

FRED OTWAY BERGE - EULOGY

Being asked to deliver a eulogy for Fred is both an honour and a privilege. It's also a final gift to Fred, and I pray that these reflections assist each one of you through the grief we all share. My name is Derek Pingel, and I have enjoyed sharing the highs and lows of the motor sport world with Fred and Pat over the past twenty years. I have received so many calls & emails from those unable to attend and they send their sincere condolences.

I would also like to sincerely thank Brad, Lynne and Pat for the privilege of sharing these thoughts, and on behalf of our family, we extend our condolences to Brad and Jane, their children Lachlan, Gretta, Lucy, Stella and Riley; to Lynne and her children Nathan (his wife Chloe) and Adam and Fred's great grandchildren Mitchell and Chelsea.

Most of us would know that Fred could entertain you for hours with stories about motor racing and life in general. You never had to worry though, if you missed any of the detail of the stories Fred told, because you could be rest assured, you would definitely hear them again and again!!

He loved giving you history lessons and stories from the past, always with a very cheeky sense of humour. Today you have the opportunity to relive some of those stories.

Fred was born in Warwick 9th June 1930, the same day that his Uncle Fred and five of his children were killed in an accident in Papua New Guinea.

He started school at Central School in Warwick. Fred hated school and kept finding reasons not to attend. He was then sent to St Mary's and still kept wagging, to the point where he would climb onto the roof of their home refusing to come down. This persisted until one day his dad got a police officer to come around to take Fred to school in his side car.

Fred never missed a day of school for a whole year from that day, even going to school when he had the mumps. He completed his education at St Joseph's Christian Brothers College in Warwick.

His working life started on a farm with his father, before joining the PMG Department as a telegram boy and postman for approximately 18 years. He transferred to Telstra as a night telephone operator in Warwick and worked his way up to the Manager's position, which he held for 6 years before transferring to Toowoomba as a travelling area Supervisor in 1977, and later to Telstra Operated Assisted Services District Manager, a position he held until his retirement in 1991.

It was on the 18th September 1949 that Fred attended the Australian Grand Prix on a disused wartime airstrip outside Leyburn.

This event sent Fred on a journey in motor sport that would span well over 60 years as a competitor, event organiser, official, Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) steward, CAMS accredited motor sport photographer, reporter and race commentator, and was still a very active CAMS official and event organiser at the time of his passing.

Only recently Fred made the comment about that Grand Prix at Leyburn ... he said *"I never realised that I had been bitten by the motor sport bug, a disease which I have not been able to cure for over 60 years."*

Fred joined the Toowoomba Auto Club in 1951 and competed in rallies, flying ¼ miles, gymkhanas and hillclimbs. He started to rally in an Austin A40, and when Peugeot won the Around Australia Trial he bought one. He had two Peugeots, four VWs, and two Holdens. He competed in rallies for 20 years both as driver and navigator. He teamed up mostly with the late Keith Cunningham (in a VW Beetle), the late Alan Seibel, Tony Best, and Greg Hallman. He won the Toowoomba Auto Club's and the Warwick District Sporting Car Club's rally championship with Tony Best. He did race an open wheeler very briefly, a Formula Vee I think!!.

He used to laugh about the 20 years competing, during which he never won a big open event, but he said he kept trying. He would reminisce that when he obtained his first CAMS rally licence in the 1950's it was only 5 shillings (50 cents).

Needless to say Fred was hooked on motor sport (Like so many of us here today) and in 1954 he was one of the instigators forming the Warwick District Sporting Car Club in his hometown of Warwick.

Some of you may recall that in his younger days, Fred loved being involved in the parties particularly prior to race meetings, many of which were at the Simmons shed precinct in Millmerran!!

In 1958 Fred was appointed Secretary of the Warwick District Sporting Car Club, a position he held for 15 years, and later he served as President for two years. Fred and the late Allan Seibel were instrumental in the building of the first dirt circuit at Morgan Park Raceway, which has grown into a major motor racing circuit today. Fred always proudly said ... “Allan and I started Morgan Park, but I had the honour of naming it Morgan Park Raceway – the name it still bears today”

In 1964 while Fred was Secretary of the Warwick District Sporting Car Club, he was instrumental in getting the club to hold a hillclimb on public roads in the heart of the city. This was a wonderful event and attracted many of Australia’s top competitors and over seven thousand spectators. Fred also acted as assistant Clerk of Course for the hillclimb. He became Clerk of Course at Morgan Park for seven years, and was also at Echo Valley in Toowoomba for some time.

In 1967, with short circuit speed events at an all-time high, the four clubs - Toowoomba Auto Club, Millmerran Auto Club, Stanthorpe & District Sporting Car Club and Warwick District Sporting Car Club felt they required a body to govern the sport, and in 1977 the Interclub Control Committee (now the Short Circuit Motor Sport Association) was formed.

Fred was the driving force with the formation of the committee and was elected as its first President, a position he held for two years. He guided the club through its early years and was responsible for drawing up the rules and safety regulations, many of which are still in place today.

Fred was a motor race commentator for over 20 years calling events at local, state and National race meetings, and even at an Australian powerboat championship.

