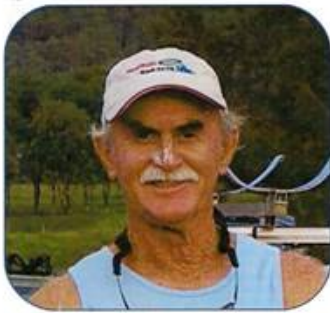


TRIBUTES TO FRANK McDONALD

This page has been set up to honour the memory of Frank McDonald, a long time member of Lane Cove River Kayakers and a paddler well known in the canoeing/kayaking community, who died on Sept 5 2010. He is sadly missed by his mates.

In Celebration of His Life

Frank Ross McDonald



9th July 1942 – 5th September 2010

Miss Me - But Let Me Go

*When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free?*

*Miss me a little - but not too long
And not with your head bowed low
Remember the love that we once shared
Miss Me - But Let Me Go.*

*For this is a journey that we all must take
And each must go alone
It's all part of the Master's plan
A step on the road to home.*

*When you are lonely and sick of heart
Go to the friends we know
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds
Miss Me - But Let Me Go*



Author Unknown

Entrance Music

'Candle In The Wind' ~ Elton John



Welcome and Introduction

Celebrant ~ John Truman



Tribute from Family and Friends



Period of Reflection

'Imagine' ~ Eva Cassidy



Concluding Remarks



Leaving Music

'Wind Beneath My Wings' ~ Bette Midler

*Thank you for joining with me in farewelling
our dearest mate.*

*Knowing friends and family are sharing my loss
lightens my heart...thank you.*

*Please join me at the Banksia Room in the
Function Centre to share memories of Frank.*



Warren Huxley, speaking at Frank's funeral service:

I'd like to acknowledge those of Frank's paddling mates who shared their stories, there were way too many to include, yet they all had a common theme.

We affectionately called Frank "Cranky Frankie" or my boys PITA 1, (Pain in the Arse) he had dubbed them PITA 1 & 2 when they really ere "Pains in the Asses" on the Murray one year. But as these things go it turned around to Frank being PITA 1 and the boys 2 & 3. Frank had a colourful turn of phrase! And gave as good as he got!

For those of you who don't know marathon canoeing, it is not an undertaking for the faint hearted, a race can be anything from 14 kilometres to 400km. There are two premier races each year that Frank was involved in, the Hawkesbury Classic which is 111km overnight in October, with some luck on a full moon, and the 404km Murray Marathon over 5 days in the hottest part of the year between Christmas and New Year, from Yarrawonga to Swan Hill.

I'm not sure when Frank got involved in marathon canoeing but Merridy and I got to know him on the Murray in 2003 when he and Ian Cooper were competing in a TK2 and so were Merridy and Margaret Cook.

Frank, who was not one bit competitive", was sitting on the bank on about day 3 having a leisurely lunch and feeling just "a wee bit tired" (well, absolutely stuffed) when Merridy called out "Come on Frank, get your arse into gear" as Marg and she paddled past. Well, if you ever wondered where the term "red rag to a bull" came from let me tell you with some authority that this was it! It wasn't long before Frank and Ian caught them up and the friendly rivalry took off.

At the same time those of us on the groundcrew noticed the fabulous space-aged camper trailer in the camp ground and had been wondering who owned it. Enter Super Marg and Jimmy the wonder dog. From then on we camped together and became great mates.

The successful completion of the Murray led to Frank and Ian paddling many doubles events over the years and they earned a respectable (understated as usual) silver medal in the 2008 State championships.

It turns out that we weren't the only ones to be charmed by Frank's Pied Piper-like approach to collecting friends.

Tony Hystek, doing his first Hawkesbury familiarisation paddle one weekend happened upon Frank somewhere between Wisemans and Windsor and by the following Wednesday had been charmed into joining the crew at Lane Cove River Kayakers. Some years Tony was instrumental in Frank's fastest ever time on a weekly Wednesday night race. With Tony in the back and instructions to hang on (which I'm led to believe is one of the few times Frank did what he was told) off they went. I'm tempted to ask Tony to stand up so you can make your own judgment but I'll spare him the embarrassment, if however you can imagine an outboard motor built like a brick dunny with a paddle, that's Tony. The grin on Frank's face lasted for weeks.

