



EULOGY
David Asimus, AO

By

Mr James Sutherland
(Chief Executive Officer, Cricket Australia)

On behalf of Jane and Heidi, I have been asked to say how much they appreciate the love and support that so many family and friends have offered and provided over the last nine days. We appreciate you joining us here today to celebrate David's life and especially those who have travelled such long distances to be here. We would also like to thank Charles Sturt University who have stepped at nothing to assist in hosting this service and the refreshments afterwards.

Like for so many of us, one of my wife Heidi's enduring feelings about her father has to do with his size. A big lap to sit on, big arms for hugs and huge hands to hold – no matter what age, she always felt safe and sure around her Dad. David's size was felt at much at home as it was anywhere else.

His size was, I found out last night, also felt in other people's homes. One of my great school mates, Roger Paisley, sent an email through last night from Canada where he had these last few days reflecting on growing up in the Tumut District where his family and the Asimus family were great friends.

Apparently not the best eater as a child, Roger vividly recalls that his mother Janet would seek to convince him to eat his dinner with the promising words: "You'll grow up to be big and strong like David Asimus".

On reflection it shouldn't really surprise any of us that knew David that he left our world prematurely. From all reports he was born earlier than expected and from that day on seemed to live by a mantra that it was unacceptable to just be on time – he had to be early – and as for being late, well that was simply unthinkable.

Now (at least compared to David), I am not quite as prompt, but I soon learnt to take my cues from him. By way of example, we often played an early morning round of golf at the Country Club when we came up to visit in Wagga. I always knew it was time to leave

because, even though I was still eating my breakfast, I could hear David, none to subtly, rustling around in the garage, starting the car, and even revving the engine as he waited for me to join him.

We've already heard about David's love of golf and I fondly recall the last time we played together. David and I teamed up against my brother Charlie and a work colleague of his. It was the Monday before the Melbourne Cup and we were at Royal Melbourne. Having scratched around in bunkers and bushes all day, David and I were pretty well resigned to defeat – and arriving at the 16th tee we were two holes down. To cut a long story short, we won the last three holes to win the match but more significantly, our miraculous recovery was ignited by David who at 75 was rightfully chuffed to birdie 16 with a tee shot to eighteen inches and then immediately follow with a regulation birdie on 17 – the longest hole on the course.

We've heard from the two Ian's of some of the many wonderful qualities David brought to his work, community and social life. It was the same at home and amongst the family. What you saw is what you got. A thoughtful, caring and generous man. He loved his kids, Sandy and Heidi and was so proud of them and so interested in their lives and achievements.

As a grandfather of five, he was known by the names Big D and Da. His grandchildren gave him so much pleasure and he loved talking about them and his own personal observations about their enduring traits and characteristics.

In a father-in-law, I could not have asked for anything more. Besides welcoming me so willingly into the Asimus family, he was always very supportive of my pursuits and of Heidi's and my aspirations for our family. He was a great role model for me – and a mentor I could always rely on for a fair assessment or advice.

I was always impressed with David's ability to have a balanced and contemporary view of the world. Whilst he held strong views, which at times, he was only too happy to share, he was also willing to embrace change and move with the times. He loved to try new technology or gadgets that might enhance his experiences in life. I think satellite navigation for the car was his latest toy.

Over the last few years, David also embraced the internet and taught himself to use it to manage his affairs, to stay up today on news and sports results, to research and plan holidays for him and Jane, and to use it as a library to satisfy his interests and vast appetite for knowledge.

In recent years, Jane and David enjoyed memorable holidays to different corners of the globe. Extensively planned by David through the web, the trip incorporated a combination of friends, golf and good food and wine. Heidi and I were always impressed that David taught himself to send text messages and we took great pleasure in receiving regular text updates with news of their travels – especially after we had managed to decipher some of his own unique abbreviations.

Whether in a formal or informal environment, David had an amazing ability to put people at ease, to make them feel welcome, to make them feel comfortable. His generosity was as much in spirit as it was in a material sense. David often visited or phoned friends who were suffering. When going to visit, Jane suggested he take something for them, but he rarely ever did. He never really needed to. His mere presence and natural ease only amplified the genuine friendship and support he always provided.

I recall one memorable occasion when Heidi and I were on the receiving end of David's material generosity. It must have been the late 1990's when David and Jane's great friend,

the late Ken Kelsall, was owner of the winning horse in the prestigious Gold Cup race at the Murrumbidgee Turf Club. For David and Jane, being there at the races to share the win with the Kelsalls made for a wonderful day. Having money on the winner made it even better.

After enjoying celebratory drinks with the connections until late in the day, David went down to collect his winnings. Strangely, on the spur of the moment, he decided to plunge all his Gold Cup return on some unknown roughie in the last race. Now the reasons for this spontaneous and seemingly irrational action have never been properly explained, but one can safely assume that if Jane knew about it, not only would she not have approved, she wouldn't have let it happen.

In any case, the rough shot won and David returned home with his pockets overflowing with cash. Notably amused at his windfall gain, David's first inclination was to share it with family. No sooner had we heard the story than a new BBQ arrived for us and a new fridge for Sandy and Bec. Jane soon had a new set of golf clubs and, over the subsequent couple of years she continued to find small wads of cash rolled up and hidden in her pantry.

Judgement and decision making have always been a great strength of David's. Whilst the decision to select the rank outsider in the final race of the Wagga carnival was a good decision, with perhaps more good fortune than good judgment, it fades into oblivion compared to the decision he made fifty years ago to ask the beautiful Jane Archer to marry him.

Amazingly, they were engaged after meeting less than four weeks earlier. It was a quick decision but not an early one. Jane Archer was very eligible and far from a roughie in the last.

His judgement on this score has proven to be impeccable. David was always the first to admit that his achievements and his broad and deep contributions throughout the community were only possible through Jane's love, care and support of him and their children. They were brilliant combination – a team committed and dedicated to each other and to their family.

Throughout the last fifty years, Jane endured regular and sometimes long periods where David travelled for business and other reasons...in fact not long after meeting and becoming engaged, David spent 12 months on a Nuffield Scholarship in the UK. It must have been a long twelve month wait for Jane. But her patience was amply repaid on his return – and throughout their life together, she simply could not have done more for him, and David was always grateful for that.

The feelings of David's children about their father are perhaps best reflected in what Heidi said on behalf of herself and Sandy on the occasion of David's 70th birthday:
“Dad, thank you for your support, wisdom and friendship. We are so proud of all that you have achieved. As a father you have been so generous in so many ways – we will never really know how to thank you for the lives that we now have”.

Without David's presence and his big arms and hands to hold them, we know that Jane and Heidi may never feel as safe and sure as they once did. But I hope that they can draw comfort from all of us, friends and family alike, as we continue to embrace them with our love and support.

James Sutherland
4 February 2008