He was well respected as a race caller and was awarded an outstanding tribute in 1974 when he was presented with the prestigious “Golden Voice of Motor Racing” trophy for outstanding race commentary.

Lindsay Simmons always says that Fred was the only bloke he knew that could make a race between 2 turtles sound like a Formula 1 Grand Prix. He really brought race meetings alive with his commentary.

If you ask Brad and Lynne about their earliest memories of Fred, they will tell you of many weekends spent at motor sporting events including short circuit racing as well as the occasional hill climb. Their father’s passion for the sport was undeniable and they recall going to Lakeside Raceway to see the Touring Cars, the drags at the Gold Coast and also going to Charlton Speedway.

Brad enjoyed going to the motor racing and also provided great commentary for races as a young boy. As the children grew up, their interests changed, but Fred remained a great supporter of all they did. Brad recalls his Dad taking him to many of his games and still has many photographs that Fred took on those days.

Fred enjoyed the good friendships he made with people through motor sport; one in particular was the long friendship he enjoyed with the legendary Peter Brock. They met at the 25th Anniversary event of the Warwick District Sporting Car Club and became firm friends, always catching up when Peter was racing in the Touring Car championships in Queensland.

Fred moved to Toowoomba in 1979, and again became involved with the Toowoomba Auto Club and was appointed to the management committee and then elected as president in 1986, a position he held for two years. In his time as President he guided the club through a very difficult financial situation with a good result at the end of his term as President.

In the mid-eighties Fred was asked by CAMS if he could help out as a Steward at an event in Toowoomba. Up until just recently Fred was still involved as a Steward volunteering in areas of administration, event command, and event assessment. Fred was also a CAMS accredited photographer.

In 1989 Fred was responsible for short course off road racing being introduced to Echo Valley, and even today, Echo Valley is still classed as the best short course track in Queensland.

Fred was elected to the CAMS State Off Road Advisory Panel, a position he held for several years, and in that time he was Chairman for two years in which time he attended every off road event in this area of Queensland.

Fred organised the "Overflow 100" long course off road races for the Millmerran Auto Club for nine years at Chinchilla, the last five being run as CAMS State Championships. Fred was on the organising committee for the Ettamogah Pub Queensland Short Course Off Road Series in 1991 & 1992.

He was on the organising committee for the Australian off Road Championships at Crow Nest Queensland in 1993. When the South East Queensland Off Road Racing Association was formed, Fred was involved with the club for several years, and organised their first three events.

In the later years of last century, Fred developed a great friendship with Pat Murray, and he encouraged Pat to come along to the various race events. Pat didn't have any interest in motor racing and quickly got bored watching the hillclimbs and other events. Never one to let an opportunity go by, Fred found some paperwork for Pat to do, and her involvement in motorsport administration had begun and continues to current day.

When Fred retired from work with Telstra, he had the idea of restoring an old VW 1500S, have a bit of a rest from the organising side of things, and do a bit of stewarding. This didn't work out. Fred was still commentating and took on the job of Secretary/Manager of the Toowoomba Auto Club's Echo Valley Motor Sport Complex, and this lasted until the end of 1995.

Fred was determined to have a spell from organising motorsport events and just keep doing Stewards jobs. This worked for two years until 1997 when Fred was approached by the Inter-Club Control Committee and asked to take on the Secretary position.

He agreed to take on the role for 12 months with the proviso they approach Confederation Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) regarding affiliation, to which they agreed. Fred went to work on this straight away. He knew all the right people at CAMS so he contacted Milton Brennan, the State Manager, who organised a meeting with Bruce Nicol, the late Leigh Vine, and Barry Nixon-Smith. A proposal was put to the Committee who then changed its name to Short Circuit Motor Racing Association (now Short Circuit Motor Sport Association).

Fred presented the proposal to the committee and they affiliated with CAMS in 1998. Several of the Association's clubs followed suit and also affiliated with CAMS; most of those Clubs are represented here today.

Fred had achieved something he had worked on for years, getting all the clubs under the CAMS umbrella. He rated this as one of his greatest achievements, although the 12 months drifted into over 20 years. He remained the Secretary of the Short Circuit Motor Sport Association until the day he died.

In 1998 Fred became involved with the organisation of the first street sprints at Pittsworth, and he helped with setting up the paperwork for the event and was on the organising committee for several years.

Fred has always been so passionate and committed to the development of so many young competitors, encouraging them to become involved in motorsport, and he was a great believer that young drivers needed to learn to drive at a motor sport circuit before they were allowed to drive on the public roads. Fred was instrumental in the Short Circuit Motor Sport Association incorporating a junior class (14 to 17 years of age) in short circuit and sprint events.

Whenever and where ever possible, Fred never missed an opportunity to brag with great pride that International Indy Car Champion driver Will Power and National Aussie Racing Car Champion Brendon Pingel both started their driving careers as 14 year olds in 1200 Datsun's with the Association. When you asked Fred what he enjoyed most about his beloved sport, it was seeing young drivers come up through the ranks to achieve success. Will was never too busy to call or visit Fred when back in Toowoomba. Fred collected so much of his memorabilia!!

