

Denzil Howard Kingston
19 July 1929 – 23 October 2014

Birth and parentage

Denzil Howard Kingston was born on 19 July 1929 in Lake Cargelligo, a town in central-western New South Wales, Australia. His parents were Cyril Edward Kingston and Hilda Zettie Kingston. Cyril was a country policeman stationed at Mt. Hope, 70km away. Denzil had a sister, Joy, four years older, and three younger siblings were to follow—Gwen, Boyd, and Ruth.

The family stayed on in the west for only a few months after Denzil's birth. His parents came from the Bega Valley, on the far south coast of New South Wales, and Cyril was transferred there. There had been a murder in the small town of Wolumla, and it was thought that Cyril, being a local, would have a good chance of solving the crime.

Denzil's first memories were of the police station in Wolumla, with its attached court room and lockup. It is now a private home. Denzil would often stop for a look when he passed through Wolumla. He remembered riding his tricycle at high speed along a path beside the house, crossing the gully to the small school, and being lifted onto Bluebell, the police horse.

Springvale

Denzil's mother was born Hilda Zettie Filmer. Her father, Edgar Hugh Filmer, owned Springvale, a 500-acre property near Candelo, another small town in the Bega Valley. He was something of a patriarch, with five sons and two daughters, and was prominent in Bega society.

On Sundays the Kingstons drove the 15km from Wolumla to Springvale. After they moved to Sydney a few years later, Zettie and the children returned each school holidays, travelling by train to Nimmitabel, then down the Brown Mountain in Fred Piper's coach.

Springvale became Denzil's spiritual home. He rode horses, milked cows, hunted rabbits, and adopted a Jersey calf he named Drizzle, who came when he whistled. Long after, when he wrote his memoir, 'The Best of Both Worlds,' the best stories were about Springvale. He loved the people there—his grandparents and uncles, but especially his Auntie Sadie. He used to stop and look wistfully over the fence when we went past in later years. Once or twice we had permission to go on the property, and then his car, which ordinarily was not driven over gravel roads, went everywhere, up hill and down dale. He knew every rock and tree.

Growing up in Sydney

In 1936 the family moved to Sydney and settled in the inner-western suburb of Dulwich Hill. It was a time of austerity, with the Second World War as a backdrop, but it was a happy time for Denzil. He delivered groceries on his bicycle. He made friends at school, including best friend Roy Litchfield. They were close until Roy passed away in 2012.

Denzil was a bit of a tearaway as a boy. He had stories about playing practical jokes, getting the cane, getting into fights. One day he decided to wag school, but for some reason he could only manage it by taking sister Gwen along. They spent the day in the park. When they went home, little Gwen was so excited about it all that she burst in and exclaimed 'Guess what, Mum! We wagged school today!'

Social life centred on Dulwich Hill Methodist Church. Like his father, Denzil was a good singer. He took singing lessons and sang solos. The young people put on concerts. There were days in the Royal National Park, and Saturday nights taking Valerie out, to the Britannia Picture

Theatre in Dulwich Hill. Denzil became a very good soccer player, playing in the Protestant Churches competition, including two years in their First Division, and refereeing. He was a keen cyclist, riding all over Sydney with his friends, and once to Wentworth Falls and back in a day.

Employment

Denzil started work in the office of his first employer, but soon found his way to something more interesting—the printing presses in the basement.

Photo-lithographic printing was just beginning then. In this kind of printing, a photograph of what is to be printed is taken, producing an image on a metal plate. The plate is repeatedly inked and brought into contact with the paper, producing high-quality results quickly. Denzil went to night school, learned the new process, and became a qualified camera operator and plate-maker. Grandfather Filmer's comment was 'Photo-lithography? Never heard of it. You'll starve.' But plate-making was an art back then, and Denzil's skills were in high demand.

In time he took on more responsibility, returned to night school to study management, and ultimately became the co-proprietor and manager of his own plate-making company, with about five employees. He had clients in Sydney, Canberra, and the south coast. His camera was the best, and he was proud of the quality of his company's work, but in the end, he decided that the workload and worry were not worth the return, so he closed the company and returned to working as a representative for other firms. He made sure that his employees had other jobs to go to.

