

# Valé Jeffrey Leonard (Chief) Perry

## 7 June 1926 – 8 September 2017

The large crowd at St Paul's Anglican Church at Rushworth on 14 September for the funeral of Jeff Perry, or Chief as he was known by most, reflected the esteem in which he is and will be held for many years to come.

A legend of the Rushworth community, Chief was a wonderful family man, was actively involved in a large number of community organisations and was widely respected for his commitment and loyalty.

The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Gunnar Rippon, with tributes to Chief being paid by his daughter Lynette, son Jeff (Slim) and grand-daughter Danni Nevercliffe.

Following the service, members of the Rushworth and District Concert Band formed a guard of honour outside the church, and at the Rushworth Cemetery where he was interred with his wife Vera, a guard of honour was provided by Rushworth Lions, Chief being a Charter member of this Club, when it was formed on 14 April 1975.

Following the service, mourners gathered at the Rushworth Football Clubrooms to remember Chief's life and to express their sympathy to his family.

On behalf of the Perry family, Lynette's tribute to Chief at his funeral provides an interesting insight into his 91 years:

### Lynette McLean's tribute to her father

Our Dad, Jeffrey Leonard Perry, was affectionately known as Chief for most of his long and rewarding life.

Chief/Dad was born at Moora in 1926 to John and Martha Perry. He was the seventh of nine children: Stan, Ron, Alf, George, Doug, Frank, Jeff and Ellis, with the last being the only girl, Betty. She is the last living sibling and is with us today.

### The early years

Life was tough for a big family during the depression and war years. The family business was structured around farming, sawmilling and firewood, all done with worn out equipment. Going to bed hungry or heading off to school barefooted was considered normal, as was sleeping with four brothers in one bed, usually with newspaper between the blankets to keep warm. School lunch was packed into a suitcase and shared by 'the tribe'. Maybe Grandma was ahead of her time with this idea of fast food!

As a young boy, Chief delivered milk, carried in billies, around the town. He did his round before and after school. He was also the local telegraph delivery boy, with his pay going to his mother to help balance the household budget. These were early signs of an enterprising young mind and what was to happen in his future.

### Life after school

When Chief was thirteen years old, his father announced that he would have to leave school.

It was then that Grandma stated that Jeffrey would not be going to work in the bush, as she said, 'There is no future in the bush. He must go to Melbourne and learn a trade.' And so a new journey commenced.

Chief worked in a soap factory while waiting for a position as an apprentice butcher and was looked after by his older brothers Ron, Stan and

Frank.

When he commenced his apprenticeship as a butcher, it was under the guidance of older brother Stan, and with good friend Bernie O'Neill, also from Rushworth. Chief was a natural, and soon became highly regarded in the trade and successfully completed his apprenticeship.

### Romance and return to country life

Chief met a pretty, special girl, Veronica Raymond. A couple of years later they married.

Country life and opportunity were calling, so with his new wife, his trade and his desire to succeed, he headed back to the country.

He got a job butchering in Shepparton and used to ride his bike in from Pine Lodge daily and home at night with a block of ice between the handlebars for the ice chest.

It wasn't long before children arrived, with Robert and Jeffrey both born in Shepparton.

### Return to Rushworth

Chief opened a shop in Tongala, which was soon sold, as an opportunity arose to buy a butcher shop in his home town, Rushworth.

This soon became reality and a new beginning for the family. Business was tough in the early years and Chief had to use all his resources and skills to survive.

Coming through the school of hard knocks had him well prepared for the challenges that he now faced. With the unwavering support of his wife and his trusty right hand man, Jack Still, the business grew and prospered.

1960 saw his new butcher shop built in High Street. The shop was modern and triggered a new found confidence in the town.

### Family life

During this period another four children were born – James, Lynette, Gail and Ross.

These were good times, growing up in a big and loving family that was warm supportive and occasionally a bit chaotic.

We all took turns at mowing the vast lawns, chopping the wood, washing the dishes, and helping at the shop. Although, cleaning out the pig yards was not so much fun, especially on Sundays.

There were memorable family trips to Melbourne and later to Corowa to visit Uncle Ivan, Auntie Linda and family. We would all pile into the FB Holden and Dad would always drive.

Meal time was always a lot of fun and much robust debate was had around the family dinner table. I'm not sure how Mum used to feed us all, but there always seemed to be a lot of meat in our diet.

We had a big back lawn where Chief would teach all of us kids how to throw a ball, play cricket, kick and handball a footy and, of course, play golf. We all realised that when it came to sport, Chief was a very good administrator, sponsor and supporter.

### Community involvement

Chief was active in the community and was never frightened to put up his hand for a leadership role, serving for lengthy terms in lots of community organisations including the local school, the Rushworth Band, the Football



Chief with Vera on their wedding day.

Club, as it was then known, the Golf Club, the Historical Society and the Lions Club, amongst others.

### Retirement

Chief exited the family business in 1984 and entered the retirement stage of his life.

A couple of years were spent enjoying quality time with Mum, a bit of travel, and developing the garden around the new home in Perry Road.

Sadly, tragedy found its way into Chief's and Vera's lives. The loss of son Bob and grandson Grant weighed heavily on their hearts and one year later Mum suffered a stroke. Chief, in his usual manner, stepped up to the plate. He devoted the next 18 years to looking after Mum and running the household. He once again did this to the best of his considerable ability and with his usual no fuss attitude.

Mum passed away when she was 89, which left a huge void in Chief's life, but true to form he once again took the positive option. With some extra time now available, he embarked on a mission to improve his community once again. He also found more time to enjoy his 60 plus grandchildren and great grandchildren. Trips to town in the Volley, writing and phone calls to family and friends were daily rituals. He enjoyed all things food related – cooking, eating, the yarns over dinner and, of course, the mandatory pre-dinner drinks. He also enjoyed making the five hour drive to Warracknabeal to visit me and his son-in-law Alan.

### Thank you, Chief

To summarise, our family life under the guidance and caring hands of Dad and Mum was pretty special. We were all privileged to have had Chief as a father and a figurehead for the whole extended family and friends.

To be taught and to understand the principles that lay the foundations for a good life and to be encouraged to have a bit of fun on the journey was, and still is valued by all of our family.

We certainly commit to passing these values on to future generations.

*Thanks Dad for all of the wisdom.*

*Thanks Dad for all of the love.*