Also charmed by Frank's Pipe Piper-like quality were Tim Hookins and Bill Handley, who had the great fortune to work near where Frank and Marg lived in Manly. Frank, who didn't mind a chat, called in – OFTEN – to see if they would like to go for a coffee. On occasions they would cancel business meetings on the spur of the moment for the pleasures of spending time with him.

In the 2006 Hawkesbury Classic Frank and Ian had to withdraw when Frank was overcome by hyperthermia. And his disappointment at not finishing was palpable. Not to be beaten, they had another crack in 2008 and to quote Marg Cook "I remember Frank's pleasure at cruising past our mixed K4 in the 2008 Hawkesbury Classic glued to the wash of another K2. He and Ian Cooper were paddling Tim Hookins' Supersonic and they did a blistering 9hr 47m 18s (approximately) and thoroughly deserved his victory in his last Classic."

Shortly after, while on a trip to the Top End, when Frank had been diagnosed with cancer, he rang Ian to say "Geez mate, I reckon we could have broken that record in the Classic if I'd had two lungs working". It's hard to imagine that Frank could train and perform at such a high level when he was in the early stages of this disease. (I'm led to believe that a certain amount of beer was involved in that training!)"

I fondly recall chatting to Frank, he was the most fantastic listener! I can picture him cocking his head to the side, pausing while he thought of just the right question to ask, so I would tell him my stories. He had an insatiable curiosity and would chat with absolutely everyone. He was welcoming, companionable, always there and just great company.

I would like to quote a few words of A B (Banjo) Patterson that for me sum up Frank. They are from that well known poem "Frankie of the Four Wheel Drive".

I had written him a letter which I had for want of better
Knowledge send to where I'd met him on the Murray years ago,
He was paddling when I knew him so I sent a letter to him,
"Just on spec" addressed as follows, Frankie of the Four Wheel Drive.

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected
(And I think the same was written in an email, font 'utsaah")
'Twas a paddling mate who wrote it and verbatim I will quote it
Frankie's gone to Queensland (SA, NSW, Tas, Vic, ACT & WA) fishing and we don't know where he are.

In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Frankie
Gone a-travelling down the Cooper (insert any other place you like really) where the four wheel drivers go
As the travellers slowly camping, Frankie strolls amongst them chatting
For the wanderer's life has stories that the townsfolk never know.

And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars.

I'm sitting in my office where a Sydney
Ray of sunlight struggles brightly down between the houses tall,
And the many air and salty of this fine, majestic city
Through the open windows floating, spreads its wonder over all.

And in place of lowing cattle I can hear the fiendish rattle
Of the kayaks and the paddles making hurry, what a sight
And the language "Are you ready?" of the starter and the timer
Comes fitfully and faintly from Lane Cove on Wednesday night.

And the Hawkesbury Classic draws us, and the full moon always awes us
As we jostle one another in our rush to find our fate,
With our eager craft and speedy, we will pause to think of Frankie,
For the stories and the chin wag, we're forever grateful mate.

And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Frankie
Like to take a turn at wandering where the seasons come and go
While he faced the round eternal with the traffic and the normal
But I doubt that'd suit our Frankie of the Four Wheel Drive.

Ian Cooper:

I first met Frank and Marg at Lane Cove, seeing their beloved Jack Russell, Jimmy, riding on the back of Marg's Mirage. We became firm friends in 2003 and a few beers and wines were consumed while we discussed paddling and travel, things we had very much in common.

Individually Frank and I were contemplating the Murray Marathon in 2003 so we tried a double and found that we worked well together in the boat. We bought a TK2 together in October and set about preparing for the Murray. This involved a lot of training and extensive socialising between our long suffering partners.

The Murray was completed successfully and over the ensuing years we paddled together in marathon series races, often with some success. In 2008 we earned a respectable silver medal in the nationals, held at Penrith.

Buoyed by our success we decided to have a second crack at the Hawkesbury Classic. So a bit more training, a few more beers and meals later, this race was completed in 9 hours 47 minutes. It was not a record but still a bloody good time and we were pleased with ourselves.

A couple of months later Frank and Marg packed their 4wd Toyota and headed off in search of more dirt roads and secluded places to camp. When his illness was diagnosed in Darwin Frank phoned me to say "Gee mate, I reckon we could have broken the record in the Classic if I'd had two lungs working". It's hard to imagine that Frank could train and perform at such a high level when he was in the early stages of this disease.

