool.

When Roger was five and a half his mother married Allan Sharp, a returned serviceman, and moved with him to a dairy irrigation soldier settlement farm in the Nathalia district of the Murray Valley. Allan Sharp adopted him, and that was how Roger got his surname.

Roger's childhood and school life were in Nathalia and he had many stories and fond memories. Snakes feature prominently! That Roger is at his core a country boy has to be due in large part to his knockabout life there. Roger kept in touch with his Nathalia roots, and in recent years made a point of going back to school reunions, where his prodigious memory - and affection - for people and places was evident. In 1953, when Roger was eight, his first sibling Trish arrived followed by Doug, then Jenny.

When Roger was seventeen, he left Nathalia for the bright lights of Melbourne. He lived in a boarding house and his first job was in McPhersons, a major hardware store, which is maybe where Roger acquired, or refined, his immense practical skills which later were turned to almost OCD-perfect creations of house extensions for the family home. Not long after, though, Roger found his true vocation and joined the Victoria Police. Roger's police career lasted 32 years and he retired with the rank of Chief Inspector, although he had been acting superintendent for the last few years.

When he was 23 Roger finally met his birth father Lex Anderson, and found he had another brother (Colin) and sister (Jill). He became very close to the Andersons

and quickly integrated into that new family, no doubt assisted by the fact that Roger was almost the spitting image of his father and shared many mannerisms.

Roger had two detours during his long and rich career with VicPol. The first was an early call up for National Service during the Vietnam War, during which time he quickly became an NCO training other soldiers, and also spent three months in Northeast Thailand in 1968 and was even shot at from across the Mekong River from Laos. The second detour was a secondment from VicPol to the Commonwealth Police (a predecessor of today's AFP) who were providing police peacekeepers mainly from State police forces to United Nations Peacekeeping operations in Cyprus. Both these detours were immensely formative experiences (as was his three month trip home from Cyprus, which included a chance encounter with Elvis Presley (!)) and have provided a huge fund of stories, told as only Roger, a great raconteur, could tell, and lasting friendships.

On returning from Cyprus, at the age of 27 Roger married a nurse, Katherine Mahony, whose family was also from the Camperdown district. Roger and Katherine were married for 23 years and had four children Andrew, David, Eleanor and Olivia. During his time as family man, Roger managed to be head of Parents committees at school, a basketball referee and loads of other doer-joiner activities that strengthened the community in many ways.

By the time he reached the age of 51, though, he came out to the world about another aspect of his life that had hitherto been kept hidden - that he was gay. Roger and Katherine divorced, and while a very difficult time, both Roger and Katherine demonstrated great courage and care.

Roger moved to the Canberra district on 3 June 1997, moving into Chris' home on a 77 acre bush block at Burra south of Queanbeyan in NSW. The country boy was very happy with the bush block lifestyle among his rosellas and wombats, and even the wallabies. But he also found a way of channeling his policing talents with a new career in the ACT Public Service. Despite an early shock about the different culture, Roger grew to secretly revel in his new job and loved many of his colleagues with whom he became very firm friends. He became a regulator of a wide range of services that were licensed and was highly respected including by many licensees. He was also able to support Eleanor's basketball career watching her go from the AIS to become Team Captain of the WNBL Canberra Capitals.

Roger retired almost ten years ago, and he and Chris moved into an apartment in

Civic, where Roger enjoyed a different urban lifestyle but stayed involved in projects, By then he had become a great traveller and caught - and maybe exceeded - Chris' train travel bug. He also enjoyed just pottering. About that time he retired he also became a granddad, and he managed to become very involved in his grandkids lives even though they were all interstate. It was one of his last regrets that he never got to meet his first great grandchild born earlier this year, but he was very pleased that his son David had become a granddad himself.

His retirement was also helped by the fact that when Roger first moved to Canberra he joined this church, St Philip's, where Chris was already a parishioner. Being Roger, of course he soon became an integral part of this community and has been a Parish Councillor and Warden - not to mention fashion parade model - for many years, while also serving behind the scenes in a raft of practical ways. (Chris has been known to nickname him "the Janitor"!). He saw through many projects. His kindnesses and practical assistance to the Dinka community here and to some of the refugees who have come through our doors would maybe have surprised those who were more familiar with his cultivated exterior of sometimes seemingly over-enthusiastic political incorrectness ...

Roger was diagnosed with lung cancer in December 2017 following a perceptive intervention from his GP Dr Peter Ragg, to whom he remains eternally grateful. Over most of the past three years, Roger managed to live a pretty good life, He did a number of things he always wanted to do, including travelling on the Ghan, making a week long trek to the Barossa Valley, and attending another of his beloved UN Overseas Police Association Reunions in Caloundra Queensland.

His last few months were hard, but Roger remained his courageous and strong self despite several waves of problems. In the end, he left this life with his strength of character intact, and surrounded by love. His last moments with his adoring daughters were gentle and special.

His was a rich and layered life in which he made many, many friends and helped and inspired many, many people in many, many ways all while making thoughtful and courageous decisions and being a committed and observant and kind servant of his fellows, even if he sometimes cloaked that in an outer garment of curmudgeonliness. This was a person of substance, who had real presence, a larger than life character, a protector, and a lover of life. "A good bloke" as many have been saying. Indeed. He will be sorely missed.