

## **RONALD JOSEPH MULOCK**

### **EULOGY**

Ron, Mr Mulock, RJ, dad, Minister, pa, the old man, perc, Ronley, Don, the Big Mule. Ronald Joseph Mulock responded to each of those descriptions during his life. His virtues of honesty, integrity, loyalty and respect for his fellow man remained constant.

Ron was born at St Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst on 11 January 1930 and baptised a Catholic on the same day. His surname at birth was Moore. Ron never knew his mother, nor the identity of his father. He was fostered out at ten months to Elizabeth Mulock (nee Goode), known to her family and close friends as 'Lizzie', a proud Londoner by birth. She adopted Ron when he was 14.

Lizzie and her first husband James Stevens emigrated from England with their son Richard James 'Dick' Stevens in 1911. Their second son Claude Sidney 'Sid' Stevens was born in 1913. After James Stevens died, Elizabeth married Sidney Mulock on 1 June 1916. Their daughter, Doreen Mavis Mulock (known as Mavis), was born in 1917. The marriage was an unhappy one and the couple separated soon after Mavis' birth. Sidney Mulock died on 21 July 1941 and Lizzie never remarried. Jim Sullivan, a bachelor cousin of Lizzie's, lived with the family and was the bread winner. Lizzie and Mavis had attended the foster home with the intention of selecting a little girl, but came home with Ron. There is little doubt that Ron's solitary entry into the world significantly shaped and directed him throughout his life. He forever felt privileged that he had been chosen by Lizzie and Mavis from the many children that were available for placement in those hard times. He never dwelt on what he didn't know or didn't have, but reveled in the beautiful family that had chosen and loved him. In recent years Ron made enquiries to determine the identity of his natural mother and father. Those enquiries proved fruitless. Some have cruelly suggested that with better legal representation those enquires may have borne fruit. Client privilege prevents me from making comment.

Ron spent his early years in Penshurst in Sydney's south. He was born at the height of the Great Depression. It was a time of hardship for the Mulock family but the close bond between its members saw them through those tough years. As the older children had left home, the family moved to a flat in nearby Hurstville in the late 1930s.

Lizzie Mulock was a Catholic but not a practising one. Ron, however, had been baptised a Catholic at birth and was brought up accordingly, the only Catholic among Lizzie's children. Ron received most of his primary education at St Declan's school in Penshurst. He showed early academic promise and won a bursary to De La Salle College at Marrickville for his final year in primary school. Subsequently, he won a College bursary and then a State bursary, which covered his educational expenses for the last two years of high school. Ron made many lifetime friends at De La Salle College and always valued their friendship.

Leaving school in 1949, Ron was employed by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration. He began studying law part-time at Sydney University. In 1950, Ron left the public service and became an articled clerk. He was admitted as a Solicitor of the Supreme Court on Friday 2 September 1955. The young graduate was determined to start his own practice and moved to Penrith on Sydney's western outskirts. It was an area that was growing rapidly and provided opportunities for a young solicitor determined to get ahead. Ron

established his own practice in 1957. He was later joined in partnership by Doug Timmins and together they established a formidable legal practice. Mullock Timmins solicitors was the home to many lawyers who established outstanding careers in the profession and judiciary. By the time Ron went into Parliament in 1971, his firm employed 20 people. During his years in legal practice, Ron honed his skills of evaluating, assessing and resolving issues for client, skills which would hold him in good stead in his future political career.

## **RON**

Ron was a kind, intelligent, warm human being who possessed qualities of honesty, integrity, loyalty and humility. He never waived from that moral code.

He was the best friend you could ever have. He was there in the good times and especially in the bad times.

Ron has received many accolades publicly and privately in the last week. Not surprisingly, many described him as a gentleman in the true sense of the word.

He was courageous in life and as he faced death.

Ron was a confidante to many. He never disclosed private information. His discretion was valued, as was his counsel.

He was a man of his word. Ron promised Lizzie, as a young man, that he would never drink alcohol until his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was true to his word. Brother Paul and I followed in his footsteps, falling short by only ten years.

