

The Parer Family in Maleny

Continuing on with our series about the stories behind our landmarks and parks, this week we talk about the little park in in Bean Street opposite the Hospital, with its own heritage story.

The Dr Tony Parer Park was constructed by the Caloundra City Council on the site of the original WWI Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital. It was officially opened on August 20, 2005 in honour of Dr Anthony "Tony" Parer, an outstanding rural doctor and the longest serving hospital superintendent at Maleny Hospital, from 1931 to 1952.



Dr Tony Parer

A compassionate man who often rode on horseback many miles to tend to a sick patient prior to an efficient road system in the district, Dr Parer took an active role in public affairs and was a member of eleven local community organisations.

More than 300 residents paid tribute to him at his farewell function held at the Soldiers' Memorial Hall, Maleny on November 10, 1952.

He was born in Melbourne in 1897, educated at the Christian

Brothers in St Kilda and attended the Melbourne University. He graduated in medicine from the London University.

He was the brother of the famous aviator Ray Parer and a cousin to the famous wartime photographer, Damien Parer.

Dr. Tony Parer's family was well respected in Maleny especially as Dr. Tony served as resident at the Maleny Hospital for 21 years until 1952.

They lived next door to the Hospital which was where the Ambulance Station now stands. He delivered virtually all the children who were born in the district in that time, as he was the sole doctor in Maleny and the then developing areas of Caloundra, Landsborough, Conondale and Witta.

His children, Judith, Michael (Mick) and Denise were educated at the 'Top School' until they left to attend boarding schools in Brisbane. Judith and Denise both followed their father's footsteps in the medical profession training as nursing sisters at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane.

Michael became RAAF Wing Commander, leading the renowned 1960's 'Black Diamonds' aerobatic team of Sabre jets which flew many

demonstration flights around Australia.

In the family tradition, he followed his aviator Uncle, Ray Parer, who slowly flew his de Havilland 'PD' in the air race from England to Australia in 1920.

Tony and Peg Parer were stalwarts of the Maleny community, raising money for the financing of the Community Hall and developing healthy diets among the residents. This included collecting fish during his Friday medical rounds in Caloundra, blowing the horn as he arrived up the hill for customers (including Catholics) to collect as he drove through town to the present site of the church at the top of Maple Street.

The family were not left out of helping to keep the community healthy!

When a young patient balked at the mere thought of receiving an injection, Dr. Tony was known to use his children as guinea pigs to demonstrate that it didn't hurt.

The Parer Family also played host to the myriad of cousins visiting from Brisbane for a trip to the country, many of these events were recorded by his cousin Damien Parer, during his visits to Maleny during the war, where he caught up with his sister, Doreen Owen and family.

Dr Parer died in 1971, aged 74 years of age. With thanks as always to the Maleny Historical Society for this article.

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