

Joe Fegan 19th Oct 1929 - 12th January 2021

Funeral Eulogy written & read by shane fegan 14th January 2021

I suppose everyone grows up thinking their dad is the best, but even from an early age I think we all knew we were growing up in a household with a man who was definitely not your average dad. A hard grafter would be a real understatement, he probably did the work of a dozen men in his lifetime.

From an early age his drive and determination was evident, heading off to Gunner Mines in the northern territory of Canada in his early 20's along with his brother John and later Fred and Stephen, to mine uranium for the cold war arms race of the 50's and 60's. I don't think they actually knew at the time what they were mining, but the money was good and it was the place to go to make your fortune.

It was tough work and I remember him telling us of the time he took a tooth ache in the mines, he had to fly to Edmonton on the mines DC3 to get to a dentist. Whereby he instructed him to pull all his teeth out in one go and put in false teeth as he couldn't have the hassle or expense of taking time off with bad teeth. The dentist refused to do it in one go but eventually agreed to do it over two days. Dad bought two suitcases and filled them with bottles of Johnny Walker Red Label and headed back to Gunner (A dry mine) to sell the whiskey and pay for the teeth, not before having to run out in front of the plane taxiing down the runway without him because of a disgruntled pilot who thought he should have got a few bottles for himself.

Christmas at our house was a great time to hear new stories of dad's various adventures over the years. Dad was certainly not afraid of taking the road less travelled or of trying new things or ideas. He had a great mind and an even better set of hands, when he set his mind on something you could be sure it would be done, and it wouldn't take too long either, for there was never time to waste in our house.

'Martin, Adrian, Finola, Shane get up out of your beds, there's work to be done' would be the call on a Saturday morning, no school meant get out the door and do some work, but it was such a great childhood growing up on the farm.

I remember many a morning getting up for school with a sleepy head on me and being ordered to run up the hill to the top yard and do three laps around the gas tanks and back down the house a bit more awake and ready for breakfast. Sometimes I wondered if I had joined the army in my sleep.

Dad was a great inventor too, he would often make his own tools or gadgets for particular jobs, so it was no real surprise when Pamela Valentine was due to arrive at the house with a UTV film crew to interview dad for Farming Ulster's Invention Competition. I decided it would definitely be worth taking the day off school to watch proceedings. All went very well, but mum wasn't too happy to discover on her return home from work that dad had not worn a stitch of the expertly picked selection of clothes she had laid out for him to wear for TV. No, his trusty work clothes, pipe and hat were all he needed.

There was never a dull moment from dad going into the mushroom business to raising suckler calves to doing the hay and silage not to mention the ongoing poultry business.

Heading towards most men's retirement age, dad was planning and soon starting to build his biggest adventure, a golf course for Mayobridge.

Many people could be heard saying at the time that Joe Fegan is mad in the head, he's turning the farm into a golf course. Who would play golf in Mayobridge, he's crazy. It was a dream we both shared, and he spent many years working away with our Martin as a sidekick making it become a reality.

As he said himself, it was back breaking work, the type of thing you would only do once in a lifetime.

He was proud of us all, Adrian for the business he had built up, Finola for getting her engineering degree and setting up her own business, Martin for being by his side along all the various businesses dad had tried out over the years, and Me well I think he enjoyed the fact we both loved golf, and both played it left-handed even though we were both actually right-handed.

Every year we would both set off to the Ulster Left Handers Presidents weekend at the great northern in Bundoran. Four days golfing for father and son, memories I will cherish forever.

And so, we bid farewell to our father, a legend of a man, who gave us such a great example of a life well lived. It was fitting and it gives us great comfort that he had such a beautiful passing to the next life where he is reunited with his mother Mary, father Felix, sister Irene and brother Stephen.

Your legacy will live on, we loved you very much. We were very lucky.