## **FAMILY**

In about 1954, Ron met Desley Allen. Ron persuaded Desley to go out with him and they kept company for about 10 months. Desley suddenly called the relationship off. If this situation was allowed to continue, it could have been disastrous for we Mullock children. However, after about 12 months, Ron convinced Desley to reconcile and they were married on 11 May, 1957, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Edgecliff. They had a long and happy marriage. Mum was dad's rock. She was always there. Dad saw in mum, beauty, grace, humility and an inner strength which we all envy.

Shortly after their marriage, Ron and Des bought a two bedroom timber house in a hilly estate in Robert Street, Penrith. Their eldest child Mark was born in 1958. When second son Paul was born 18 months later, Ron and Des decided they needed a bigger home. They bought a three bedroom timber house with a big backyard at 9 Cronin Street. Other children soon followed, John, Jane and Peter. This necessitated another move and they bought a house on the corner of Colless and Lethbridge Streets which remained their home for 34 years. Their youngest child Peter had cerebral palsy and died in 1981 aged 16. Their third child John, a talented actor, died of a rare lymphoma in 1999 aged 38. Despite the loss of two children, their relationship was always strong, always supportive, always loving. As a parent, it is inconceivable to perceive that you could lose a child, let alone two, at a young age. But together they weathered those times and their relationship and life grew as a result

of their losses. The deep Christian faith that Ron and Des shared helped them to cope with these personal tragedies.

Ron was always a loving and supportive of his children. He was always there for us in our sport, our academic achievements and for the good and the difficult times of childhood and adolescence and guided each of us into adulthood. He provided all the children with a strong life code of service, hard work, humility and a respect of others.

Ron reveled in the birth and life of his grandchildren, Max, Beth, Georgia, Dominic, Gabby, Ruby, James, Tess and Peta. He was a doting grandfather who attended upon their sporting and academic achievements through childhood and he was always there for them as a mentor as they entered adolescence and adulthood. Pa, as he was always known will be greatly missed by each of his children and grandchildren.

It is wonderful that today can be shared by Ron's nephews, Neville, Ian and David and his niece Margaret, and their families who have travelled great distances to be here. We miss John and Dianne who are unable to be here today. You had a special place in dad's heart. You were the link to his early childhood, Lizzie and his family.

## **POLITICS**

In the mid 60's, Ron became convinced that Penrith Council was not doing enough to meet the needs of the fast growing Penrith area. That year he ran for Council as an Independent, promising a vigorous new approach and was elected. In 1968, Ron became a member of the ALP. He was also approached by the Liberal Party but his family tradition was strongly Labor. Ron was an Alderman on Penrith City Council for six years and as Mayor from 1968-71. As Mayor, he was instrumental in initiating the Penrith Lakes scheme. It was a far-sighted project that transformed exhausted quarries into a major scenic and recreational area for western Sydney. In later life, Ron chaired the Penrith Lakes Committee from 1996 to 2001.

In mid 1969 Ron was approached by the Labor Opposition Leader Pat Hills and agreed to stand for Nepean, the electorate containing Penrith. He won preselection by 44 votes to 12. and won the seat from the sitting Liberal member, Ron Dunbier in a landslide. He was assisted in that election by Peter Cox, the member for Auburn and Shadow Transport Minister. Ron and "Coxy" as he was known, developed a close personal bond and they became lifelong friends and confidantes. Ron was elected to NSW State Parliament in February 1971.

There was further success in the 1973 election when he became the Member for Penrith following a redistribution of seats. Shortly after that election, Neville Wran replaced Pat Hills as Opposition Leader. Wran asked Ron for his vote against Hills but he felt compelled to vote for Hills out of loyalty for past support. Ron assured Wran that if he was elected, he would have his total loyalty and support and he kept that pledge. Under Wran, Ron became the Shadow Attorney and Justice Minister. In the March 1976 election, Labor won by one seat. Ron, as usual, significantly increased his primary vote in the Penrith Electorate. He remained as a Minister in the Wran and Unsworth Governments from 1976 to 1988. During that period of time he held the following portfolios:-

- 1976 – 1977 : Minister of Justice and Minister for Services, including Corrective Services
- 1977 – 1978 : Minister of Justice and Minister for Housing
- 1978 – 1980 : Minister for Mineral Resources and Development
- 1980 – 1981 : Minister for Mineral Resources and Minister for Technology
- 1981 – 1984 : Minister for Education
- 1984 – 1986 : Deputy Premier and Minister for Health
- 1986 – 1987 : Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport
- 1987 – 1988 : Deputy Premier and Attorney-General.

