

Reginald Roderick Deane

My Father, Reg, in his meticulous way, left us pages of instructions on how this service was to be organized. He wanted today to be a celebration of his life and to give thanks for those who had made it so meaningful and happy.

In his extensive and frequently updated notes he said that his family and his strong Christian faith were the twin lynchpins of his being. Following his tradition of thinking always in genealogical terms, his family left Parramatta to come to New Zealand when he was a young boy of four years of age. His Father, George, came to Auckland to manage the paper and newsprint company Carmichael and Co. Years before Reg's grandparents had emigrated to the new colony of New South Wales where his Grandfather became the Secretary of Lands at Parramatta, which at that time was the breadbasket of the colony. In Auckland, they lived at Herne Bay on the seashore where he developed his abiding love of the water and boating. He had a small yacht which gave him a taste and interest in sailing for the rest of his life.

Reg and Margaret met at Margaret's sixteenth birthday party. He was instantly smitten by this dark haired, blue eyed beauty. The photographs show us why he was in love with Margaret for the rest of his life. They were an item; always together, always devoted to each other and to their wider family and a diverse circle of wonderful friends. They were married for 64 rewarding years. They were a shining example to us all of what marriage and family are really all about.

He loved the celebrations of weddings, births and marriages. He was always there to help at funerals as well.

He had an adept way of stepping in and lending practical support in so many ways.

Reg and Margaret were devoted to Jill, to her family and to Gillian and me. He was a loving Grandfather who followed his grandchildren's progress with great interest. What pleasure he had this year at Callum and Melissa's beautiful wedding in Martinborough, and with the birth of his first Great Grandchild, Flynn Edward Daniell. Flynn's regular visits to Lansdowne Court were a highlight over the difficult weeks when his health was failing. He loved thinking about Callum and Melissa's baby due on its Grandfather, Gary Daniell's birthday, on May 25. The latest excitement on Christmas day was hearing about the wedding of PD and Timothy on February 7. We know he will be there in spirit.

The Tauranga cousins who are all here today were among his very favourite people. He was a surrogate Father to them after his dear brother, Les, died when he was too young. Reg and Shirley, Bill and Emma, Anne and Colleen were an amazing support team to Margaret and Reg in the difficult period since Reg had his stroke two years ago. His great niece, Nynette, and his niece Colleen, had arrived home in Tauranga, late on Sunday night after cheering him up all weekend. They have now returned for the funeral.

Beyond his family and friends, Reg's working life spanned 47 years. This included his war service as a Flying Officer, running a business with my Mother in Devonport before the war, and then becoming a leader in New Zealand's electricity industry, including 20 years as General Manager of the Wairarapa Electric Power Board and culminating in him becoming President of the Electrical Supply Authorities. He rightly viewed this as the pinnacle of his career.

He was a serious workaholic who hugely enjoyed his addiction to his work.

Over the years, Reg was also a splendid contributor to the Methodist Church in each community in which he lived, and to a wide array of community organizations, such as Plunket and the YMCA. He had great satisfaction from being a skilled bowling umpire.

However, these conventional associations mask the wider achievements about which my Father was always unduly modest. This point is best illustrated by the fact that he was a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators, a Fellow of the NZ Institute of Corporate Managers, a Fellow of the NZ Institute of Management, and a Fellow of the Institute of Local Body Administrators. He was a Companion of the NZ Institute of Engineers (one of only four such Companions at the time, even though he was not a professional engineer) and a Fellow of the Royal Metrological Society. These were special awards which respected his considerable professional and administrative abilities. The term Fellow typically represents the highest level of membership of these bodies.

We loved hearing stories of these organizational skills being put to good use when he oversaw the return of the troops to NZ across North America by rail and then home by boat. Each berth was full for twentyfour hours a day. He rarely talked about the traumatic years away at the war. He left NZ as one of a group of eight and was the only one to return home. He was an outstanding navigator, which led to his metrological Fellowship, and to touring NZ on his return home to train others Air Force navigators.

Reg had always dreamed of being an architect and he was able to indulge himself happily as Jill regularly found a new section, planned a new home and together they watched daily the building progress and the lawn and garden set out once again. These projects always necessitated long hours in the study while Reg ensured each aspect was perfect.

His interest in genealogy was intense and his historical records bear testament to this passion. These records will be deposited along with my own substantial collection of papers this year in the Turnbull Library in Wellington.

Other special memories include family holidays with dear friends such as Inez and Norman Andrew who are with us today. Reg was a splendid swimmer. He was an excellent teacher and taught many of our friends to swim and body surf. We all spent so many happy hours at the beach in Opunake. Reg owned the first surf board in Opunake. It was so gigantic it took four of us to carry it into the surf.

Jill, Reg and I formed a family relay team at the Opunake swimming club. These were special years being close to the beach, the rivers, & the swimming pools once again.

From the time Margaret and Reg were married there were always well trained and carefully bred dogs as part of the household. There are lovely photos and warm memories of the passing parade of dogs until my Mother said she could not bear to say goodbye to any more of them.

Until recent years, Dad had always enjoyed robust good health and had great resilience. He loved to travel and meet different people. Even when he was having radiation treatment they made a lot of new friends at Osman House, in Palmerston North.

His planning skills encompassed many holidays, sending us all the most meticulously detailed itineraries. Margaret would write letters to us from each location. They were constantly in touch with family and friends wherever they went.

As we all know, Reg had a remarkably strong set of values, based on his Christian belief and principles. He believed in the strength of families and the importance of service to one's community and to one's friends. He was a man of unfailing integrity and had a wry sense of humour. He had an endless enjoyment of life.

Tributes have been flowing in from friends around New Zealand. Tasi Lemalu, mother of the outstanding NZ opera singer, Jonathan Lemalu, said in a message:

"Our thoughts are with you, extending our deepest and heartfelt condolences to you all. Such news never fails to pull strenuously as if to uproot our hearts and destroy the core of our very existence, but the consolation is the end of the pain and suffering of the human body and the eternal Peace in God's arms, awaiting our return home to stay forever."

And as Glenys Bullivant, who knew my Dad from her schooldays, said in an email:

"What a special man and a great life he had and shared with us all. He has been part of the fabric of my life, weaving in and out a strong thread of positivity and care, for almost 50 years and I will hold on to many fond memories of him."

And so will we all.

I must draw these threads together.

Reg loved my Mother in the most deep and caring way. My sister Jill was a very special and wonderful part of his life. He shared his gifts generously with others. I was one of the great beneficiaries of that.

Lately we have been blessed with other new friends such as Nicki and his team of nurses at Lansdowne Court who have looked after him with tenderness. We are grateful to Dr Crozier and to Dr Dennison who have visited him regularly.

We will all miss him greatly.

But with his instructions in mind, I must not use any “mournful words” ... and this service must be one of “thanksgiving and celebration” ... the hymns were to be “joyful and praising” (there were to be five of them ... however, the organist has kindly helped us to obey this edict) ... and the service must be “light, bright and beautiful” ...

And so it shall be.

Rest in peace Reginald Roderick Deane,

Caring and loving husband,

Devoted father,

Family patriarch,

Chief Executive,

Community spirited citizen,

Strong Christian,

Keen sportsman,

And, as so many people who cared for him recently have said,

A real gentleman.

Roderick Deane,

Masterton, 7 January, 2004.