

Eulogy: Remembering Len Haynes

As delivered by his son, Jim Haynes.

Len was a bit of a loner. As a child he wanted a better life than his circumstances offered. He had a strong sense that life did not have to be the way it was and he was determined to create something better. He guarded his independence and drew on his own strengths. Even in his eighties and nineties he would say, 'I said to myself, what's wrong with you, Lennie, get on and do it!'

In one of his first letters to his future wife Sylvia, in 1945, he asked if she minded his 'frankness'. She replied that she liked and admired it. He approached friendships warily. His often repeated motto was 'Familiarity breeds contempt'.

In Sylvia he found a bridge to the world of other people. She mediated for him, doing most of the necessary social interaction and relaying stories to him. He was an observer and analyst of what people were doing, discussing family and friends over endless cups of tea with Sylvia – and his children when they would listen.

He followed a set of beliefs about how to live – be serious, work hard, owe nothing and always buy quality – be it music, clothing, jewellery, tools or furniture.

Throughout his life Len loved music. He developed a love of opera and classical music. In the 1950s he bought, at one of the auctions he attended when looking for something like a new bicycle, a record player in a cedar cabinet. It was a beautiful piece of furniture as well as a good player for its time. From then on, Maria Callas could be heard on the shore of Botany Bay if you went for a walk along the beach in the evening – so loud and so long did he play it.

He could lose himself in the music. He talked music with his son-in-law Jim, and his granddaughter Katherine, buying them both classical music CDs he thought they would like. Katherine said:

He taught me so much about classical music and opera. He made tapes for me of music he thought I would like, he told me so much and answered all my questions.

He would save music up to share with me when I came to visit. He taped opera and ballet for me to watch with him. He and my grandmother took us to the theatre we sat in the back row of the Opera House (the best for his hearing) and watched the Mikado.

While cooking, working in the house or the shed, Len would maintain a constant soft singing, which was as familiar a part of his presence as the smell of hand-rolled tobacco (or later, chewing gum) and a hat.

He loved the books he called 'the classics', and was proud that this love of reading and learning was carried on. He told his grand-daughters with great pride how Sylvia had taught us to read before we went to school, and he took great pleasure in his family's academic accomplishments, and especially in attending Jillian, Katherine, and Robyn's graduation ceremonies.

Len viewed his main role in life as family provider. He not only worked to earn money, but worked at home to build a comfortable base for his wife and children – to add value to what he could afford to buy with the work of his hands.

He worked to build for us the better life he had wanted as a child – and he succeeded. He took an interest in the health and achievements of his children, their spouses, his

grandchildren and his great-grandchildren. He rarely if ever offered praise directly, but would boast our accomplishments to others with a huge sense of pride.

Katherine recalls: Reflecting on Len what stands out is how much of his time he gave me After watching my sister and I play cars in our sand pit, which was under the orange tree he built road signs out of tiny oranges just beginning to grow, nailing them on to bits of wood, he made smooth roads out of a block of wood and then he watched us play.

He made toy trucks and trains, a pull along rabbit and dog, and best of all a doll house which he flat packed into his suitcase to bring to Adelaide ...When we went to Sydney he made golf courses in the backyard out of old margarine containers by digging them into the ground.

He made the best potato fritters. He made them for my sister and I because he knew we loved them.

Len's sister Jessie is 20 years younger than him and lives in Canada - she said last week *I keep recalling the one clear image I have of him coming home on leave from the navy {in London, during WWII} when I was a little girl and the big box of chocolates that he had saved for me and him stripping off his money belt packed with five pound notes and giving it to mum. He was a good son and a great brother and I grieve, not for him but for my loss.*

His niece, our cousin Susan, recalled his return to London in 1965,

His Mum Ada's first words to him at the arrivals lounge in Heathrow when he set foot on British soil for the first time in 22 years were 'I should've drowned you at birth'. When he and Sylvia arrived later at our house in Northfield Park some 30 minutes away, his sister, my mum, had mounted a huge Union Jack tea towel complete with bulldog above the fireplace just to wind him up, he showed no signs of being wound. . I was so impressed. We hit it off straight away.

His nephew Christopher, also in England, recalled:

I remember him well from visits here, and being introduced to whisky chasers with my beer when I was about 16, and his support for my left wing views and anti-Vietnam war stance, but also of a very fit and healthy man who lived life to the full.

Len served throughout WW2 and wore his RSL badge with pride but I asked him once why he didn't always march on Anzac Day or talk about the war and he said 'It was six years of my life.... there's a lot more to a life than that'.

He was one of those blokes who never talked about the war although near the end Jillian was able to get him talking about ships and events at that time.

After I wrote a book about the Australian experiences in WW2 several years ago I visited him and was trying to make conversation, never an easy thing with me and my Dad.