Minister for Education – oversaw the highest spending portfolio with an annual budget at that time of over \$2 billion and 60,000.00 staff at a time when there was significant reduction in Federal Government Funding and the onset of the recession. Ron was public enemy number one with the Teachers Federation, but presided over an ambitious school building program and implemented changes to make the curriculum and examinations more relevant. He also ensure that there was improved opportunities for disabled students and for multi-cultural and aboriginal education. Ron had always been a long time crusader for increased higher education opportunities for Sydney’s west. He expanded the Milperra College of Advanced Education into the Macarthur Institute of Higher Education. After he left the education portfolio, he continued to work for the establishment of a University in Western Sydney. On 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1987 he and Premier Barry Unsworth, concluded a Commonwealth/State agreement that resulted in the establishment of the University of Western Sydney in 1989.

Minister for Health – February 1984 – February 1986. This was the most demanding period in his 12 year Ministerial career. This was the time of the bitter doctors dispute when many surgeons had offered their resignations from public hospitals, plunging the health system into crisis. One of Ron’s strengths was his ability to conduct calm and constructive negotiations, but his skills were tested to the full. However, he eventually negotiated a deal with NSW doctors where the majority returned to the Public Hospital system. Ron staunchly defended the public hospital system and Medicare and his attacks on the militant surgeons led him to be christened “Rambo Ron”. He subsequently played an important part in negotiations between Prime Minister Bob Hawke and the medical profession that ultimately resolved the dispute at a federal level.

Minister for Transport – 6 February, 1986 – 26 November, 1987.

With Education, Health and finally Transport, Ron was appointed to the three recurrent spending portfolios in New South Wales. He introduced better management and more efficient work practices and during his first year as Minister spending a total of \$420 million on capital works expenditure.

Minister for Mineral Resources

During Ron’s tenure as Minister for Mineral Resources, on 24 July, 1979, an explosion occurred at the Appin Coal Colliery. Forty six workers were trapped underground and subsequently fourteen of those workers were killed. Dad was immediately on the scene. It was the greatest personal tragedy of his political life and he felt deeply for the victims, their

families and the Appin Community. He maintained close links with Appin Community and I would be surprised if there are not representatives here today. His compassion and humility were to the fore.

In December 1986, Ron developed a severe heart condition and having already suffered with diabetes, he decided to retire at the 1988 election. Prior to the poll, Ron was appointed Attorney General on 26 November, 1987. It was fitting that, particularly as a lawyer, he finished his career on a high point.

Ron made and maintained many friendships with political and ministerial staff. Many became close personal friends. They regularly lunched in Sydney. Dad always looked forward to those lunches. Your friendship and support were an important part of Ron's life.

Ron always believed the ideals of the Australian Labor Party and its aim for improving the lives and maintaining the rights of ordinary Australians, was the perfect match to his social justice ideals. He never forgot his early years growing up in southern Sydney, the plight of working class families and the need to ensure that all Australians benefit from the wealth achieved by this country.

On his journey, Ron always had strong grass roots support at branch level, respecting the views of branch members and their important role within the party. He made many life-time friends through his membership of the Penrith and Kingswood branches of the party. Ron advanced to higher positions within the party. He won the respect and following of members who were unaligned with the left and right factions of the party. He remarkably obtained the position of Deputy Premier which is a testament to his status and respect held within the parliamentary party during the Eighties.

In 2008, Ron was awarded life membership of the NSW Branch of the Australian Labor Party. He received a standing ovation from delegates at the State Conference when the award was presented to him. All the family was present. Ron regarded this as one of his greatest political achievements. He was always true to the party and to its beliefs and ideals. Unlike some, he never put self interest before the party he loved. He was a True Believer.

One question Ron was often asked was along these lines:-

***“Ron, your children seem like they have half a brain. Are any of them considering going into politics?”***

I might add that having regard to Eddie, Joe and ICAC, you may think that having half a brain is no longer a pre-requisite to enter political life.

