

8 May, 2023

Richard Slater

My name is Yvonne [REDACTED] and I am the youngest grandchild of Richard Slater and I have written this statement about my beloved Grandfather.

Richard Slater was born in Derbyshire England and migrated to Australia with his family when he was a young toddler and he was one of six children.

The family settled in the Marlee / Wingham NSW area where he grew up experiencing rural life on the farm. He met his beloved wife at a country dance in the area and later they settled in the Newcastle NSW area in the very early 1940's, where they lovingly raised their only child, a daughter, both of whom are now sadly deceased.

Richard worked very hard to provide for his family and to create a safe and loving home, always putting his family first and protecting their wellbeing.

During World War Two, Richard ensured his wife and daughter were safely evacuated away from the Newcastle NSW area, when enemy submarines and invasion threats entered the Newcastle harbour, while he remained working in the area to provide for his family.

During his working life Richard worked as a farm hand in his early years. He was employed at the iconic BHP steel works in Newcastle NSW as a crane operator. He also worked for the Department of Road Transport and Tramways as a tram driver and later a bus driver. Richard also worked as a factory foreman for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company. Later in life he was a cleaner for one of the local bingo halls.

Most described him as a quiet, kind and considerate gentleman, a loyal and humble family man with a caring nature just going about life with integrity. Richard was a hardworking man and was a no fuss kind of man who simply got the job done. Richard was a friendly man and was always one to offer help to his family and those in his neighbourhood.

At the time of his death he had built a contented life for himself with a loving wife and shared the closest of bonds with his loving daughter, four grandchildren and family.

Richard's life story will probably be considered by most as ordinary, however through the eyes of a Granddaughter, it is in the ordinary that the greatest treasures and memories are found.

I was only eleven years of age when my grandfather was murdered and my loving memories of him are reflected through the eyes of a child.

"As a Grandfather he was known to us as "Fardy", he drove an old blue valiant and he wore an old fashioned corduroy cap. Fardy loved to garden, he grew fruit and vegetables and the most beautiful flowers, especially snap dragons. He loved to tinker in his old shed with tools and make small projects and he always had a use for discarded objects. Fardy would build me a cubby house made from old sheets and wooden crates. Growing up around him were happy days spent going to the local beaches and parks. Simply going to the bakery with him to buy a pie and lollies brought joy. Fardy's favourite lollies were barley sugar and butterscotch.

Fardy sure had his hands full with four grandchildren as we were as wild as the wind. Days were spent riding around on our old worn out bicycles and scooters, where he stood on the sidelines ready to come to the rescue mending flat tyres, broken bits and scraped knees from our falls. He always took us to slide down grassy hills on old pieces of cardboard. Fardy also owned an old vesper

motor bike and going for a ride on it with him was an adventure, while remembering to hold onto him so tightly on the ride. Fardy would fill empty soft drink cans full of coins for each of us and with the coins we would buy whatever we liked. He had a gentle laugh and I remember the smell of his after shave.”

Beauty is often found in a lifetime of ordinary moments and a loved one’s life time is never long enough.

The horrific and heart breaking impact that his murder has had on my life is very hard to express openly and words often evade me when talking about it. I witnessed my beloved Grandmother (his wife) and my beloved Mother (his daughter) suffer immensely in their grief, both broken hearted.

Murder is a haunting that never leaves you. A sense of fear always has a presence, even though you pretend it does not. Your world was once a safe place and now you are vulnerable. Most don’t know about that chapter in my life as trusting others with you most inner self and emotions is too fragile and re-living it and the aftermath is too painful. The scars are invisible to most.

As life goes on you gracefully manage to find a gentle strength and a gentle place of healing. While one never gets over such an experience, I have been able to flourish knowing he had a beautiful presence in my story. I have been able to make a beautiful mosaic of my life despite the shattered pieces.

My true hope and intention in this statement about Richard Slater is to shine a light on his life and not for him to be remembered as a victim or a news headline, but for him to be remembered as someone who had a - ‘Raison D’etre ‘ – ‘a Reason for Being”.

Richard’s life mattered and his reason for being was far from ordinary, his legacy and love endures within the hearts of all of those who loved him and his family tree still lives on.

An excerpt from the childhood poem I wrote about Fardy, shortly after he had passed away, shows my love: -

“For Fardy was a treasure to me and he will always be. So I’ll give him one great big kiss in my thinking mind and tell him I will always have a love for him – No matter where he is at all”.