

Norman John Menz.

Born in Pinnaroo on April 8th 1933

He was baptised in Mootatunga September 10th 1933 - and was almost baptised as Norma Jean instead of Norman John.

Norm was the 5th child of Hermann Albert & Ethel Annie Menz (nee Stead) along with 4 brothers and 2 sisters Albert (known as Boy), Peter, Joy, Ron, Noreen and Stan.

Dad brothers and sister Joy have passed and Aunty Noreen Matulick is here with us today.

The family grew up at Kringin and were among the first settlers in the district. There were tennis courts, a football oval, racecourse, school hall, post office and railway station - today it is barely any evidence that any township existed.

Dad loved sheep from a young age and whenever Pop (his Dad) was working with sheep he would stay home from school. Dad was so keen on sheep he would tell people that he would have a thousand sheep one day and carry them wherever he went. Well he certainly achieved his dream of owning 1000 sheep and many more and continued his love of sheep and wool throughout his farming life.

After drought and depression the family moved to Paringa where he went to primary school at Renmark. He was good at playing draughts and was the school champion and liked woodwork classes.

He started playing cricket and football at primary school and went by train from Renmark to Adelaide to play football against other schools, the country lads beat all the city schools. At high school he added tennis to his sporting regime. His passion, determination, desire and dedication for sport was, shall we say 'embraced' with much enthusiasm - and his first true love was found :) SPORT WAS THE APPLE OF HIS EYE and his desire to win was set in concrete.

His Uncle Ray Stead asked if he could help with harvest and he left school later that year to help drive the tractor during harvest before moving back to Renmark to pick grapes. He also worked at Eudunda Farmers and would kick the football around with others in their lunch break.

He was offered farm work at Nangari where he camped in a hut and rode his bike to Meribah about 33kms on weekends to attend Strawberry Fetes on Saturday nights, played tennis on Sunday mornings then rode back to Nangari. There wasn't any Colts football in Renmark so he began playing for Meribah - he was a bit younger and smaller than the older men they played against but was not phased as kids at school were usually bigger lads. He hated the football rule back then - if you went off the oval, you could not go back on for the rest of the game.

He did National Service Training for the Army at Woodside. He was not suited to Army life, he didn't enjoy queuing up for everything, including every meal and was not fond of lining up for anything after that.

Dad and Pop would travel to the Kringin farm and go back to Renmark on weekends where he was able to play football on Saturdays.

He moved into the Kringin house as a bachelor and bought some sheep in 1954 to work on the farm (it was a good 20 minute drive from the tiny towns in the district) which would've been quite scrubby land with lots of trees in the day. In the later years dad really enjoyed clearing land - and found that the easiest way to do it was with a match - i believe he would look around to assess the wind situation and think yep today looks like a good day to burn and more often than not light his match and let the wind do the rest :) He did get in a bit of trouble with his method of scrub clearing but couldn't really see what the problem was!!

Norm had his 21st birthday in Renmark and remembers Stan Lehman bringing along some girls and football mates from Pinnaroo and of course a keg of beer he said.

It was in his mid 20s that he met a young lass called Barbara Bainbridge at a dance. Love blossomed and before long they were engaged. 12 months later they were married on 1st November 1958 at Meribah - Norm

was a handsome 25yo & Barb a gorgeous almost 18yo. But in true Dad style the wedding was held at 6pm because he had to play tennis that day!! A sweet innocent young Barbara had no idea how much time her new husband would dedicate to sport in the coming years.

12 months later a bouncing baby boy called Gary arrived in 1959 to fill their home with love.

June every year must've been off season for Dad or there were lots of cold winter nights because the 4 other children all arrived around 9 months later. Cynthia in February 1962, Trevor March 1965, Bradley March 1969 and Karen in March 1971.

In 1962 Norm bought some land from his Pop, he had sheep, was share farming and developing new land. He bought 30 ewes and a ram and 4 flock rams and named the property Menara.

With sport came the social gatherings (and beer) with the other lads from the small towns of the Mallee in particular Peebinga. He played, captained and coached football at several clubs including Peebinga, Meribah, Ngallo, Renmark and Browns Well for many years.

After quite a few beers one night they got bogged going through the paddock as he didn't have enough speed to get through a sandy patch and had to push the pram through the sand to get home (i'm sure mum was impressed). Another time he slid off the road a few miles from home after some rain, so he slept for a while and managed to get the vehicle on the road again when he woke up.

In 1974 the family moved to the Paruna property, called Korah Bore – where us kids could catch the bus at the end of the driveway instead of driving 15-20mins each way to Peebinga. And the Paruna township provided an endless supply of Football, Tennis, Golf and Bowls.

He loved his sheep and would enter the rams and merino wool at the Loxton, Renmark, Pinnaroo, Swan Reach, Karoonda and Naracoorte Shows - and was very proud of his many Trophies, Ribbons and prizes that he won every year and even qualified for Zone Champions for his wool at the Adelaide Show. He has all the records of all the prizes and placings.

