

George Robert Diefenbach

1933 - 2023



George Robert Diefenbach was born on the 16th of June 1933 to George and Nellie Diefenbach at Nambour Hospital.

George was the second youngest of 8 children – Nell, Glad, Ivy, Ted, Violet, Norm and John.

George was known to many as – George or GR by his beloved wife Betty, Dad by children, Poppy to his adored grandchildren. In his younger days, his nickname was Berry – as he was as brown as a berry.

When George was a child, the Diefenbach family lived at many places, including Valdora, Pomona, Imbil, Cooroy, Kenilworth and Conondale before moving to Maleny in 1942 at the age of 9.

George was “not particular” about school and left Maleny State School at the age of 14. The Family share farmed on Collard’s, Bergann’s and Neil’s farm around the Witta area. George helped on the farms, carted water from the creek on Reesville Road during the drought in the 1940’s drought with the horse and slide..

George and his brothers practiced hitting tennis and cricket balls and getting up to all those things boys would do on the farm. The Howard family lived on Alcorn’ farm opposite the Diefenbach family and Betty can remember her mum saying, “Those boys hitting tennis balls and their mum has probably had to help milk the cows!”. However, all their practice of hitting those balls set them up to enjoy many years of sport.

George’s first job was at the Diefenbach case mill at Witta where he worked with Ted and Norm making cases for pineapple growers. They hauled logs from Conondale – this was very heavy work back in the days. The pineapple cases were then delivered across Montville to Palmwoods. George later joined Ted and Norm to purchase the case mill from their father and brother-in-law, Viv Barsby, where they continued to operate until the mill closed in the 1960’. George also worked in construction on the Montville-Maleny Road and worked at the Packer’s mill in Reesville and Tesch Saw Mill in Witta.

At the age of 18 George was conscripted to compulsory military training for a period of 3 months. His National Service was carried out at Wacol where he made lifelong friends.

George married Elizabeth (Betty) Howard on the 6th of May 1961 at the Maleny Methodist Church following a three year courtship. Betty remembers her and George along with Bill Collard, Dick Cole and her dad, Eric Howard, painting the interior of the Church in time for

their wedding. George and Betty celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary (60 years) in 2021 and received congratulations from many friends and family, the late Queen Elizabeth II and all level of Government.

George and Betty were blessed with two beautiful children, Susan on the 28th December 1963 and Dale on the 15th July 1966. They completed their happy family.

January, 1964, George's father purchased the closed Summit Cafe (where Peace of Green Gallery now stands). George and Betty found themselves opening a cafe, with Susan only four weeks old. Betty's sister, Lois, left school to help in the cafe where George became her first boss.

George continued to be employed at Tesch Mill until, whilst the cafe was operating, until George was approached by Nugget Sinclair to join the PMG (Post Master General's Dept) which was responsible for the provision of postal and telegraphic services. George agreed and worked on the construction and laying of cable, and later on, cable jointing and gang supervisor.

During these years, there were some local "oldies" who joined George at PMG. Well not so old when they joined! The likes of Don Cole, Nugget Sinclair, Jimmy Lusk, Snow McDonald, Len Lowe, Laurie Benecke, John Lusk, Doug Cox, Kevin Bochow and Keith Owen, However, George couldn't have been more proud when his son, Dale, joined the team before he joined the Fire Brigade in 1990.

Towards the end of George's 31 year career he worked in the office at Telstra.

George and Dale only worked together on some occasions, and there was probably a reason for this. Dale remembers a time where they were all sent out to do repairs following a flood. George was parked on the side of the road in his truck and started to wind down his window when Dale was approaching in the opposite direction. Instead of stopping for a chat, Dale edged his truck towards George's truck and drove through the puddle of water. Mud and water splashed up inside George's truck and all over him, as Dale continued to driveway away. Dale remembers Kevin Bochow, who was with George, just cacking himself laughing. Dale said George was still trying to get the mud out of his ears with his handkerchief when he saw him again.

George and Betty are no strangers to tragedy and grief within their immediate and extended families. In May of 1975, at the age of 11, their daughter Sue was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in her spine and began treatment which was to last for 3 years. Sadly, she passed away in November 1978, aged 14 years and 10 months. George recalls a very tough time for everyone, with Dale and himself remaining in Maleny while Betty and Sue were required to leave Maleny and live in Brisbane for Sue's treatment. They also travelled to Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. Both George and Betty were inundated with offers of assistance during this time and the time following Sue's death, for which they were extremely grateful.

In 1982, George and Betty opened their home and their hearts to Joann Coyne who they fostered, and with whom they remain in contact.

Their family grew again when Dale met Jodie, who later had George and Betty's two grandchildren, Jacob in 1999 and Danica in 2001. George adored his grandchildren and spent as much time with them as he could. George and Betty would share the babysitting duties with Jodie's parents, Jake and Barbara, and have them help out where they could, including building decks, concreting pathways and roofing! Yes, on top of the shed roof! When Jacob was only two, Jodie and Dale started to notice a change in Jacob's walking style. He would look down with his hands behind his back and stroll around like an old man. Wonder where he got that from.

George was an exceptional sportsman throughout his life, and excelled in all areas of sport he played, including cricket, badminton and tennis. He was valued not only for his quiet, gentle, unassuming nature but also his willingness to help others to improve. His home is filled with many trophies and he was particularly proud of his Open Men's Doubles tennis trophies he won in 1982 and 1985 with Dale. George also won Open Men's Singles during the later part of his working life and retirement.

George then took up golf and was quick to remind all of us, ever so humble, of his not one, but two, holes in one which he shot in 1988 and 2000. George and Betty enjoyed travelling to Hawaii, to Western Australia and many other golf courses around Australia with a group of friends and members from the Beerwah Golf Club, and their good friend Ray O'Leary, for many years.

