

Dairy Tales

Maleny dairy farmers may be a dying breed, but men like Frank Rough are stalwarts. The product of a pioneering family, Frank once lived without electricity, a car or a tractor. Writer, Judy Fredriksen, recently met with Frank to hear more about times gone by.

by Judy Fredriksen

IN HIS 95 YEARS, Frank (born Arthur Francis Rough) has seen Maleny transform from a rustic outpost, infaid with dirt tracks trodden by bullock teams, to a modern enclave defined by its arts, crafts, coffee shops and its controversial attitudes.

The greatest changes in Maleny have occurred since the deregulation of the dairy industry in 2000, says Frank. "The number of farmers are dropping off," he says. "People think differently now to what they did back then. They have different professions."

Despite this, the Rough family is raising its fifth generation of farmers with two grandsons still heavily involved in the dairy industry. It's a testimony to their hard-working Scottish heritage.

"My father worked with the property - Strathbrock - and he also worked in the store in town, and he also drove cream wagons," says Frank.



Above: Frank and his sister riding to school on a stock horse

Right: Frank achieved the rank of sergeant whilst serving in the army in WWII

The family provided cream to the Maleny Butter Factory, but the Roughs further subsidised their income by raising pigs, growing bananas and pineapples.

Typical of the era, Frank and his sister would ride to school by horseback, the two of them sharing an old stock horse.

At age 14, Frank left school and in 1938, went to work at the general store, Tytherleigh's, now Maleny IGA.

"I rode a horse to Maleny every day. An uncle had a paddock in town - I'd leave the horse there," says Frank. That paddock is now the Maleny IGA car park in Willow Lane.

Nothing was pre-packaged back then, so Frank would weigh out the sugar and flour and decant it into small brown paper bags.

Following the outbreak of war, Frank joined the army in 1942.

"I was sent to a unit in North Queensland which was a field bakery, but I wasn't a baker. I was sifting weevily flour," he laughs.

Although he never saw active service, he became a sergeant and at the end of the war, he went to Singapore to help repatriate troops.

"I ended up going to Singapore to get the prisoners of war out. I've got sights in my eyes from Changi Jail, but anyhow, it was all experience," he shrugs. Still haunted by the experience, Frank goes on to describe the long corridors of Changi overflowing with prisoners so skinny, they were like the "skeletons in a doctor's surgery".



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Frank tended the garden at the Maleny Historical Village for many years



"There were so many of them," he says, sadly shaking his head.

While serving in the army, Frank met his future wife, Kath, through an army mate in Sydney. After Frank was discharged, he and Kath married and went to work on the family farm at North Maleny, building a second house on the property.

When Frank's parents retired, he took over the farm and it wasn't until the 1970s that he bought his first tractor. Tractors weren't a high priority then because of the high cost.

Until then, all goods like cream cans, bags of grain or molasses were moved around the farm on 'slides' behind a draught horse.

"I used to carry a knapsack on my back to spray weeds. He doesn't, he drives a tractor," chuckles Frank poking fun at his son, Ken.

Then Ken chortles in response, "He rode a horse to town to see mum when I was born!"

Frank's children include locals Des Rough, Ken Rough and Jan Brown.

As the family grew, Frank displayed a talent for carpentry by building extra rooms onto the house. Without any woodwork training, he made a state-of-the-art buffet which still graces his dining room today, proudly displaying an array of family memorabilia.

After selling the farm in 1978, Frank bought a place on McCarthy Road, near the airfield where crop dusters used to land and now the location of the Maleny High School.

For the next ten years, Frank worked as the janitor at Maleny State School, spending his spare time indulging in his favourite pastimes of gardening, volunteering at the Maleny Agricultural Show, the Maleny Historical Society and Senior Citizens.

Then cruelly, Frank's beloved wife Kath was struck down with motor neurone disease.

"With motor neurone, she didn't have to spend time in hospital, but still needed to be cared for." Stoically, he continues, "For the last nine months I fed her through a tube in the stomach. It's a terrible thing."

Frank nursed Kath for two years before she passed away from the crippling disease.

Each generation of Frank's family had always been blessed with sons to carry on the Rough name, but gradually that changed and the Rough name was in danger of dying out as an imbalance of girls prevailed.

Then much to Frank's delight, Arthur Francis Rough was born in 2014 (Ken's grandson), and Benjamin Arthur Rough in 2016 (Des's grandson).

Frank celebrated his 95th birthday on December 12, 2018 with his four-year-old namesake and his family, who treated him with a homemade chocolate cake.

Frank still lives independently, though with a lot of assistance from his daughter Jan, who visits daily. This allows Frank to potter about his well-kept garden, wander over to the Maleny Historical Village where he has life membership or catch up with old friends in the Senior Citizens.

When asked to sum up his life, his sense of humour resurfaces yet again as he laughs, "It was a lot of hard work!"

