

Eulogy for Frank

For those who don't know me, I am Mark, Frank and Jess's eldest son, living in Wellington New Zealand, married to Trish with two children Harry (22) and Lucy (16 and 7/12ths).

Father gave me strict instructions saying that the Eulogy must be kept to 5 minutes. It should be like a mini skirt he said. Long enough to cover the subject, but short enough to keep interest.

But I wonder, how does one summarise the life of someone in 5 minutes?

Another saying comes to mind

Rules are made to be interpreted.

So I will talk briefly about Frank, then read a tribute from Trish, relate a couple of memories from Harry and finally we will listen to a short piece of piano music played by Lucy for this occasion.

An old saying that I heard recently was

Not everything that can be counted counts;
And not everything that counts can be counted.

So it was with Frank. So many uncountable ways to describe this kind, charming, devoted man.

As you all will know Frank was married to Jess for 61 years. Jess was the youngest of 12 which meant plenty of cousins for us. However on Frank's side there was only he and brother Natie. Natie didn't have any children. So we grew up with Jess's extended D'Aguiar family being an integral part of our lives.

Only recently have I started taking a further interest in the Berger side of the family. This all started when I applied for Portuguese Citizenship and saw Frank's birth certificate.

Looking at that birth certificate shows that he was born to Harry Berger and Minnie Becman on 15th February 1930. But even more interesting is that it shows Harry Berger being 49 and having birthplace of Russia and Minnie Becman being 26 and from Latvia.

Frank grew up in Muizenberg and ended up attending Wynburg Boys High. He was always keen on Rugby, playing rugby for 1st XV. He also participated in athletics and again if my memories are correct, he was a 440yd person.

In the 50's, Frank was a member of the False Bay rugby club. It was there that he met many of his life long friends.

At one of the socials, he had a bit much too drink. Jess was there on a blind date with another fellow. Frank approached Jess in his stupor, sat down next to her and when Jess recoiled, said "I won't bite you." Needless to say Jess was not impressed.

However, Frank was a stayer and for eight months he persisted trying to get Jess out on a date. Eventually, Jess conceded and as they say Bob's your auntie.

They were married in 1955, lived in Vredahoek and Mark was born in 1958. A job opportunity meant a brief spell in Windhoek from 1958 to 1963. In Windhoek their second son Simon was born in 1960.

A transfer to Johannesburg happened in 1963. Jackie was born in 1964 and for the the next 16 years, first Bedfordview and then Glendower were home. During this time Frank was an avid golfer, heading off for a round most Saturday mornings.

1979 saw a transfer to Somerset West for work. However that was a brief 4 year stay which included their 25th Wedding Anniversary and Jess's 50th Birthday.

For the next 21 years, they returned to Johannesburg, again living in Glendower. This was what one could call the Bowls and Gym phase. Jess tells me of one weekend that they had planned a trip to Sun City. Unfortunately, one of the bowls teams was a member short and Frank got the call up. He opted to play. After a 'choose between bowls and me' discussion, Frank chose. As the story goes, he chose bowls and Jess decided that 'if you can't beat them, join them'. So she and a few friends joined the women's bowls club. Bowls provided them with many close friendships and some wonderful memories.

I left South Africa in December 1983 and ended up in Wellington, New Zealand, where I met Trish and married in 1990. Although Frank and Jess were not at our wedding, we did travel back immediately after that and spent our 'honeymoon' with them.

In 1993, Frank and Jess made what was to be the first of eight trips to New Zealand. The lure of the grandchildren, first Harry in 1994 and then Lucy in 1999, was too great. It is satisfying to see the bond that developed between grandparents and grandchildren during and after those trips.

2004 saw Frank and Jess downsize and return to their roots in the Cape. They settled in Parklands and had 10 happy years here, getting involved in the community and being close to family.

In April 2015, they undertook the second downsizing and moved into River Glade Retirement Village. Unfortunately, health issues occurred, but fortunately they have ended up in the care of River Glade Health Care where they are very well cared for.

I have been absolutely blown away by the support and care both have received and can only say 'Thank you, thank you, thank you'

Tribute for Frank from Trish

Dear Frank

It was always just plain Frank – not grandad or anything else - but we did have our little acronyms, yours being FFIL (favourite father-in-law). However, you were a bit suspicious in the beginning as to whether I was a real daughter-in-law and gave Mark a grilling in my absence as to whether we were actually married – due to the fact that I kept my own name, not a custom you were acquainted with.

