



Remembering Peter Mulqueen

**SIMON MULQUEEN REMEMBERS
HIS LATE FATHER PETER MULQUEEN
20 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH ON 12TH
APRIL 1999. AGED 69 YEARS.**



Simon and Sue and their family

My father Peter, was the ultimate Funeral Professional, following his father Jack and grandfather's Michael Mulqueen and Peter Fizelle into the business, he lived and breathed funerals from a very young age. He often said his father would take him out to family homes to arrange funerals when he was just 11 years old. Peter would be offered a cold drink whilst his father would discuss the details of the funeral with the bereaved family members. This was Dad's initiation into the industry and he never forgot the lessons his father taught him.

One event that had a real impact on Dad's early life was the drowning of two of his mates in the Bendigo Creek when he was very young maybe 6 or 7 - They were playing in the swollen creek and slipped in, Dad saw what had happened and raised the alarm, but to no avail, the boys bodies were later found near Lake Weeroona—both had died. Dad was required to give evidence at the Coronial inquest which must have been daunting for a young grieving boy. Needless to say he was always apprehensive about his own kids playing near the creek and incursions down into the waterway were strictly forbidden (This may not have stopped us given our childhood curiosity but we never let him know if we ventured there).

In the late 1940's having left Marist Brothers College Bendigo, Peter was studying at Xavier College in Melbourne and often helped his grandfather (Michael Mulqueen) and uncles in the family Funeral business in Sydney Road Brunswick, the Melbourne business having been established as a branch of the Bendigo Family business in 1931. In 1948 when his father was forced into retirement due to illness, Peter left Xavier to return home to run the family business with his mother Irene (Gerdson) Mulqueen, and his grandfather's brother Andrew Mulqueen who had worked in the business since he arrived from Ireland in 1902. Not long after this (1950) his father, John (Jack) Mulqueen, died at the relatively young age of just 51.

Peter was a keen footballer and played at YCW for a number of years, he was a part of the 1954 Premiership team in the Bendigo Football Association. In his school days Peter was an accomplished athlete with a wiry build, often enjoying success in the School High Jump and Long Jump competitions.

He had a keen interest in all things outdoors as well, he loved fishing and often journeyed to the inland rivers of Victoria and NSW. The adjacent picture was taken in the 1960's on his return from a very successful trip with his mate and local Tram Driver - Tony 'Sugar' Marchiandi. In later years he often indicated that he would have released the bigger fish he had caught, if he had had his time over. I'm not sure if he was becoming an environmentalist or simply realised the bigger they are the fatter they were, he loved eating the smaller fish more than the larger ones.

Peter was very much a family man, he met and married Adele Johnson in 1954 and had seven children, (I'm the middle one). He and Del also raised two of his granddaughters so in all they were responsible for bringing up nine of us. He was tough but fair and provided for his family very well. Family holidays were few and far between, the business demanding much of his time. As did his other interests such as VCFL Football Director for the region and a columnist writing "Hook, Line and Sinker" for a local sports magazine.

I had the great fortune to work with my father for close to 20 years, we did not always see eye to eye in all things but in relation to the provision of quality Funeral Service and facilities he and I were very much on the same page. He wanted to innovate and lead the industry in terms of how funerals were conducted. For a period in the 1960's he was not only an owner of the family business, he also owned a third share of William Farmer Funerals, W. H. Oakley, and Northern Funeral Supply Company, which operated a coffin manufacturing plant in Long Gully. His partners were Nell Oakley and Mick Mulqueen (his uncle from Melbourne). He was a member of the Australian Funeral Directors Association for a number of years before I established the Victorian Independent Funeral Directors Association in 1985 (Later The National Funeral Directors Association of Australia), of which he and I were Foundation Members. He often attended conferences where he was able to converse with like minded Funeral Directors from all over the country, bring home ideas that would improve his business and the service he provided to local families. Dad's knowledge of local families and their connections was quite astounding, families trusted him because he had looked after them for so long.

In the last few years of his life, Dad was quite ill, having been a smoker from his early school days, he would often comment on how he would 'wag' school and climb a tree near the Bendigo Creek to have a smoke or two "out of sight". This habit caught up with him in later life and he suffered from emphysema and type two diabetes. From the early 90's he slowed down in a work sense and retired completely in 1997 in his 50th year of Funeral Directing. He helped so many families in his career and in my view, set an incredible standard for the Funeral Industry in Bendigo during his life. For me he was a father, a mentor, a Funeral Director and a community minded citizen of this great city and today I remember him 20 years on from his passing on April 12th 1999, at just 69 years of age.

Rest in Peace – Peter, Dad, Grandpa, Your memory lives on in us all as we carry on our family's Funeral Directing tradition. – Simon, Susan, Harrison, Murdoch, Ethan & Eilish Mulqueen.