

Funeral Service for Anthony Robert Farnham

Conducted by William B Day (0408 946 942)

Monday 26 August 2013-08-22

Order of Service

- Entrance music – Christian Funerals to supply
- Welcome by William B Day
- Reflection CD music (3 mins) 6 short Aboriginal chants by Lola Young
(CD to be supplied)
- Eulogy read by William B Day (10mins)
- First Speaker - Bill Ethel
- Second speaker – Brian Churchill
- Third speaker – TBA
- Reading of messages from China
- Last Speaker – Aiting (daughter)
- Slide show with music on DVD - 6mins (DVD to be supplied)
- People come forward to pay respects while we play CD track 7
Bob Dylan “Mr Tambourine Man” (5.20mins) CD to be supplied.
Allow time for all to come forward to lay flower or rosemary on the
casket.
- Four Candles – Reading by Aiting Farnham (daughter). Candle-lighting
by Vicky (sister) 5mins
- Committal reading
- Exit music - CD track 14, Willie Nelson “On the Road Again” (2.20mins)
(CD to be supplied)

Welcome to the funeral service for the late Anthony Robert Farnham. My name is Bill Day and I have been asked by Tony's wife, Li Xian Zeng, and his mother Audrey Farnham, to conduct the service. The family, Audrey, Vicky, Li, and Aiting thank you all for attending this celebration of the life of their son, brother, husband and father. By our attendance here today we are expressing our deepest sympathy to the family on their sad loss.

Tony was admitted to hospital on 16th July and passed away peacefully at Bethesda Hospice on Sunday 17th August after a short illness. He was 56 years of age.

In respect for Tony's wishes, the family have requested that this be a non-religious ceremony. However, in the final hours of Tony's life at Bethesda in Claremont, last Saturday week, a full rainbow arched across the sky in the fading light, and appeared to end in the river below us. As you know, to the Nyungar people of Perth, the Swan River represents the track of the Wagyl, the Creator Rainbow Serpent of Aboriginal belief. The rainbow that evening seemed to us to be a sign.

Genesis Chapter 9, also says, "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind."

The rainbow seemed an assurance that Tony was passing to a higher spiritual realm and that his suffering was drawing to an end.

With that in mind, it is fitting that we pause for a moment of reflection to listen to a few short traditional chants by the late Lola Young, medicine woman and teacher, of the Innawonga and Gurama people from the Tom Price area where Tony did much of his Aboriginal heritage work. Lola sings of the land, and the spirits in the land. In her book, she says,

“it’s all about sharing the knowledge, and sharing the song so my family wouldn’t be scared. We all welcome.”

Let’s listen to Lola for a moment:

Play CD Lola Young (3mins)

Tony and I have been friends since his final year at the University of Western Australia where I was also studying. Our friendship continued in later years during our mutual employment with various Aboriginal organisations as anthropologists and later working together as consultant anthropologists. Before his entry to university as a mature age student he led an interesting and varied life, including as an activist in the building trade unions, about which we shall hear more during this service.

The Farnhams are a well known family in Maylands, where Tony’s grandfather and great uncle owned Farnham’s grocery store in Eighth Avenue – a grocery store that served the community well for many years. Tony’s father, Don Farnham, served in New Guinea during World War II before building a home in Boronia Street, City Beach. Tony was born at King Edward Memorial Hospital on 20 May, 1957, where his sister Vicky was born three years later. Like boys of that era, Tony and his friends enjoyed an adventurous life, cycling to the beach in summer and Beatty Park Pool in winter. He was also very keen on participating in Little Athletics and the football juniors with the Claremont Football Club which trained on the oval at City Beach. A constant companion was his faithful dog “Patchy”, a double for the mascot of His Masters Voice.

Patchy lived to the ripe old age of 17.

In 1966 the family moved to Sydney when Tony’s father was transferred to the head office of Greater Pacific Life Assurance. While the family looked for a house, the children attended The Rocks Primary School,

which you'd think would be about as far away from City Beach as you could get. The children caught the train from Wynyard to school with no sense of danger in those days. There were also picnics with family friends exploring their new home-city until they settled at Claresville on the Pittwater, where Tony attended Pittwater Grammar. Being so close to water, Tony could resume his interest in aquatic sports by sailing a VJ yacht at Claresville and board surfing at Avalon Beach most weekends. When the family returned to Perth in 1974, Tony stayed in Sydney for another year, working on building sites. He got a start in the building trade when a builder neighbour agreed to give him a trial. After his first day, it was suggested that he spend the weekend practicing with a hammer, which he did, hopefully without getting too many sore thumbs. As we shall hear, back in WA, as a carpenter, Tony became very involved in Union affairs.

It was while working on a building site in the grounds of the University that Tony became interested in further study as a mature age student. He enrolled in the 1990s and graduated as a BA majoring in anthropology. He then worked at the Perth office of the Pilbara Native Title Service, as a consultant and this year at the Kimberley Land Council in Broome.