8 Ball competitions were popular at Browns Well Football Club, he was chairman of the social club, and running the 8 ball comp which of course he won a few tournaments. Golf was still a highlight but he was getting sick of tennis so switched to Cricket (in his spare time of course).

1982 was a terrible drought with 3500 acres of crop sown and nothing reaped at all that year. But on a good note Dad was named the best country player at the Red Cross Open Golf Day which was played at Royal Adelaide Golf Course.

Dad was well known for moving a flock of sheep with golf sticks in hand - i guess that's how he got so much practice, he would let the sheep move along and then have a few swings! perhaps it was close to finals.

He leased and bought property in the South East near Padthaway and Naracoorte to raise his sheep in greener pastures and travelled to various towns to buy Stud Rams. Trevor still has Dads old Bedford truck that is over 50 years old. and both Gary and Trevor obviously enjoyed the farm life and have been on the land cropping ever since - Gary was never very fond of sheep but im sure Dad was pleased Trevor always had sheep and enjoyed farm sitting when they went away for holidays.

In 1987 Norm and Barb moved from the Paruna farm to Loxton on Second Street. Dad loved working on his fruit block - he loved growing fruit and vegetables and began playing more and more bowls which he was extremely passionate and serious about.

Bowls was his new passion, he and Mum travelled far and wide while Dad entered bowls competitions all over the state and even in Darwin he managed to enter the Masters competition when they came to stay with myself and Jamie for a few weeks.

After a few years they moved slightly out of town to the Gratwick Rd property with a bit more space including a lawn tennis court from 1994 till 2014 where they had many good.

For Dads 80th Birthday we all camped at Paruna over the Easter weekend by the football Oval, we fit a double bed ensemble in a large tent for mum and dad - true glamping style for pensioners, and went to the Kringin site where Dad went to school and looked for the time capsule Dad said is somewhere. We went to the farmhouse his parents lived in and the house where Mum and dad lived when they got married, climbed the big sandhill on the farm and smoked mallee roots - it was a fantastic weekend and something Dad had always wanted to do.

They moved into a Retirement Unit near the Loxton Hospital in 2014. And a few years later moved to Keith in July 2016 to be closer to their children and lived directly across the road from Cynthia & Keith for almost 4 years which was fantastic and lovely to see grandchildren and great grandchildren almost every day and pop over to visit Cynthia and Keith most days for a drink or dinner with regular visits to Trevor and Tricias farm out of town.

Dad had a triple bypass surgery in December 1999 and had type 2 diabetes for about 40 years, had a cancer scare 8 years ago and lost sight in one eye about 5 years ago but continued to be quite fit and healthy.

He had a sharp memory, was still active, walking every day and was well known around town as he cruised around on his shiny red gopher and still managed to play bowls until just a year or two ago.

Just a few weeks before his passing he told Brad about a golf final against Gary Cockshell about 40 years ago and recalled practically every shot of the last 9 holes.

Dad would ride up the street most days to grab groceries and it became a novelty as he rode passed the Childcare Centre where Mandys daughter Rylee & Adams daughter Sienna were on certain days (they were both almost 2yo), he would stop to say hello as the toddlers played outdoors and the girls would squabble to hold his hand through the fence, as all the other kiddies swarming around calling out grandpa grandpa grandpa. Cynthia has wonderful footage of young Rylee jumping up and down on her Great Grandpas knee every time they were at Cynthias house. It was a special friendship with an almost 85 year age gap.

Dad moved to Carinya Retirement Units in May 2019 to be near Mum who was in Keith Aged Care facility with dementia whom he visited and sat with every day for most of the day. He would sit there with his magnifying glass and do his Thats Life puzzles. I'm sure he annoyed the heck out of her at times but she certainly depended on him and would always ask where he was if ever he wasn't there. We have lots of fond memories visiting them in Keith.

After being unwell from October last year Dads health declined and he knew it was time to move into permanent Care and wanted to be in the same facility with mum so they both moved to Naracoorte Aged Care in January this year.

Dad was eventually diagnosed with Leukemia in Feb 2020 and deteriorated quite quickly. He passed away peacefully in Naracoorte Aged Care on May 17th with Mum nearby and Gary and Sharon by his side on his very last day. Dad never parted with his bowls and kept them in the wardrobe with him til the very end just in case he needed them.

Well Dad its time to say farewell. We will all miss your big squeeze hugs and sloppy wet kisses, but we know youll be reunited with family members and a whole bunch of team mates and youll fill the role of a Captain, Coach or Skipper in Heaven as soon as you arrive.

Thankyou Dad for all the fun times we had growing up on the farm, for encouraging us to play sport every weekend and all the life lessons we learned along the way. But most of all thank you for your care and dedication to Mum it hasnt been easy but it was lovely to see you dedicate your final years to her care and keep her company every day, we know you will watch over her until she can join you eternally.

Love you Dad