By the time he retired, computers were changing the printing industry. Photo-lithography is still used, but computers control the whole process. Denzil's working life coincided with the era when plate-making was a skilled trade.

Family life

Denzil married Valerie Jean Rochester on 18 October 1952. He and Valerie were teenage sweethearts who met at the Dulwich Hill Methodist Church. They had two children, Stephanie Joy Kingston, born in 1953, and Jeffrey Howard Kingston, born in 1958. The family lived next door to Valerie's mother, in Challis Avenue, Dulwich Hill. Stephanie became a Geography teacher, Jeffrey became a university lecturer.

The family had wonderful holidays. Each Boxing Day, we would pack clothes, Eskies, and Sox the dog into the station wagon and head for Toowoomb Bay, on the Central Coast, where we first had a tent, then a caravan, and finally a mobile home with a great ocean view. Denzil had to work, but he travelled up each weekend. He was a keen rock fisherman and often brought back rock cod or blackfish for dinner.

Denzil took his annual leave in the May and September school holidays, and we went on car trips. We travelled all over Australia and New Zealand. These trips inspired Stephanie to become a Geography teacher. Abercrombie Caves, near Bathurst, was his favourite spot for a weekend break. We visited the caves, explored the bush, and fished for trout.

Denzil loved to work with his hands. He built his own shed and filled it with tools. He single-handedly opened out 5 Challis Avenue by knocking out two walls. When Stephanie took up Folk Art, he made the wooden shapes she painted on, and sold some to other folk artists.

He mainly worked in wood, but other hobbies came and went. He polished opals, and made them into rings and pendants. He took painting lessons. He learned leadlighting, and produced several beautiful pieces for the family and one or two neighbours.

Retirement

Denzil had a long, peaceful retirement. He looked after the two houses in Challis Avenue. The annual pilgrimage to Toowoon Bay continued, and there were trips to Bega and elsewhere to catch up with country relatives and friends. In 1995 Denzil and Jeff travelled to Canada and the United Kingdom—Denzil's only overseas trip apart from New Zealand. They visited Sutton Valence, a village near Maidstone in Kent, where his mother's family originated.

Around this time he contracted cancer, his only major illness other than his last. It was a worrying time, and the treatment was a hard slog, but it cured him.

Denzil could make friends and share a joke with anyone. He told the Jehovah's Witnesses that if they kept coming to his door he would eventually convert them into Methodists. Stephanie's friend Helen had reason to consider Denzil to be a good judge of young men, and her daughter Diana duly brought her boyfriend along for his approval. Denzil carried out the 'Mr. Kingston test' with the aid of a printer's magnifying glass.

Denzil was the father of Challis Avenue, helping neighbours with odd jobs, lending tools and feeding rabbits. His oldest neighbours were the Szabos, who have lived next door since 1959. One day old Mrs. Szabo became distressed while her sons were out, and then Denzil, not knowing what the problem was and finding the doors locked, carried an extension ladder into their backyard and made his entrance via the upstairs balcony.

His last years were mainly devoted to the care of Valerie, which he shared with Stephanie. Some knee pain slowed him up, but his health remained generally good. He enjoyed reading, and still took the occasional trip away. He bought his last new car on his 84th birthday. He would pull up beside some neighbour, make the mirrors move in and out, and ask 'Can your car do this?' He was proud of the driving test he took when he turned 85, writing 'World's Best Driver' on the bottom of the excellent report. He loved a talk, and would often wander out into the street to 'shoot the breeze' with whoever happened to be passing.

Denzil died in Concord Hospital, Sydney, on 23 October 2014, a few days after his 62nd wedding anniversary, of complications arising from a heart attack about a week earlier. He was 85 years old.

Denzil built his life on strong foundations, faith in God, doing useful work, and loving and providing for his family. He enjoyed life and was content with his share of it. He will always be present in our hearts.

Jeff Kingston
October 2014

Denzil's memoir, 'The Best of Both Worlds,' is now out of print, but it can be read online at <http://jeffreykingston.id.au/denzil>. This eulogy is also there.