This story probably provides the answer to that common question. When Ron was first elected to Parliament in 1971, the Election Party was held at our home. There was more than 200 people in attendance. It was a great night. Brother Paul and I were 13 and 14 years of age respectively. During the course of the night, speeches were held in the house, after the successful poll was declared. At that time, Paul and I were the only ones left in the backyard. In the backyard with us was a beer tent. In the beer tent were two kegs, each with a beer gun. Whilst the celebrations were being conducted inside, Paul and I developed a little game. He held one of the beer guns to my mouth and squeezed the trigger and I held

the other beer gun to his mouth and squeezed the trigger. The game didn't last long, but we had a lot of fun. Later that evening Ron visited the beer tent. Paul and I were curled up in a corner, still holding the beer guns, fast asleep. At that moment, any thought of a Mulock political dynasty quickly and permanently disappeared from Ron's brain. As for Paul and I, let's just say, we knew our limitations.

## **SPORT**

Ron was an outstanding sportsman. He loved Rugby League and Cricket. Lizzie and her family only ever referred to Ron as "Don", after Don Bradman. He was never referred to as Ron. He was College Captain and Captain of the First XI Cricket team, First XIII Rugby League team, Senior Athletics Champion and was awarded the Student/Athlete Trophy for all round scholastic and sporting achievement. He subsequently played first grade cricket between 1949 and 1962 and was an opening bowler for the St George, Waverley and Cumberland Clubs. In 1959-60 season he was the highest wicket-taker (49) in the Sydney First Grade Competition.

He loved the Sheffield Shield, he was a great supporter of the local Penrith Cricket Club and was a cricket tragic. It was at the Penrith Cricket Club that dad met and became great friends with Trevor Wholohan, a friendship which lasted a lifetime. At the request of Alan Davidson, one of Australia's great all-rounders, he was appointed as Vice-President of the NSW Cricket Association and he held that position for many years under Alan, as President.

The appointment allowed him easy access to Shield and Test matches at the SCG in the company of fellow cricketers and cricketing tragics. It was a wonderful period of Ron's life. After his appointment ceased, Rodney Cavalier, the Chairman of the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust, issued Ron an invitation to every test match for lunch held at the SCG in the Trust Room. I thank Alan and Rodney for their friendship to dad.

Ron's great love apart from Cricket, was Rugby League. Having been brought up in the St. George area, he was, until the establishment of Penrith Panthers in the first grade competition in 1967, an avid St. George supporter.

After the establishment of the Panthers, Ron became an avid supporter and rarely missed a game whether it be home or away. When at home, he would take we boys and always sit on the hill surrounded by family friends and their sons. In the early days, we didn't experience too many wins, but we were all crazy Penrith supporters. None were more crazier than Ron. After the game, dad would leave us for about 45 minutes and go into the sheds. He never was critical of any player or the team when they lost and was an enthusiastic supporter when they won. There is no doubt he gained the respect of the vast majority of players who played for Penrith after 1967. They knew he wasn't a fair weathered friend – he was there for the good times and the bad times. He became a confidante for many of the players, both about football and life issues. They trusted his judgment, his counsel and his discretion. He was appointed the Patron of the Panthers and held that position for over 30 years. He was there for all the losses, but he was also there for our two premierships – I have never seen him so happy, especially after 1991.

It's no secret that things soured between Ron and Panthers Management in early 2000. To their great credit, the Panthers Board, led by Don Feltis and Panthers management initiated in

more recent times, attempts to resolve the issues between them and those attempts were successful. On behalf of our family, I thank Don Feltis and his board for those efforts which culminated in a tribute to Ron on Sunday evening prior to Penrith's final match against New Zealand Warriors at Penrith Stadium. It was a great night and all our family were invited to witness the tribute at the invitation of Panthers. The invitation was extended on behalf of Panthers by Royce Simmons who rang me and said:-

***“Panthers would like all your family, including your mother to attend.”***

I said to him:-

***“Royce, mum hasn't been to the footy for thirty years. If she's knocked back Ron for thirty years, I don't think you've got much of a chance, but we'll give it a go.”***

I spoke to Paul and he said:-

***“I'll speak to mum.”***

Paul said to mum:\_

***“Royce wants you to go to the footy on Sunday night.”***

She said:-

***“Royce has invited me?”***

He said:-

***“Yes mum.”***

She said:-

***“I'll go.”***

Dad must have been looking down, shaking his head in disbelief.