As a friend and a doubles partner he will be greatly missed. Rest in peace, Frank.

Marg Cook:

I had met Frank a few times down at Wirong Flat with the club, but I didn't really know him.

Merridy and I were paddling our first Murray Marathon together in 2003, as were Frank and Ian (Cooper).

Late during day one or two, Merridy saw Frank and Ian enjoying a leisurely lunch on the riverbank. She yelled, in her best voice, 'get off your arse Frank and get on the water' (or words to that effect) as we paddled past. That got them moving and became the start of a great friendship.

The next year Frank and Marg kept in touch with us on the Murray by text and phone, from their luxurious campsite in the Snowy Mountains. He must have missed the flies – so in 2005, Frank towed his Ultimate camper trailer down the Murray and land crewed for Merridy and me. We learnt much about Frank's "can do" attitude and also of his generosity of spirit. He welcomed all paddlers as friends and was always happy to include new people in his circle. He had a knack of getting the most shy and awkward people to feel relaxed and belonging – a rare and valuable skill.

I remember Frank's pleasure at cruising past our mixed K4 in the 2008 Hawkesbury Classic, glued to the wash of another K2. He was paddling a supersonic with Ian Cooper and they did a blistering 9hr 47min for the 111km. Frank had a keen competitive spirit (under his laid back exterior) and thoroughly deserved his victory in his last Classic.

His tales from his 4 wheel drive adventures with Marg and Jimmy, in the Ultimate, the van or the milk truck have entertained many of us. Frank's meticulous preparation allowed him to explore further from civilisation with the creature comforts he and Marg enjoyed.

When he was diagnosed with mesothelioma in April 2009, Marg and he made the long drive back from Darwin to Sydney with the van and milk truck. In spite of stopping off at various hospitals on route for life saving treatment, he still was able to camp by the Macquarie River at one of his favourite bush sites. A great adventurer, kayaker, bushman and friend.

Tom Simmat:

I was pretending to share a can of creamed rice with Jimmy trying to get some relief from the heat, lying on the grass in the shade, next to the lake at Cohuna. End of day four on the Murray. Frank was giggling at my antics.

I had not been paddling long, but Frank had accepted me into his company, without reservation. We camped with him that trip, he always knew the best and coolest spot to be, and was so genuine with his comradeship. In the few years I have known him we grew to be great friends.

Tim Hookins:

Frank was the one who got Tony Hystek going on paddling! He suggested Tony should come down to Lane Cove and do a time trial. Good suggestion.

I got to know Frank land-crewing on the Murray. I had been driving down the Murray landcrewing for Tom Simmat but I was driving with an expired driver's licence for three days. Frank offered to take me to Deniliquin to the RTA during a short break on day 4. After that I was legal again!

Frank was very disappointed when in 2006 he got hypothermia during the Classic and couldn't finish. He was in the front seat of a TK2 with Ian Cooper and he just got too cold with the water spraying up on to him all the time.. In 2008 I lent him my Supersonic and the old faithful team of Frank and Ian did it again. This time there was no doubt that Frank would finish and he was delighted to have done it once more although he was surprised how much effort it took to complete. Aren't we all?

Frank is a generous bloke. When Andrew Macauley sent out a last minute appeal for a boat to paddle in the classic Frank offered his Flash. Andrew did the Classic without stopping, without a landcrew and got straight out of the water at the finish and put the Flash back on Frank's Landcruiser, without a moment's hesitation.

Frank is a good listener, especially when it comes to hard luck building stories. He is a retired builder while Bill Handley, my business partner, and I are very much current builders. Many times we have settled down at Bellaroma in the morning to have a winge and tell him how this or that client was not playing fair. Frank would just listen and say something afterwards. We always felt a bit better after those chats, somehow. We really enjoyed our chats with Frank. He would just drop in to the office and ask whether we wanted to have a coffee. We would just drop everything and go!

