

Jim Cork

1928 - 2004

Family and friends of Jim Cork, I welcome you here today to celebrate the life of Leslie James Cork, usually known as Jim or Jimmy and sometimes referred to as "The Legend".

I knew Jim for the past 25 years. He was born in the old Maleny Hospital on 12th March, 1928 He died on 21st March, 2004 at the new Maleny Hospital, 76 years and 9 days later. He was the 4th child of Leslie & Grace Cork. His brothers and sisters were Enid, Marj, Olivine, (Jim), Edith, Dawn (deceased), Ina, Daphne (deceased), Johnny, Marcia, Kenny.

Jim relayed to me fond memories of growing up on the family dairy farm, situated on the Wootha Rd a few miles from town on the western side of the road. The family home is still there, a big house, painted green, and these days surrounded by a flower farm. He told me of the cream shed and the flagstones on the floor of the dairy that were dragged by a sled & pony from the Obi that runs through the property. They kept their dry cows at the end of Cork's Pkt Rd. It seems to me to be an Australian tradition that a road acquires its name from the family that owns the property at the end of it.

Jim received his schooling at Maleny. I think that he enjoyed school, he certainly enjoyed learning. He had vivid memories of his teachers and of once getting into trouble for apparently not knowing his birthday. He knew it alright, but his teacher just couldn't understand how his sister was born in the same year. Those were days of big families and children were often born within 12 months of each other.

Jim was 11 years old at the outbreak of World War 2. He was 17 years old when the war was finally over. He had thoughts of becoming a pilot, and was always a little intrigued by planes and the terminology of those that flew them. His teenage memories were of cream trucks picking up the kids from Booroobin and Wootha to take them to the picture show, and dances often held in the family home.

Jim didn't want to work the family dairy farm, and went to work in the bush, snigging hard wood logs for the Tesch family saw-mill for many years. The buildings still stand at Kenilworth Rd, Witta, and when I first came to Maleny the whole district would buzz with the sound of the mill saws. This mill, like many others, provided employment for many of the local families.

I think that his first dozer was an "Allis". However he came to form a relationship with a caterpillar D-6 and this was the machine that he worked for many years. He snug timber at the top end of the Stanley River, Bellthorpe and especially from the forestry past Curramore, where he had a fantastic knowledge of the steep ridges and deep gullies that he referred to as the "Black Hills of Dakota". One of the cutters that he worked with at that time was Keith Riordan.

This was a dangerous occupation and I think this was where Jim used up one of his 9 lives, having to jump off his dozer which careered to the bottom of a gorge, he followed the track of smashed timber to where the machine came to rest, the motor still idling away.

One of the timber "jinkers" that Jim used now sits in Tesch Park outside the Maleny Library. I think it would be appropriate for a plaque to be laid next to this jinker to commemorate the early timber industry of this district.

It was during this time that Jim had a pivotal role in forming one of the districts famous roads i.e. "The Suicide" - the road from Curramore to Kidaman Crk. The surveyors had been in the area for a number of weeks and were having trouble marking out a suitable track on the rough terrain. Jim knew the country pretty well, and with his trusty old D6 he cut the road in, in 2 days. That road, with its many hair-pin bends, is still in use today and provides a link to the Mary River Valley when the Grigor Bridge is out at Conondale.

In 1953, aged 25 years, Jim married Lillian Joan Stevenson, a beautiful young woman from Spring Hill in Brisbane. They celebrated 50 years of marriage last year. I always found it interesting that Leslie James, known as Jim, should marry Lillian Joan, known as Joan, both having the initials L.J. and both being known by their second names.

Jim and Joan were blessed with 6 children, 5 boys and a girl. James (Tubby), Peter, Kelly, Brad (Wog), Glen (Skin) and Leigh (Lil). Tragically Peter was killed in a car smash when aged 24 years. This event must have put the whole family under a lot of stress, and I suspect this is where Jim's aversion for funerals stems from.

Both Jim and Joan were tremendous workers, both working well past the age whereby they could have drawn the aged pension. Joan worked for 47 years in the Maleny Hotel, retiring in 1997. In 1976 Jim bought the middle garage and for years pumped fuel and ran a workshop as well as running the RACQ service. Jim would often be called out by a farmer to get his old tractor going. The account would go to the RACQ and in return the RACQ would have a new member. Jim signed up record numbers of new members this way.

Jim had a great self-taught knowledge of anything mechanical, as evidenced by the fact that he kept my old TK Bedford truck and TD-5 International crawler going. I would often say that if you gave Jimmy a big block of steel he would build you a tractor from the ground up. These skills have been passed on to at least 2 of his sons: Kelly who has an international reputation for rebuilding classic motor bikes, and Brad who can turn his hand to just about anything mechanical.

Jim and I became firm friends over the pool table in the public bar at the Maleny Hotel. On the pool table he had a competitive nature and a good eye for a long, straight shot. We formed a doubles partnership that at times was hard to beat. On a number of occasions we won the Friday night pool competition. This was not always a good thing, as at times we would collect \$50 or \$60 and get on the grog. On one such occasion, whilst walking home Jim fell at the bottom of the steep hill on Cedar St and crashed his head on the concrete gutter. He spent a number of weeks in hospital; another of his 9 lives used up.

Jim first consulted me at the surgery in 1988. He had fallen off the rocks whilst fishing at Noosa with his old mate George Gibson. He had sustained some fairly serious injuries including a gash to his head, a broken right wrist and a couple of broken ribs. All the time that I spent patching him up, he had this silly grin on his face. It was only after I had gone fishing with him, off the rocks at Noosa, and seen where he had gone in, that I realized what the grin was all about: he was pleased to be alive.

10 or so years ago Jimmy convinced me to go fishing with him one Friday down at Coochin Creek. I'll never forget the first time I slid into that sticky black mud, or the thrill of catching a big whiting on light gear. For the next 3 or 4 years we went fishing every Friday, mostly down at Coochin, but also off the rocks and out to sea. We had a couple of month-long trips to Janey Creek, north of Weipa and 3 years ago had a memorable trip to Mornington Island in the Gulf.

Jim had a ready smile and a twinkle in his eye. He was a mentor and a father figure, but mostly he was my best mate.