## **PENRITH**

Ron loved Penrith right from the kick-off and the longer Ron lived in Penrith, the more the love story developed. In many ways, they were made for each other. Penrith was on the verge of significant growth as a community and at the time when Ron arrived in 1955, it was small enough for most people to know each other. He made an immediate impact in business and the community with his friendly, considerate, professional nature and willing to assist those less fortunate than himself. He seemed to know everyone. He had a fantastic memory and always remembered a name or an event involving a person who he met without difficulty. He took time to talk to people in the street and would always attend social and community functions, especially if they involved the support of others less fortunate than himself. After his political life commenced, he was a tireless worker for his constituents and worked to deliver on issues that affected Penrith people. They knew he was playing for them and for Penrith.

Ron was involved in many Community positions and received a number of Community awards during his lifetime. They included:-

- Board of St Dominic's College, Penrith – Chair
- Good Samaritan Committee On Disability – Member
- Penrith Region Social Justice Network (Catholic Parishes of Penrith, St Marys, Glenmore Park, Emu Plains, Cranebrook and Luddenham/Warragamba) – Co-Ordinator
- Board of Marist Community Services (Blacktown) – Chair
- Board of Emmaus Disabled Persons – Catholic Services (Parramatta) – Chair
- Centacare Advisory Board – Parramatta Diocese – Chair
- Local Government Steering Committee for the Promotion of Chifley University (re-named University of Western Sydney) – Chair
- St Nicholas Penrith Social Issues Working Party – Chair
- Board of National Goals and Directions Inc. – Deputy Chair
- Board of Holyoake NSW Inc (Providing programs for Dependants of Alcohol and Drug Users) – Member
- Board of Australian Institute of Inclusive Communities Ltd – Member
- St Nicholas Penrith “Together In Action” Pastoral Care Teams – Co-Ordinator
- Bridging The Gap Inc. – St Marys – Committee Member
- Mamre Advisory Board – Member
- Board of St Anthony's and St Joseph's Homes – Croydon – Member
- Board of Life Education (NSW) – Member
- Committee to Review the Structure of the University of Western Sydney – Member
- Cricket NSW – Vice President.

#### **PATRON AND HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS FOR SERVICES**

- 1971 – 2003 : Penrith Panthers Rugby League Club
- 1982 – 2002 : Greystanes Children's Home Leura
- Foundation Patron : Penrith District Cricket Club Inc.
- Nepean District Junior Cricket Association
- Penrith Rugby Club Inc
- Kingswood District Bowling Club
- Autism Association of NSW
- Path Inc. For Service to People with Disabilities.

I could go on, but I think you get the drift. Ron was totally connected to the Penrith and broader community.

Ron and Des' involvement in the Penrith Community led to lifelong friendships. The Wittons, the Wilsons, the Corbetts, the Browns, the Roach's, the Dinnings, the Gledhills, the Freeburns and many other great families of Penrith. Those friendships provided life-long support for my parents for which we are eternally grateful.



## **RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Ron was a staunch Catholic throughout his life. The Catholic Church provided Ron and Des with great strength and faith which allowed them to always see the best in human nature. Their deep Christian faith assisted them to cope with many personal tragedies in life including the loss of their two children, John and Peter. In many ways, the church has been like a second family to Ron and Des. It has provided many life-long friends both religious and parishioners. Many are present today. Ron was involved in many committees and groups including his beloved CLC. He was an advocate of social justice and in the church, had a platform for the implementation of social justice policies. He and Des worked very hard to make those policies successful. We thank all the members of this parish and the greater church community for their support of Ron and Des over the years and especially, the last twelve months when Ron's condition deteriorated.

One of the great honours for Ron was his appointment this year as Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great. This award is more commonly known as a Papal Knighthood. In April last year I received a frantic phone call from Des. She said:-

***“Son, we have to meet, but your father is not to know.”***

Mum is not a drama queen, so immediately I felt the worst – something serious was wrong with dad.