We were lucky to have arranged a meeting just a week before Frank landed up in hospital. Tom Simmat, Bill and I went with Frank for a coffee in Manly. Frank was really keen to hear how Tom had got on up the Yukon and how I had bashed my boat around going down the Avon. He was also keen to hear about Bill's amphibious plane. He always liked hearing about Bill's flying expeditions just as much as about our paddling expeditions. We really didn't think that would be the last time we would see him, because he still seemed like the same old Frank. And that's how we will remember him.

Good, kindly, Frank.

Tony Hystek:

Last Saturday, as I did the HCC famil, I thought about meeting Frank for the first time. It was the same day in 2006, and the same place when I undertook my first ever Hawkesbury famil from Sackville to Wisemans. As we paddled along together, Frank introduced himself with his usual welcoming smile and answered my questions with matter-of-fact advice on how to do the Hawkesbury, as well as telling me proudly about his club, and what a great bunch of people they were. I was hooked, and so was introduced to the Lane Cove mob the very next Wednesday.

I remember the Wirong days, with Frank and Marg gladly offering the after-paddle cups of tea from their well-travelled expedition 4WD. And Frank's fabulous paddle in the Hawkesbury Classic in 2008 with Ian Cooper, when he got to Wisemans looking very second-hand, indeed physically sick. But after a quick revive and mustering his inner strength, he got back in and powered on to the finish in amazing time.

And the look of pleasure after we did his quickest ever lap of Lane Cove in the Supersonic a few months later. This must have been close to the time he found out the bad news.

I only knew Frank for a short time, but it's the longest I've ever known anyone in Lane Cove. I'll miss him.

Derek Simmonds:

Frank will be remembered as a passionate sportsman and adventurer who lived and loved life to the max and generously shared it in their pursuits.

Long before he took up paddling he was an A-Grade tennis player, Aust. Championship level squash player and BMW Alp. His last tennis triumph was a gold in the 2009 NZ Masters Games 60+ mixed doubles.

Around the time he became a "self-funded retiree", Frank and Marg became Wed night regulars at Wirong in their Mirag accompanied by their beloved Jack Russell, Jimmy. Sitting regally on the back of Frank's 530, Jimmy's stability was the paddler on the river.

It wasn't long before Frank got competitive, briefly in a TK1 and then his trademark Flash. His greatest successes however were later Supersonic with Ian Cooper as stoker. They distinguished themselves in the Marathon series and Myall and Hawke. Frank's other retirement passion was extreme outback camping adventures with Marg and Jimmy in his beloved immaculate loaded with every conceivable survival and comfort necessity.

Early in 2009, after a scorching time in the 2008 Hawkesbury Classic, Frank became ill in Darwin on a trip to the top-end. The asbestos-related lung cancer followed quickly. Tragically, a lifetime as a builder and Frank had fallen victim to James Ha. He was no victim by nature. He was determined to fight on with Marg at his side and continue adventurously to the end. The Landcruiser as a six-wheel camper and the Travelling Macs continued their trips, now sadly without Jimmy, gone to dog time ago. Their last adventure was an extended tour of Tasmania only six months ago.

Frank never boasted or talked much about his many and varied achievements, preferring to take an interest in others and encourage them. He was a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of all LCRK paddlers who gave it a go, from the regular Wed nighters to the few who extended themselves massively to the limits of human endurance. He was always the first and most generous with encouragement and congratulations. Right to the end he was much more interested in what others were doing than needing help in his own ultimate struggle. His rare spirit of generosity, encouragement, fun and loyalty will be sadly missed down at the river.

Justin Paine:

I had my last chat with Frank on the Thursday, three days before he died. He was in hospital and had a phone by his bed. We had quite a long talk and he was very much with it, as lucid as ever. As always, he wanted to know everything that

was happening in Lane Cove River Kayakers – “tell me all the gossip!” He was a bit breathless, understandably, so I did most of the talking and let him ask me questions.

It was like most of our other conversations, he was interested in everyone and everything, couldn't get enough information.

He was a good friend, to me and to many, many others. And he was generous, in a way that people are generous with themselves in what they give to others.

I miss not being able to phone or visit him and have a chat, things keep happening and I think to myself “Frank will be interested when I tell him about that,” and then I remember that that pleasure has been taken away.

It was good that his mates from Lane Cove and other kayaking clubs could join with Marg, his family and other friends at that memorable funeral service to remember him and celebrate his life. And what a life it was, packed to the brim with all life's experiences.

He may have gone, but his memories have not.
