

Item 3.1

Vale Ron Jennings

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I wish to inform Council of the passing of Ron Jennings, warmly known as the Mayor of Millers Point on Wednesday, 27 July 2022.

Born in Adelaide on 4 October 1929, when Ron was 21, he moved to Sydney around 1966. Suffering from a serious respiratory condition, his doctor told him he would do better in another climate.

He initially knew few people. Luckily, he ran into Bill Anderson, an old friend shortly after he arrived while working around Circular Quay.

"He was such a huge man, you couldn't miss him," Ron told the Sydney Morning Herald in a 2010 interview.

Bill invited him to live in the old Sailor's Home next door to Cadman's Cottage in The Rocks, where he was caretaker. He developed a strong rapport with Bill, Bill's wife Tess, daughter Lavinia and son Barry, ultimately becoming part of the Anderson family.

Shortly after Bill passed away, the Sailor's Home closed and Ron and Tess moved into separate housing in Millers Point, with Ron continuing to help in raising Lavinia and Barry. Lavinia eventually had her own children, Shayne and Kirstie, who eventually attended Lance Kindergarten) and then Fort Street Primary School in Miller's Point. Shayne recalls his grandmother and Ron picking them up after school every day. When Tess died, Ron took over the role of being Shayne's and Kirstie's sole grandparent. Shayne still remembers him as 'pop'.

As Kirstie and Shayne grew older, they started spending time after school at the King George V Recreation Centre (KGV). Ron already had a long involvement with the Centre, beginning around the time Lavinia had turned 12.

He became increasingly active in the community, helping form the Resident Action Group and joining Fort Street Parents and Citizens Association. He also started fundraising and reach out to organisations such as Rotary to provide Christmas presents sponsor yearly snow trips for the children attending KGV.

When Shayne and Kirstie started at Glebe High School, Ron expanded his activities, helping raise funds for upgrades to the indoor basketball court and starting a reading club, where he would volunteer twice a week to help those struggling with reading.

He soon became a well-loved community leader, working hard on behalf of local residents, given much of his time and often using his own resources.

His active participation in his community included being a tenant's representative on the Millers Point Neighbourhood Advisory Board and took part in regular meetings with Housing NSW and other government agencies to get action for residents.

He was actively involved in the King George V Recreation Centre, assisting KGV staff to promote programs and events to the local community, becoming their friend and supporter. He supported the KGV monthly community barbeque, KGV Community Christmas Party, and 'YouthFest' events for many years.

Other activities including chairing the Millers Point Community Festival, and year-long fundraising for a wide range of charities and advocating on behalf of the community for youth services, community programs and events.

Many people remember him from his walks along Cumberland Street and around the local area carrying his shopping bag and wearing his loud Hawaiian shirts. These walks would regularly include visits to local businesses to obtain support for his charities and community events.

Such was his reputation that he was the first person who residents with a problem went to for help and advice. It was people like Ron who made communities work by bringing people together, listening to them, and helping them in practical, active ways.

In his notes which helped in the preparation of this Lord Mayoral Minute, Shayne wrote of Ron:

“For anyone that has ever had the privilege to meet Pop, let alone calling him a friend, knows the positive impact he has had, from the selfless acts to benefit his community, to his cheeky conversations to get a laugh out of you, the sponsorships for local community members and the way you'd just have to give him a phone call and let him know that you were going to run a raffle, to which by the next day he'd have nights for two at the Observatory Hotel, Bridge Climb passes, gift vouchers from the Glenmore and Australian Hotel's, dinners at Phillips Foote and other restaurants in the area and tickets to events, footy and basketball games, just to name a few.”

Around 2000 Ron moved into the purpose-built Sirius building where he lived for the next 14 years. In March 2014 the O'Farrell Liberal Government announced it intended to sell the building along with 214 Millers Point properties. He described the day he learned of the NSW Government's plans as the saddest day his life. Despite this, he became active in the campaign to save Millers Point public housing.

Ron, along with other Millers Point residents, ultimately moved to Pyrmont where he became actively involved in the Pyrmont Community Centre.

On a personal level, I also acknowledge Ron's wonderful, tireless support, especially during my election campaigns. On election days, I always knew the booth at Millers Point would be well run and would yield a very positive result.

I am saddened by his passing and extend my sincere condolences to the family Ron found when he moved to Sydney: Shane Waite, who called Ron “Pop”, Shane’s mother Lavina, his sister Kirstie, his partner Christie, their children Cephas, Louarna, Brittney, Rayden, nephew Mark and two grandchildren Eveanna and Alaric.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate Ron Jennings and his significant contribution to the communities of Millers Point and The Rocks;
- (B) Council express its condolences to Shane Waite and family; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to convey Council's condolences to Shane's family.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor