# Eulogy for Rosemary

## Introduction

Thank you for being here today.

Many have travelled great distances and I particularly want to acknowledge Rosemary's grandson George who has flown from London to be with us.

For those I haven't met, I am Mary-Jane, Rosemary's daughter, and I suspect you are all thinking "as if we couldn't tell".

As I stand here, I can imagine Mum saying to me – "Oh for goodness sake".

Because, for all the things that she was – which I will get to later – there were many things she was not.

She was never pushy, interfering, or someone who draws attention to herself.

So she'd want me to just get on with it.

## So to start – a bit about Rosemary's characteristics and interests

When I asked around the family how to describe Rosemary, a few key themes emerged.

Inquisitive, interested, and committed.

Independent, self-sufficient, and stoic.

Tolerant and patient. Softly spoken.

Proud…

And… just a little bit deaf.

She had many loves and interests gathered throughout her life.

Her children and grandchildren. And of course, Graham.

Reading, and sharing her love of reading.

History – particularly her family's war and pioneering history.

Her routines around school, church and exercising.

The bush.

Gardening.

Her chooks.

And more recently, her dog Jockie Boy.

**But this is a special opportunity to look back at Rosemary's life**

Known as Mum, Ro, Rosie, Nanny, Grandma, Mrs Martin and… Plod.

Mum was born in 1935, followed by her younger and only sister Suzanne – or Sue – 4 years later.

They grew up at Yalpara Station – north east of Orroroo.

Her parents were Violet "Vi" and Lindsay De Lisle Miell known as "De".

Vi's family pioneered Cuddly Creek, Riverton and some went to Jamestown.

De's family pioneered Crystal Brook and they purchased Yalpara in the 1890s.

In 1939 – when Rosemary was 4 and Sue just a few months old – her father De was one of the first to enlist in the second world war.

For over five years he distinguished himself in the Middle East, Darwin and New Guinea as a Lieutenant Colonel.

The family moved to St Peters in Adelaide during these years and Rosemary attended East Adelaide Primary School.

After the war they returned to Yalpara where Rosemary – now age 10 – was boarded with a family in Orroroo to continue her primary education.

Significantly, Rosemary had a childhood illness where she had many months in hospital and six months with her leg in plaster.

This caused a shortening of her leg, a limp, swelling, pain, a knee replacement and the nickname Plod because she walked very slowly.

At age 12 Rosemary started secondary school at MLC as a boarder and then attended teachers' college.

She enjoyed both very much and made many lifelong friends.

It also nurtured Rosemary's interest in reading…

and literacy and education remained key interests throughout her life.

**And now onto marriage and children**

Her first teaching post was in Laura, where, in 1956, at age 20, she met the dashing Graham.

They married a year later, settled initially near Georgetown alongside Graham's parents and brother who moved from Sandy Creek. They had their first child Richard the following year.

I was born two years later, and in 1962 Graham and Rosemary bought Coolatoo, a wheat and sheep property 12 miles from Jamestown.

Then they had Hugh, and then Sandy.

It was about this time she honed her skills in **TOLERANCE**.

## The 60s for Rosemary was a JUGGLE

True to her independent and intellectual nature, she returned to teaching after refreshing in 1969.

Up until this time married women were discouraged from working, but things were changing.

Ahead of her time and without other support on the home front, she really had to do it all.

And at this time, life was pretty close to mayhem.

We had groceries delivered weekly at the bus stop. Bread rarely made it home, eaten by us as we walked home from the school bus.

She was a good cook and meals were typical of 1960s farm fare.

Always mutton, usually three veg. A weekly cake, ANZAC biscuits and Bo Bo cordial if we were lucky in the hot summer months.

Never much variety, I can remember eating cheese and gherkin sandwiches every single day for school lunch. For years!

The big hits included tuna mornay, Mum's take on a pizza on Sunday night, and desserts – golden syrup dumplings, rolly polly puddings, lemon delicious, tinned fruit, jelly & ice cream.

Huge mistakes included junket, sago, mock turkey and fly pie.

And watch out on the nights when peas were served up to Hugo. There was a firm rule that we had to eat everything on our plate, and thanks to Hugo we sat there until bedtime some nights while he squeezed every pea because he hated the skins.

After a busy week in the classroom, Saturday morning was usually cleanup day.

Except for the boys – who would shoot through pretty quickly.

Leaving Mum and I to do it all.

Bed linen change (top sheet to bottom), washing, vacuuming and cooking the following week's cake and biscuits for school lunches.

Most weekends included being forced to "water". A tedious chore dragging the hose from plant to plant, tree to tree, three circles of water each.

Even then, when she had so many other things competing for her attention, her garden was number one. And it grew and grew.

There were often sports drop offs on Saturdays too – cricket, footy, netball.

Sunday morning was always church and Sunday School… with any of us she was quick enough to catch.

And did I mention the cow that had to be milked?

You mustn't think Dad wasn't on board, as he certainly was hands on during these times.

Often being the culprit behind the relentless cheese and gherkin sandwiches.

Brushing and plaiting hair, removing splinters and clipping nails.

Through all of this – the pressures of work, home and farm – there was <u>always</u> a story read at night, all of us squished in a bed and fighting to see the pictures.

Rosemary arranged a regular delivery of books sent from the Adelaide Library which was always a highlight, especially for me.

