

Donna Cameron Hannah; [REDACTED]
Partner of Peter Edward Russell
Friend and sister-in-law of John Alan Russell

Words to describe John.

Kind, generous, charismatic, inclusive, thoughtful, quirky sense of humour.

He once bought Peter a jade tree for his birthday and wrapped gold coins on it with sticky tape. Now it was a true money tree!

Another time, he put on a morning tea party for my grandparents and his grandfather so they could meet each other, and he coordinated everything himself to our surprise. Naturally, my grandparents loved him.

Losing John has left an empty space in our lives that can't be filled. We think of him almost daily, it's hard not to, when I look at my boys, I can see the resemblance between them and John and I'm reminded of what could have been and how much we have all missed. I try to imagine them altogether and the enriched relationships they may have shared.

John has 2 nieces and 3 nephews and 6 great nephews all the boys carry on his name in his honour. Sadly, John never got the opportunity to meet them all.

He wanted to build a house at Wollombi for all the Russell's. We had some great plans for the future for all of us. He was looking forward to the next chapter of all our lives after his grandfather passed away. John and Peter lived in the family home and shared care for their elderly grandfather and Peter's son Allen.

Losing John was a huge devastation for Allen he was only about 12 years old and about to start high school, he never complained but I'm sure all the media about his Uncle was distressing for him. In later years it was distressing for our other children, they knew of Uncle John, but had never known how he passed until the "Bondi Badlands" book was released and the media that followed. We had to try to explain to a 14, 16 and 10 year old the truth.

The Russell family lost more than just a son, brother, uncle, and friend. We lost part ourselves, for all these years, even the highlights in our lives were never quite as joyous as they could have, should have been. It's difficult when one of us are not there.

John was clever, artistic and a fabulous dancer. He had many talents that should have been passed along to his nieces and nephews, a huge loss for them.

It's hard enough when you lose a loved one, even more difficult when it's tragic. Because of the circumstances of John's death, I have trust issues and I worry, no panic when my kids go out at night, I can't sit still, I can't sleep, my mind runs away and I think all kind of possibilities that may occur, until I know they are home again, I just cannot rest, I'm not sure how I got through the teenage years and still have hair left. My kids are now 32, 30 and 26 and I still worry. I'm afraid that something terrible will happen to them. I know it's unreasonable, but it's hard not to have these thoughts.

John and Peter's father sadly passed away in 2022 from side effects of dementia. At one of our last visits, he had a moment of clarity and distressingly asked for John and what happened to him, where was he? It was a very sad moment to see him with tears and fear in his eyes, these were his last lucid moments in his life. A few days later he passed over.

Thankyou to the commission for your interest
Donna Hannah Russell