'The old warships that supplied the garrison and evacuated the wounded at Tobruk were called a 'pile of scrap iron' by Radio Berlin. It was a really dangerous job and many ships were lost,' I said 'so the Aussies christened them "The Scrap Iron Fleet" but the Brits used the term "The Tobruk Ferry",

You were on a destroyer then, weren't you,' I asked, 'in the North Sea?'

'No,' he said, 'we were on the bloody Tobruk Ferry for seven months!'

I didn't realise I'd researched and written an account of something that my Dad had actually lived through!

He was a staunch unionist throughout his life, with strong beliefs about right and wrong, and an interest in politics. Katherine remembers:

As I grew up he shared so many things with me. His opinion on politics and the state of the world. He listened to my opinions and encouraged me to have them. He used to shout at the TV.

He served as a Union delegate while working at Davis Gelatine. Although he remained a Labor man, he left the Party when, in the 1950s, Tom Cahill won pre-selection over the local nominee, Paddy Williams. Even at 93 he would tell anyone the story and restate his conviction that party bosses had ruined the party by nepotism.

This interest lasted all his life - his last conversation with his granddaughter Alison in April this year involved his opinion about the Prime Ministership of Julia Gillard. Like Christopher, Alison also appreciated Len's support and understanding of her left-wing activities throughout her life, as well as the why don't you a decent job and stop worrying everyone' advice that usually accompanied it.

Alison recalled: My first two memories of Grandad are from when I was a pre-schooler. One is of him yelling at me because, after dropping a cork in his beer, I had stuck my fresh-from-the-sandpit fingers in to retrieve it for him.

The other is of him telling me I was 'his sun'. To this day, I'm not sure if he meant I was the tomboyish grand-daughter, or that I lit up his world, but at the time I took it as both. My relationship with Len followed that pattern - he was often a rude, ornery bugger lacking in any social sensitivity to the point of hurtfulness, and yet he always offered me the most incredible unconditional love.

I felt great ease in his presence, always confident he would be honest, if not tactful, with me, and I always felt he had great respect and interest in my opinions, and an intellectual give and take.

He was above all, a proud man, and the look of love in those blue eyes he bequeathed to me never left me doubting that I, my mother, father, uncle and aunt, sister, nephews and nieces, were one wellspring for that pride.

Katherine also adds:

He explained the off side rule in soccer so I could understand it and taped the Italian world cup games and taught me about all their players.

He had Anthony and I around for dinner the first time I introduced them even though he was really nervous and anxious. He cooked.

At my Nana's funeral he touched my shoulder and told me 'she loved you' and offered me comfort when there was no comfort for him.

He loved me and I loved him. I will miss him so much.

As we all will.

He bequeathed to us in varying degrees his intelligence, stubbornness, values – and an Australian family.

We are grateful, and we will remember, carrying part of him within us.

Our eternal thanks and gratitude go to the staff of Sir Joseph Banks Aged Care... who looked after Lennie for six years... we cannot thank you enough

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FAREWELL: The quote on the cover of the memorial booklet comes from the Roman poet Horace ... I don't think Len ever read Horace... though he used to tell us stories when we were kids about a character called 'Horace The Flea'

Anyway the quote from the 'Roman' Horace is this

'Nil desperandum Cras ingens iterabimus aequor '

Do NOT despair ... for tomorrow we will set out again on the vast ocean

It comes from the story of Teucer the son of King Telemon of Salamis Teucer was a great archer - and the brother of the great hero Ajax who died at Troy When he finally arrived back home Teucer was exiled by his father for not bringing home the body and armour of his brother.

So after a war and great voyage Teucer and his men was an exile ... he had to become a migrant and start all over again on a new life... a new journey ... he actually went off and won a war in Cyprus and became its founding father ... but he had to say to his men that day ...his loyal soldiers who had just fought a war for nine years and rowed home over vast oceans and now could not go home and join their families

Nil desperandum Cras ingens iterabimus aequor

do NOT despair... tomorrow we will set out again on the vast ocean. That's optimism for you.

Len was a sailor and made many voyages. He never returned home after his voyage to the Pacific in WW2. He met our Mum and asked to be demobbed in Australia and started all over again and started the family we are all a part of.....

Migrants are tough people ... they take a chance, a risk, they sail off to God knows where hoping it will make a better life for them and their kidsLen did that ...perhaps some of his English relatives never quite understood ...but we do ... we grew up here in this great nation and land of opportunity because he took a chance and made a voyage into the unknown.

Now Len has another voyage to take on an unknown ocean.... as we all do at the end of this life ...

And before that time we all have our lives to live and other voyages to make....

Thank you all so much for coming... as we leave here.... I'd like to say to you all ... as you remember Len....

Nil desperandum do NOT despair

Cras ingens iterabimus aequor tomorrow we will all set out again upon that vast ocean

We have some poppies for remembrance... and, as a way of saying goodbye, we'd like you all to take your time ... and then take a poppy and place it on the coffin before you leave ... with a thought or a prayer or a memory of Len

And then please DO join us for refreshments and a chat and a catch up at the Lawson Room at the Memorial Centre which is straight down the pathway