George loved his Brisbane Broncos and watched them religiously. Every time you would visit him after a game, he was say, "How about those Broncos." Definitely rubbed it in when they won, but sat pretty quiet, and had nothing to say about them when they lost. Would always slip in how the Dragons lost again!

It is no surprise that, with great practical skills, and a strong interest in timber, George built things, like tables, cupboards and a rocking horse for his children. George has also loved gardening for a long time. With one and a quarter acres to look after at their home in Miva Street, he built gardens and always had an impressive veggie plot. Here is where his orchids thrived, as you can see around you today.

This also led to his skills of being a terrific painter. Dale would always say if it was standing still, George would paint it! Betty only had to ask once about fixing or painting things, as before you knew it, George was out there fixing or painting whatever needed to be done.

George also had a wide vocabulary. He knew a lot of people called "Thingy-a-Bob" or "What's his name". If he couldn't pronounce a name he usually made it up. George also had many tools, mainly all called "Whatcha-ma-call-it", "do hickey" or "you know". Which of course, we didn't know.

George worked many, many hours as a community volunteer. Usually whatever Betty volunteered him for! His record with the Maleny Show Society as Chief Hall Steward is impressive and he took part in many working bees over the years. In the early 80s both he and Betty worked tirelessly to raise funds for the swimming pool at the Maleny State School. When Betty was Community Centre treasurer George supported her by joining the

volunteer maintenance team doing all manner of repair and pending many hours raising funds. Both he and Betty often donated their time and effort to the Maleny Historical Society and have been awarded life memberships.



Brothers, Ted & George & Tom Malone
Meddleton Hall. 2003

Australia usually always with groups of friends of the likes of Doug and Betty Watson, John and Jan Gregson, Denis and Jan Parker, Len Lowe and Beryl, Bill and

George also played the mouth organ, button accordion and guitar and, in the past, would accompany Walter Lawley at community functions. He teamed up with Betty to deliver Meals on Wheels for a period of many years.

George and Betty travelled extensively within



Betty & George, Kings Canyon 2003

Marlene and many kilometers with family, Lil and Ted, Lois and Laurie and Bill. They went around Australia twice in their caravans; enjoyed travelling on the Indian Pacific and the Ghan; crossed the Nullabor seven times by car, train or plane; crossed the Simpson Desert with Tom and Desley Malone; Cape York with Stan and Gloria Collard; and travelled to the Tamworth Music Festival 19 years in a row. As a result, they have a long list of friends with whom they regularly keep in touch.

George and Betty would love traveling and camping with Dale, Jodie, Jacob and Danica as Dale and Jodie usually went in fishing competitions. George would say, "Oh goodie. We get to look after the grandkids again." George and Betty would often come to the grandkids' events, such as school ceremonies, graduations and sports day. They even travelled afar to watch them swim at Kingaroy, Wondai, Kilcoy, Maleny, Caloundra etc. When George was too unwell to travel, he even watched Jacob play volleyball via live stream.

George and Betty also managed to fit in a few cruises before Covid stopped all plans.

2022 George attended the inaugural Maleny Auxiliary Veteran Leaky Hose Club which recognised past and present Maleny auxiliary fire fighters. George was in the Maleny Auxiliaries from 1974 to 1978. Dale followed in George's footsteps by joining in 1985.

After enjoying very good health for a long time and leading a very active life, George began to have issues with his health in 2021, to the point where he was dependent on oxygen at all times. Although he has always been an avid reader, and at times he could read one book down stairs between gardening and another upstairs, in the last few weeks George relied more on this pastime. He loved stories of the outback, mystery novels, word puzzles and completing jigsaws. Anytime the family would come over they had to at least put in a few puzzle pieces to finish them. Sometimes this was difficult when pieces were missing. They were sometimes stuck to George's dressing gown, shoved down in his lounge chair, or ended up in some random place, like under the screwdriver box.

George welcomed Jacob's partner, Nat, and Danica's partner, Nelson, and considered them part of the family. Nelson was always referred to as Dale and Jodie's son-in-law, and towards the end, Nat became the "special one". Whilst George was in hospital, Nelson attempted to finish George's last puzzle with Nat finishing the last of it this past Sunday. With one dreaded piece missing!

In June 2023, George celebrated his 90th birthday with family and friends visiting him over his birthday weekend. At one stage, George grumbled to Jodie that all those who came to see him were women! So Jodie encouraged some of Dale's mates to drop by and see him to even up the number men to women.

Right to the end, George had his moments of cheekiness and quit wittiness. In the early days, George would always be ready with the Sunshine Coast Daily's joke of the day when people came to visit. Obviously he would tell the joke more than once during the day as he would start to giggle before he got to the end of it.

There was always an opportunity to have a go at Betty too. At one time, when George fell out of bed, Jodie asked George did he fall out of bed or was he pushed. Without hesitation he said, "I was pushed" and had that cheeky look in his eyes. You could not help but laugh.

Even in his final days, when the family was up seeing him, George still had something cheeky to say. Especially to Jodie. After their chat, George closed his eyes, and went very still and quiet. Jodie lent in to check that the oxygen was still going – only to have George say "I'm still breathing!" Barbara remembers George's parting words to her, "I'll be seeing you when you got nothing on!" Then had a smirk on his face. Not sure what he meant by that.

George peacefully passed away on Sunday, 10th September 2023 with Betty and Lois by his side. George was a loving husband, father, father-in-law, Poppy, brother, brother-in-law and friend. He was always grateful to Betty for her care until the end, and the many visits from family and friends over the last 12 months.

