**Eulogy for Crofton Joseph Uniacke, given at his funeral 07/02/2019, by his son Crofton Peter Uniacke.**

Imagine a 5-year-old schoolboy in Australia in 1930 with the name Crofton Uniacke. (*What’s* your name lad? *Say again*?) As a boy, Crofton Uniacke was also distinctive in other ways. Aged about 7, he stands out in a school photo with his thick mane of dark wavy hair, surrounded by his classmates all with short haircuts. His mother thought his hair too lovely to cut. Sometime later he told a barber that he had his mum’s permission to cut it. He hadn’t. She shed a few tears when he got home.

His name, Crofton, was traditionally a first name for a Uniacke younger son. He grew up the middle child of a loving family, with parents Crofton and Kathleen, elder brother and sister, Gerald and Raie, and younger sisters, Margaret and Carmel. From the family home in Ivanhoe he attended Parade College in East Melbourne. He joined the RAAF in 1943 aged 18. He trained at Uranquinty in NSW and was commissioned a Pilot Officer, later Flying Officer, and selected to serve in Britain. He travelled to England via the United States and Canada – in those days an exciting and glamorous experience for a teenage boy from suburban Melbourne. The war diary he kept has an entry for each of the 556 days he was away. He later wrote of those experiences in some detail. Fortunately for him, he missed the worst of the air war in Britain. Later he always made light of any danger he might have faced, but he did tell of losing three friends in a single week of night flying.

During several R&R breaks he travelled over to County Cork via Belfast, changing from his air force uniform into civvies as the train crossed the border between northern and (neutral) southern Ireland. He visited the old family seat at Mount Uniacke, something that meant a great deal to him and to his 90-year old grandfather back in Melbourne. There, Crofton found the graves of his Uniacke forebears in the (Protestant) Church of Ireland.

On his return to Melbourne, his family met him at Spencer Street station carrying a banner saying, ‘Welcome Home Croft’. A photo of the young officer ‘breaking ranks’ to greet them made the front page of *The Sun* newspaper.

Crofton had met his future wife, Therese Healey, briefly while on embarkation leave awaiting transit to Britain. He re-contacted her on his return from the war, at his own mother’s suggestion! The way he told it was that he’d been invited to attend a social event and bring a guest. Having only recently returned home, he wondered who he might ask to accompany him. When he mentioned this to his mother, she responded: “I saw Tess Healey at the theatre recently. She’s a very nice girl. Why don’t you invite her?” So he did. Tess and Croft were married at St Patrick’s cathedral in April 1950. It proved a very happy marriage of almost 69 years.

While we are now saddened to lose Dad, we recognise that he had a long and wonderful life that it is appropriate to celebrate. To be sure, there were struggles and setbacks, as in most lives, but Dad had a strong belief in his ability, and faith in things always working out for the better; so, there was also sustained happiness and there are many highlights of his life among us.

His professional life really started in earthmoving equipment sales. In 1961 he established the first privately owned John Deere construction equipment franchise in Australia, INTRAC Sales. He was a sound business man, never afraid to have a go; he always believed in himself and the ability of those around him. His energy and commitment saw the business successfully grow over a period of 35 years. Peter (I) worked closely with him for 20 of those years. Dad had strong, honest and well-regarded business ethic; his basic rules were “Never promise what you cannot deliver” and “If there is a problem, fix it fast”.

Dad was well regarded within the equipment industry. He became president of the National Tractor and Machinery Association and was a strong advocate to government for reform and improvement within the industry. He loved a challenge and making things right.

Opportunities for travel on business conferences and connected holidays always included Mum; together they saw many places in the USA, Britain and Europe. He returned to Ireland a number of times, where he re-established strong connections with the Cork Uniackes and with members of the extended family in Britain.

His interests included fishing, especially surf fishing at Lake Tyres when we were kids and trout fishing with his sons at Lake Eucumbene in their teenage years. Dad was a cricket enthusiast (although always as a spectator).  He became a member of the MCC at the same time his two sons received their memberships that he’d signed them up for as babies.

His other great passion was harness racing, eventually becoming an owner of several horses and winning some memorable races. Dad was a foundation member of the Victorian Caduceus Club. He loved to attend races with Mum at Cranbourne, Kilmore, Warragal, the old Showgrounds, Moonee Valley and his favorite venue with his brother Gerald was at Yarra Glen, where he will be buried this afternoon.

Family was all important to Dad. He was in charge of the Sunday roast and loved lunches and dinners at restaurants with his young family in the 1960s. He and Mum hosted a great many parties at home. He always found time for annual family holidays, in early years in Gippsland or travel interstate; later and most memorable were our many holidays on Lake Eildon houseboats.

Croft’s passion for flying was lifelong. After his retirement, in his 60s he studied to attain an unrestricted pilot’s licence which, given his personality, was the only type he would settle for. He flew from Lilydale airport out over Yarra Glen, the Yarra Valley and beyond.

Croft was a much-loved son, brother, husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, uncle and friend. Through his own talent and hard work, a certain amount of luck, and the support of others, most notably Tess, he had a successful career and was able to live comfortably, provide well for his family, enjoy a variety of interests, and extend his generosity to others. He could be single-minded in pursuit of what he wanted to do. (Early on, his father-in-law affectionately nicknamed him ‘the bull dog’.) But his deepest values were love and loyalty to family and friends and the enjoyment of shared activities. Throughout his life he helped and supported people around him and was happy to do so; he was always there for anyone who needed assistance, both among his family and friends and more widely. He was tenacious in pursuit of what was right, and he made significant contributions on numerous committees, including the Owners Corporation Executive of Templestowe Manor where he and Tess have lived in recent years.

Some of those who’ve contacted us recently to express their condolences have described Dad as “kind and generous"; "a wonderful brother and uncle"; "a very strong dignified man who could certainly be feisty but was always a gentleman"; and “always welcoming with a smile”.

We just hope the good Lord is ready to have Heaven re-arranged. God’s speed Dad, you can now fly with the angels. Our love forever.