Fred assisted so many clubs and junior drivers in his years of involvement with motorsport. When the Stanthorpe and District Sporting Car Club was formed, he journeyed to Stanthorpe to their inaugural meeting and helped them to get started. He also journeyed to Goondiwindi for the first meeting of the Goondiwindi Motorsport Association and assisted them to get the club going and still had involvement with both the clubs.

Fred was awarded life membership of the following clubs for outstanding service rendered:

1960	Warwick District Sporting Car Club
1980	Toowoomba Auto Club
1993	South East Queensland Off Road Racing Association
1999	Millmerran Auto Club
2008	Short Circuit Motor Sport Association
2009	Confederation of Australian Motor Sport

Fred was also awarded

1999	CAMS Queensland Motor Sport Official of the Year
2000	Australian sports medal

So was there anything else in his life other than motorsport?

As a young man Fred enjoyed shooting and also raced push bikes with some reasonable success. He was also Club Secretary of the Warwick Star Wheelers for a number of years.

Fred was always a very keen fisherman; when he got time away from motorsport he would head off with the boat and enjoy a few quiet days of fishing. In earlier years, spending some time fishing on the river at St George was a favourite past time for Fred and son Brad; while in recent times, Fred enjoyed coastal and reef fishing. Motorsport & Fishing!!!!

Fred and Pat shared a love of fishing, and we know that Pat will certainly miss Fred patiently baiting the line for her. I wonder whether they chatted about fish or cars while waiting for the next big fish!!

As you have heard, Fred was a very keen photographer, starting at the Australian Grand Prix in 1949 at Leyburn with a Box Brownie, and advancing to a very high tech Canon taking many thousands of photos of, yes, motor racing, spanning over sixty years.

Many of you will recall viewing endless slide shows and video clips at motor sport presentation nights, all compilations from Fred's photographic skills. In fact those Short Circuit Motor Sport dinners will never be the same again without Fred's "Money or the Box" segment, but then again he's probably trying his luck with St Peter right now!! Fred loved to see people enjoying themselves and taking home a prize. (Came out of hospital last year to our Dinner)

For many years Fred wrote stories and took photos of motor sporting events and these featured in Queensland magazines Auto Action and Leaded, as well as one of Australia's top motoring magazines "Race". Fred was always so proud of his photography and stories when they appeared in the local and regional newspapers.

Fred also enjoyed watching sports other than motor racing and he had a close relationship with his grandsons Nathan and Adam, and often made an effort to watch them play sport in Toowoomba. Brad's children attended boarding school in Brisbane and often played sport in Toowoomba, which was a great joy for Fred to see them; as well as when Brad, Jane and the family ventured to Toowoomba for holidays from Mission Beach.

Fred and Pat loved to go on road trips, seeking out new places to visit, and take a few hundred more photographs. Fred always cleverly designed the trip so that they could visit any race tracks in the area. Pat recalls the time that Fred took her on an overseas adventure to New Zealand, and the road trip ended up at Wellington just in time for the Wellington street racing event!! I can see Fred's slight grin as he surprised Pat with a noise filled weekend instead of the peaceful one he may have promised!

Only a few weeks ago, my wife Chris was chatting to Fred and Pat about a "wish list" for a new motor sport precinct. Even though his health was failing, Fred was still planning the next thing to promote motor racing and as he carefully listened to the long list of ideas, he said there was one thing missing ... a motor sport museum, and that he would have a lot of memorabilia to contribute. That is so true, and perhaps one day we will have the opportunity to honour Fred's life in this way.

For members of motor sport clubs who are here to honour Fred today, may I ask that you form a guard of honour on arrival at the Garden of Remembrance. Also if you would join the family at the adjoining church hall following the burial, we would love to hear your stories of the impact Fred made in your life.

Our faith and hope assure us that God embraces Fred with a love, whose depths and eternity, is beyond our comprehension. Fred had a special devotion to Our Lady and loved to pray the Rosary, and always carried the cross given by his mother. We pray that Fred will enter into the fullness of God's presence.

In closing, the final lap is complete and the chequered flag has been waved for Fred; today we celebrate his life, and all that he meant to each one of us. Fred truly has left an indelible legacy, and I share the words from peak motor sport body CAMS Australia as they shared his passing with the motor sport world ... *"Fred played such a pivotal role in providing an inexpensive well regulated competition that has launched so many drivers' careers ... his contribution cannot be overstated."*

Personally I will miss Fred: his guidance, wisdom, knowledge, stories, humour and support have been a source of strength and encouragement for twenty years, eighteen of which I have served alongside him as President of the Short Circuit Motor Sport Association. I do recall that when I was first elected, Fred told me he thought it was a good thing for me to do for a couple years!

Fred will be fondly remembered as a father, grandfather and great grandfather who treasured their close family relationships; for the motor sport family gathered here, Fred was a friend, a mentor, a leader and passionate advocate for the motor sport community. It is said that “true friends are hard to find, harder to leave and impossible to forget. “ To many of us Fred was a true friend, who we will never forget.

Rest in Peace Fred, Rest in Peace..