They must have been exhausting days for Rosemary. With her kids in bed, she then had to spend her evenings marking and planning lessons.

Through all of this, we learned to be independent at an early age. Helping around the house and farm was non-negotiable.

Mum and Dad were both committed to work hard to follow family traditions and sent us to boarding school to "broaden our horizons".

And we did spread our wings.

The boys went jackarooing in Longreach and the Riverina. And I went to Adelaide! Alice Springs! Perth! Melbourne!

**So Rosemary and Graham had to get used to a life after the kids left**

It was about this time that Mum finally had time and quickly immersed herself in a range of endeavours and hobbies in the Jamestown community.

She did further study and obtained a Bachelor of Education by correspondence.

She then spent years as librarian at the community library which had moved to the High School.

She had the pleasure of her friends popping into borrow books, as well as helping run some remedial reading lessons from time to time.

She was fiercely committed to literacy in the community and took great interest in those who struggled and finally succeeded.

She always said "everyone is good at something".

She was involved in book club, bridge, the Soroptimists.

For those that don't know – the Soroptimists are an international volunteer movement advocating for human rights, gender equality and especially making sure the voices of women and girls are heard, and they have opportunities to reach their potential.

And of course, the op shop – where she washed and ironed the donated clothing for years.

She and Dad finally had time to travel and enjoyed a number of long trips around Australia… and even went to South-east Asia with Dad's sisters and brother in laws.

There were many a funny tale following that particular trip. I'm not sure they had seen a noodle before that.

And always and especially on the hottest days – and right up until the end – you could find her in the garden watering. Three rings here, three rings there.

**In looking across Mum's life – she was many things:**

**She was a KEEPER** – a collector… or do we just say "hoarder".

There aren't many things she didn't rescue.

Family memorabilia was on top of the list.

We're talking old photos, China, silverware, even linen… Her mother Vi did the finest stitching and needlework, and Rosemary has saved them all.

The house bursts with these treasurers.

But she could be terribly possessive.

When suggesting we could perhaps pass some of these on, she'd say "MINE".

There's photos, things *for* the op shop and things *from* the op shop – and it goes on and on.

And recipes!

Books and books of them stuffed with scraps of paper with a quickly jotted down recipe to try – though she rarely had time.

When preparing for today, and working down the list of things to consider as a family… we were asked "did Rosemary have anything special she would like placed in her coffin?"

Looking around at each other, this quickly turned to roaring laughter following comments like "Well here's an opportunity!" and "How much room is there?".

**She was a READER** – Rosemary's got books everywhere.

She could never throw one out. Stacks would build up all over.

One of her favourite things was an afternoon rest and read.

She always had her nose in a book – even in the backseat of a car on windy roads.

**As mentioned already, she was a GARDENER**— this was such a joy to her.

And with such a lot on her plate, you would think she would contain it, but seriously, there were no bounds.

Its true Dad shares this interest but sensibly – with fruit trees, tomatoes and strawberries.

Rosemary – however – was always on the scout for new plants and we would accuse her of being "the Jamestown Swiper".

We'd often be in the car when she'd slam on the brakes and leap out of the car to snatch something hanging over a fence.

It mortified us and we'd say – "You can't do that!".

And she'd say – "Of course I can!".

Water was always a problem, especially during droughts.

But this didn't stop her.

We can all remember Dad threatening to chop up the hose into 1-inch pieces because the sheep were out of water again.

**She was a RAISER** –

As kids we had a large chook yard, and mum saw this an opportunity to fill it.

There were not only chooks, but at times, turkeys, ducks and eggs being hatched in an incubator.

Of all her interests, this is the one that could unravel Rosemary the most.

"Are the chooks out?", "Are the dogs off?" – she constantly asked.

And if it was yes to both…

Rosemary would run screaming towards the chook-yard and invariably find one of Dad's kelpies slinking away with a few feathers hanging from its mouth.

Usually, I'd consider mum to be poised and dignified, but not on these days.

We would head for the hills and find her sobbing, hours later.

Dad usually made himself scarce too.

And have you heard the one about her accidentally locking a fox in the chook yard one night?

And though she could be reserved – maybe because her hearing would make it difficult to follow along – **she was also fiercely PROUD**.

I know she was generally very proud of her children (and often horrified, I might add!)

…and of her 8 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

While never effusive… I would often find her pouring over the latest photo drop.

She was very proud of her connection to the bush and loved trips up north. She was truly contented with a barbeque in a creek bed.

She was also proud and interested in:

- early South Australian history and her connection to these first pioneers who arrived from Isle of Man in 1838,
- her family being founding students at Prince Alred College (PAC),
- and her family's service in three wars.

Proudly, her grandfather Albert is featured in the Diggers Walk along the Belalie creek in Jamestown.

**As she got older**, the things that bothered her included her hearing and her leg.

And things that never bothered her –

Being tidy or late.

As she'd say, "Oh for goodness sake, I'll get there in the end".

As a final comment – and I might get emotional here –

I wanted to give huge thanks to the support provided by the doctors and nurses at the Jamestown Hospital.

For their professionalism, respect and care.

All the way through her last day with us, she never demanded a thing.

She said several times: "I don't know what all the fuss is about."

Thank you for being with us today.

Vale Rosemary.