

## **Don Simmons September 9, 1936 – February 25, 2023**

Don Simmons was born on September 9, 1936, in Adelaide to George and Mary Simmons. George built a house in Myrtle Bank, carrying out a lot of the work himself. Don learnt a lot of his woodworking and building skills from his father and loved Meccano. No doubt these influences directed him towards a trade after he left school.

Don attended Pulteney Grammar School from 1947 until 1952. In 1949, he won a Pulteney Choir Scholarship through St. Xaviers church in Glen Osmond. Don was a very keen tennis player and was captain of the school team and was also in the cricket team. He was very sports orientated and had a particular love for golf. He would avidly watch World of Sport on a Sunday over lunch and was that keen on sport, he even enjoyed watching Eddie Charlton playing billiards on Pot Black.

He left school in 1952 and did an apprenticeship with the Weapons Research Establishment at Salisbury. Whilst doing this, he joined the Royal Australian Naval Reserve as a radio technician for his National Service. Dad spent nine years in the Reserve and achieved the rank of Petty Officer. He had the opportunity to serve on many ships, including Australia's last aircraft carrier, the HMAS Melbourne.

At the same time, Don had played football and decided that perhaps his football skills were more attuned to umpiring. He subsequently ended up working on his weekends for the SAFL umpiring league matches in Adelaide.

During the late fifties. Don worked for the Department of Mines in South Australia. One of his trips took him to the Simpson Desert and then down to the Strezlecki Desert doing mineral surveys and exploration. This area is now a major gas field. They drove across the Simpson Desert from West to East, well before the first documented crossing, with no air conditioning and just a compass and the stars for navigation and found Birdsville from there, they drove down to the Innamincka region.

Don married Lyn Follett in October 1961, they honeymooned on the Murrumbidgee River on a houseboat and eventually had two children, Clayton and Penny.

In 1965, Don received an offer of a job at the Island Lagoon Space Tracking Station in Woomera as a radio technician with The Department Of Supply. The tracking

station was involved in mapping the moon in preparation for the Apollo missions. The family moved up there and remained until 1968. Don was involved with footy umpiring, regularly played squash, and played for the local cricket club on a dirt oval.

Don then obtained a position with Hewlett Packard in Melbourne where he spent the next fifteen years before moving on to his own business ventures. By this stage, he had resigned from the Navy due to the move to Woomera. However, once down in Melbourne, he umpired for the VFL. Mostly country matches because of his age at 32 he was considered too old. Occasionally though, he was the reserve umpire at some of the major league matches in Melbourne.

After leaving Hewlett Packard, Don and Lyn owned two card and gift shops, one at Waverley Gardens and the other at Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre. Their next venture was building a hothouse on Penny's property and growing hydroponic tomatoes before retiring.

Don always had projects going on at home, tasks such as putting in a sprinkler system or concreting. He had a knack for incredible workmanship and took great pride in it. Nearby Cranbourne Pony Club was well known for its show jumping competitions and needed some new jump poles for an upcoming competition; a new venture was borne. He and Lyn painted many, many poles for horse riding clubs around Victoria over several years. When the poles became too heavy to manoeuvre, he turned his hand to making bird houses.

Don loved travelling. He and Lyn had many holidays in Fiji together, going there on an annual basis.

Unfortunately, on Friday, February 25, Don had a stroke and succumbed to the physical damage in the early hours of the following Sunday morning.