We arranged to meet at my office at 8.30 on a Saturday morning. She then advised me that Ron had been nominated as Papal Knight, which she explained to me was a very exclusive and honored position within the Catholic Church, however there were lengthy documents to be completed which had to be done within a few days and nobody was to know except she and I. Mum was in a bit of a panic and I said to her:-

***“Don't worry, we'll sort it out.”***

And we did sort it and dad's application was ultimately approved.

However, I was intrigued about what being a Papal Knight involved, so I googled “Papal Knight” after mum left. It became apparent to me that there was four main aspects to a Papal Knighthood.

1. Chivalry;
2. Loyalty;
3. Shining Armor - I thought, he's not really a dress-up type of guy, but .....
4. On horse back;

I thought to myself, Ron, you're in strife.

But of course that was not the case. Ron was an excellent choice. The ceremony conducted by the Bishop at the Parramatta Cathedral, with all the family present, was one of the proudest moments in dad's life and it was an appointment that he cherished. It vindicated his lifelong advocacy of social justice and his philosophy of helping others less fortunate than himself.

## **RONISIMS**

1. The “RM” – Ron had a habit of falling asleep when very tired. He would close his eyes for four or five minutes, in company, or if driving, would pull up on the side of the road, without any announcement, put his seat back, close his eyes for three or four minutes, wake himself up and then proceed to drive, or re-engage in the conversation. It was christened the “RM” and it was legendary.
2. Memory - Ron had a phenomenal memory, especially for names, places and numbers. His loyal former staff, many of whom are here today, would just shake their heads in disbelief as to how good his memory was. People would often remark:-

***“I met your father once, twenty years ago and I met him again and he knew my name and he knew where he had met me.”***

It was all too common. We are so lucky that that the cancer that eventually took dad did not affect his brain and it was as sharp in the days leading up to his death as it had been for the whole of his life.

On the Sunday before he died, the doctors advised that there was nothing further that could be done and they would start him on morphine and arrangements would be made the following morning for dad to return home to die. I attended the hospital that morning and dad was heavily influenced by morphine and he was laying in bed, eyes closed, not responding to the conversation around him. Mum and dad had an address, the black book, which is their bible for phone numbers and addresses. I promise all of you, your names and phone numbers are in it. Mum had it with her in the hospital. She said to me:-

***“Mark, I need to get some medication to take home. I will ring Steve’s Pharmacy and see if I can order it. Can you pick it up on our way home with dad?”***

With that, she picked up the black book and sat in a chair next to the bed. Dad’s eyes were still closed. She said:-

***“Ron, is Steve’s Pharmacy phone number in the black book?”***

Dad slowly opened his eyes, looked at mum and said:-

***“4721-2074”*** and then closed his eyes again.

Mum and I stared in disbelief – that’s how good he was, even to the last.

Dad attended an Adelaide Cricket Test a number of years ago held at the Old Adelaide Oval. He was in the company of the great Keith Miller. During the test, Keith asked dad if he had ever met Sir Don Bradman. Ron replied in the negative. Keith disappeared and returned a short time later and asked Ron to follow him. They went into a room where Sir Don was viewing the cricket by himself. Keith introduced dad to Sir Don, then excused himself. Dad had thirty minutes, one on one, with his lifetime hero. It was a special day. I imagine little Lizzie looking down on him, huge smile, knowing that her Don had met “The Don”.

This week the family has received many glowing tributes following Ron's death. On Tuesday night when I returned home from mum's, I had a card from an old school mate. We don't see a lot of each other. We went to primary and most of secondary school together. His words really struck me and I thought I would share them with you:-

*"I was remembering when your dad coached us at St. Nicks in Cricket and Football. The 3 stone 7 lbs and then the 4 stone 7 lbs teams. He would often pick us up from school in his white falcon stationwagon and we would all pile in – the whole team and drive off to Jamison Park.*

*When I first started teaching at Colyton High, your dad was always happy to come and speak to my Commerce classes about government etc. I always appreciated the fact he never said no to my requests each year, despite his busy schedule.*

*I'm happy that I got to say hello to him earlier this year at my uncle's funeral. He always remembered who I was.*

*Your dad helped and made a big difference to a lot of people's lives.*

*He was a good man.*