From the first time we met you were incredibly generous. When Mark and I came to South Africa just after we were married, you and Jess treated the four of us to a trip to the gamepark. Your asking for directions were legendary, but we got there and back and had a great time, seeing some of the best that South Africa has to offer.

You went out of your way to see that we had everything. Whenever I admired anything in a shop you would want to buy it for me. Mark jokingly suggested I admire some items with hefty price tags to see your reaction. We were younger then and did not fully appreciate that it was your way of showing us that you loved us. Mark has inherited that same trait and is a soft touch to his own children.

When you and Jess visited New Zealand we had fun times showing you around. At first you were a staunch supporter of South Africa, but gradually came to accept that NZ, while small, might have a few attractions of its own. However, the bit you liked best about NZ was spending time with us. In those days you enjoyed having a whiskey and Christmas cake was one of your

favourites. I think of you fondly when I make the Christmas cake each year.

We all enjoyed having you and Jess to stay – you were very adaptable and slotted into life at number 43 with ease. When grandson Harry was one year old you and Jess used to walk him in the push chair each night until he fell asleep. I was so grateful to be relieved of that task. You were on familiar terms with all the dog owners in the area who were out walking their dogs at the same time. As he got older Harry would hop into bed with you in the morning and clamber all over you. You enjoyed the rough and tumble and it was great for us to have a bit of extra time in bed. Harry's Thomas the train set grew magically in size when you were here. The plan was that he was supposed to get a train as a reward for good behavior but I know that he wasn't that well behaved. We often visited the Botanic gardens and you would be entertained by Harry careering off down the paths on his plastic ride on – named Skarloey after one of the trains. Later, when Lucy arrived, you shared your time between the two of them. You took her to the park, played in the swimming pool with them both, and spent endless hours with Jess teaching them Rummy and scrabble and playing board games.

You had your own routines here. In the morning you would ring Rob to get him to turn the sauna on before you drove yourself down to the gym. You would come home mid-morning, maybe having stopped off to buy a pastry and fruit and a scratch and win. Buying your lotto ticket was mandatory and you were delighted to win a few hundred dollars on one of your visits. Sometimes both of you would have a break from children and take yourselves off to play bowls at the local club. Other times you would entertain yourself watching the sports channel or listening to classical music. You were undemanding and fitted in with us and were ready to help. One day a load of wood was delivered and you volunteered to stack it for me. I doubt that you had ever stacked wood and underestimated the task. You must have regretted offering but you stuck at it.

Neither you nor Jess were critical grandparents. I'm sure we weren't perfect parents but you refrained from passing any negative comments and were very proud of the children as they grew up. They probably told you guys more than they told us!

As you aged and your hearing deteriorated communication became more difficult. Still, we would see your smiley face on Skype and hear the latest on the rugby and then Jess would relay our news to you. We know that she continued to read the text messages and emails to you until the end so that we were part of your life. You never stopped caring about us and we never stopped caring about you. Thank you for being a kind, honest and generous person that we were blessed to have in our lives.

Go well FFIL.

Harry

Frank loved spending time with us when we were young. Assembling train sets, teaching us card games, or just helping my parents by keeping me out of their hair. There are two occasions that come to mind that show what sort of man he was.

First, he took me to get an ice block on a hot summer's day. He even opened it for me. Unfortunately, he didn't open it the 'right way'. Instead of opening it from the top, so you could use the wrapping as a handle, he opened it from the bottom. If I remember correctly, he swapped my opened one with his unopened one. He took the burden of a poorly opened ice block on himself.

Second, he and Jess decided to walk me to school one day. Perhaps somewhat naively, they were content to rely on me, a young boy, for directions. I seized the opportunity and used it to explore all the different routes, giving them a good workout. For what it's worth, they kept up, and took it all with good grace.

Lucy

Frank was a great lover of music. Many have commented on the music emanating from his room.

Lucy has played one of her favourite pieces on the piano, recorded and sent it to me to be played here.

A Reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes

There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to give birth, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear down, and a time to build.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace,
and a time to be far from embraces.
A time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to be silent, and a time to speak.
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.
This is the Word of the Lord