Once again Tony's life took a dramatic turn when in 2004 he set off to China with the deliberate intention of finding a wife. Many of us had our doubts, but Tony was as optimistic as ever, with the confidence that he displayed throughout his life. Li tells how she was introduced to Tony by a friend in her home city of Beihai in February, 2004. For Tony, it was love at first sight. As they say, he "swept Li off her feet", proposing on the day of their first meeting. Naturally Li was a bit overcome by his forwardness and asked for time to think about it. But Tony replied he only had seven days left on his visa so it was urgent. Li was assured that

Tony was a good man and he would look after her. So it was that after a 4-day courtship the marriage papers were signed and Tony returned to Australia, vowing to return in June for the wedding ceremony which you will glimpse later on a short video clip. He made several more trips to China after that.

Li's eleven year old daughter Aiting was very excited to be getting a daddy. However, riding home for lunch with her school friends they met Li with Tony and stopped to talk. Back at school the girls asked "Was that your mum with the Westerner?" Aiting replied, "No that was my aunty". Times have changed, and today Aiting is happy to call herself "Aiting Farnham". She is a credit to her Dad and the love and care he showered upon her."

I remember Tony saying before he left for China, "If it doesn't work out, at least I will have given someone a new life in Australia." I also remember signing declarations to support Li's visa application that their's was a genuine relationship, citing Tony's telephone conversations I had witnessed between two obviously adoring lovers.

Tony, you led a charmed life. You brought back a lovely bride and had many happy years together. You gave them a new chance in life and it is just a shame that you could not be here next year to celebrate your tenth wedding anniversary. Your family is in good hands, we are going to miss you, old mate.

I now ask Bill Ethel, followed by Brian Churchill to reflect on Tony's life as they knew it.

- Bill Ethel
- Brian Churchill

Would one of Tony's colleagues from the Aboriginal Land Councils like to give some reflections on that period of his life?

- Reading of messages from China.....

- Final Speaker: Tony's daughter Aiting

In his will, Tony requested that we play the song, "Mr Tambourine Man" Li has asked for the song "The Power of Love" from their wedding video. Both those requests are incorporated in the following six-minute slide show and video clip which brings back memories of a life well lived.

Play slides DVD (6 mins)

We now come to that time when you can pay your last respects to Tony as you come forward after the family to lay a flower or sprig of rosemary on the coffin. Please save your condolences to the family until after the end of the service. While you come forward, Bob Dylan's version of Mr Tambourine Man will be played. It is often interpreted as a very spiritual song. Some of the words are:

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
 In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.
 Then take me disappearin' through the smoke rings of my mind,
 Down the foggy ruins of time, far past the frozen leaves,
 The haunted, frightened trees, out to the windy beach,
 Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow.
 Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free,
 Silhouetted by the sea, circled by the circus sands,
 With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves,
 Let me forget about today until tomorrow.

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
 In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.

Song: Bob Dylan's "Mr Tambourine Man" CD track 7.

(When everyone has resumed their seats, continue):

In the bowl before us there are four candles to symbolise some of the feelings we are experiencing today. Aiting will read the dedications to each candle, and the dedication will be translated into Chinese by her friend, Jack

Candle lighting ceremony: Vicky to light candles.

The Four Candles

The first candle we light represents our grief.

The pain of losing you is intense.

Too deep to express in words

The flame reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

This second candle we light represents our courage.

The courage you showed

The courage to confront our sorrow,

To comfort each other,

To change our lives.

This third candle we light in your memory.

For the times we laughed,

The times we cried,

The times we were angry with each other,

The silly things you did,

The caring and joy you gave us.

This fourth candle we light for our love.

We light this candle, that your light will always shine.

As we share this time of remembrance

with our family and friends.

We cherish the special place in our hearts
that will always be reserved for you.

We thank you for the gift
your living brought to each of us.

Committal -The service will end with a brief committal, after which Tony will be privately cremated. Later according to his wishes, his ashes will be scattered into the Swan River in Maylands, the Dreaming track of the Creator Spirit and where his father's ashes were also scattered. You are welcome to join the family at the Dome cafe in Railway Parade Maylands after the conclusion of the service.

As we say goodbye to Tony, please take time to recall your time with him
Today we have had a glimpse of a life well lived.

It was a life of great integrity and loyalty. A life full and rich with love that affected each of us in different ways. His physical body may be departing from us, but he lives on in our memories.

Sadly, lovingly, and with great respect, we commit the body of Anthony Robert Farnham to nature's keeping.

May all our sadness and regrets that we feel today be turned into gratitude for the time we spent with Tony.

May the chill of sadness of death, give way to the warmth and sunshine of the memory of him that will be cherished forever. Thank you Tony, may you rest in peace....

Curtain is drawn

People leave to the song, Willie Nelson, "On the Road Again." CD track 14