For Frank Henagan, 28 November 1933 – 6 January 2014

It is terrific to see so many of Frank’s friends here to celebrate his life. There is no doubt that it has been a most remarkable life from humble and at times difficult beginnings.

Frank Patrick Henagan was born in Adelaide on 28 November 1933. He moved to Melbourne in 1937, when he was adopted by a couple whom he later discovered to be his grandparents. He attended Coburg High School and then completed his Matriculation at Parade College, and was accepted into RMIT to study engineering despite his dream of being a Physical Education teacher. Following a bout of ill health that saw him relocate to Mildura for a number of years, Frank returned to Melbourne and became a qualified green keeper.

In 1976, while he was working at Port Melbourne Council, Frank’s life – and that of the College – took a most fortunate turn for the better. This was when he was offered the job of gardener at Trinity by Alan Todd, who was the bursar at the time, on the urging of two then Trinity students, Justin Cook and Rod Lyle, whom he met at Naughton’s after footy training with Uni Blues. His original plan was to stay for 3 months and tidy up the gardens which were a mess in those days – but fortunately for all of us, he stayed on in various capacities for another 37 years because, as Frank said to me on one occasion, “the place grows on you after a while”.

In my view, there have been three people who have served Trinity in the most remarkable way - Syd Wynne, Arthur Hills and Frank Henagan, and the College is immeasurably richer because of their unique contributions.

Frank took over from Arthur as the College Porter and was also appointed Verger in the Chapel in 1989. He did many other jobs in the College either officially, such as his role in the Hall for formal dinners, and his appointment as the first full time Director of Sport in 2003 or unofficially. Frank’s involvement in the College has been not so much a job as a way of life, and I don’t know that he ever had an official job description, but if he did it would have run into several pages and been a source of amazement and alarm to any Union Official. Having lived in the College with him for some 13 years, I saw firsthand some of the things that he did. If there was a job to be done around the College no matter what time of the day or night, it was Frank who did it. I saw him cleaning up the Junior Common Room at 6 o’clock in the morning after a student party, getting out of bed at all hours to help a student who was in trouble, and doing everything else that needed to be done, or rather that Frank considered needed to be done, in between.

He has even looked after pets for various staff members and one of my favourite memories of Frank is of him walking across the Bulpaddock one Christmas break after
he had been over to get the morning paper, followed closely by Ron Browning’s dog, who, in turn, was closely followed by Ron’s cat.

His contribution to College sport has been extraordinary. It doesn’t matter what sport you think of Frank has played a role. His vast experience, his enthusiasm, and his leading by example in all sports have not just brought terrific results to Trinity (including a much treasured football premiership in 1994) but have given enormous pleasure to the very many students who have participated.

Outside of Trinity, Frank’s sporting achievements made him a legend in his own lifetime with so many sporting associations. He was actively involved with University sport since 1955 when he first competed for the University Athletics Club. He was a life member of many including the University Football and Cricket Clubs and the Sports Union. He was named as boundary umpire in the University’s Football Team of the Century, and was for some years a boundary umpire for the then VFL Reserves, including being selected for two grand finals. He was actively involved with coaching and managing Under 19 teams for Uni Blues and was also manager of the University Cricket Club’s first eleven for 14 years.

In addition, Frank was a champion middle distance runner who was a member of the Australian training squad for the 1956 Olympics invited by the famous Franz Stampfl, and he was the pacemaker for Merv Lincoln when he became the third man to break the four minute mile in 1956. It is remarkable how many students have run and trained with Frank, and how many have returned to Trinity with a son or daughter to “have a run” with him.

Recent years have seen a true celebration of Frank’s life and have given the College community the opportunity to demonstrate what he meant to them, particularly with the function for his Football Team of the Century, the launching of the book about him “Frankly Speaking”, and his 80\textsuperscript{th} birthday celebration at the MCG last year with over 300 of his friends there, as well as the more intimate gathering on his actual birthday.

However, my most vivid memory of a birthday party that I was at with Frank is Julie Grills 21\textsuperscript{st} in Carlton when Jane Mitchell approached Frank and I who were talking together and asked us to drive her car back to College for her. I deferred to Frank as he was being his usual abstemious self, but subsequently regretted this decision as we literally kangaroo hopped all the way back to Trinity which took forever but fortunately did not involve any intervention from the police who never would have believed that Frank was the sober one!

Frank did have a great sense of humour, and there are many stories about him, most true and some apocryphal, which I know he would enjoy all of you sharing after the service, and Scotty Charles who is going to speak next about Frank from a personal point of view will expand on this important part of his character and his life.

Despite some serious health setbacks over the last three years I never heard him complain once or look for sympathy, and his unfailing determination so amply demonstrated in the sporting arena has always got him through up until the last few days.

However, his greatest contribution by far, despite all the achievements already referred to, has been as Frank Henagan. His honesty, his integrity, his ethic of hard work, his
selflessness, his loyalty and his humility have been and will remain an inspiration to all of us who have been fortunate enough to come into contact with him over the years. Those writers and academics who refer to the “generation gap” have not known Frank, as age or status differences, no matter how great, were of no consequence to him. If you were a friend of Frank’s, then you were a friend of Frank’s and his constancy in that has been extraordinary. His sometimes externally gruff manner hid a huge inner understanding and kindness, and his remarkable tolerance has always been there when needed, even with the most difficult students or situations.

Frank’s philosophy on life can be summed up by an article he wrote in the Fleur de Lys of 1994, and I quote inter alia:

“In society today I believe you can still make it to the top if you are committed to training, are prepared to work hard in your profession, play according to the rules and have some belief in Christianity… .. In conclusion, I believe that people who come into the College should use their schooling, their sporting abilities and their Christian upbringing wisely, so that they may succeed in life.”

Leo Rosten said in part:

“There is a myth to which many of us are addicted that the purpose of life is to be happy. I know of nothing more demeaning than this narcotic pursuit of fun. Where was it ever written that life can always be easy or free of conflict or of pain. The purpose of life is not to be happy but to matter, to be productive, to be useful, to have it make some difference that we lived at all.”

Well, Frank has mattered, and he has certainly made a profound difference in Trinity College and in the lives of the countless people who have come into contact with him. It has been a great privilege as well as a pleasure to be his friend, and on behalf of the entire Trinity Family I say a most profound thank you to Frank for everything that he has done for the College and for every one of us. He has been such an important member of the Trinity Family for so long, it is really hard to believe that he is no longer with us but, nevertheless, he will live on as an integral part of Trinity in so many ways.

Let Shakespeare have the last word on Frank’s remarkable life:

“His life was gentle, and the elements so mix’d in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world ‘This was a man!’”