



JOHN (PATYSY) PATSIKATHEODOROU

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What does one say to a mate's wife and kids when he has gone from this world? A very difficult scenario, under an umbrella of huge sorrow, anguish and grief is one way of describing ones feelings on hearing the passing of a good friend.

In typical Aussie style, I swore, called him a bastard in absentia, he had no right to leave us like he did suddenly and didn't have the decency to say "chaps it's time for me to go". What a mongrel! How dare he leave us dangling behind while he soars through the heavens like a beautiful eagle stretching its wings towards the stars above? Well I am going to have a few words to say to the bastard when we finally meet again one day, but not just yet, I said to his lovely wife Helene and their three sons Dimitri, Stratos and Nicholas.

Just looking at his image, gives those who never knew him that his smile alone describes his character. Colourful, a giant of a man metaphorically speaking, a wonderful human being and someone to have in the trenches when the going gets tough. John was all of this and much much more to those who knew him better than I. John and I may have been politically the opposite of each other but as a friend, few could beat his heart of gold, humour and steady hand.

I first met John some nineteen years ago whilst working with a Welfare Agency assisting the unemployed and the needy within the Victorian community. My CEO at the time was Peter Jasonides, another good mate who advised me to visit John in Footscray and assist him with the creation of a community data base for the Migrant Resource Centre. I chuckle when I reflect back on my first meeting with John even today.

I walked into his office and found him walking around this huge room which was covered in documents, reports, briefs of every kind, computers cables and equipment strewn across the table and writing implements in the nooks and crannies surrounding his desk. John looked up at me and said "come in mate, my name is John, what can I do for you", smiling and stretching out his hand for the normal bloke handshake.

It was a warm strong handshake that transferred confidence and welcome at the same time. In short, I explained who I was, why I was there and who had sent me. Without blinking an eyelid, John walked across the room, shuffled through a pile of documents and came up with a wad of loose leaf papers with numerous names and contact details. "See what you can do with that mate" he said. "Create a data base that will enable me to access the information quickly and let me know when you have finished". That was the end of the conversation and I left the building leaving John behind in his office to roam through the documentation on his own. It was obvious to me that he knew exactly where everything was but to me it was a labyrinth of documents.

I returned back to the office and reported to the CEO of the visit and Peter Jasonides merely smiled and requested that I finish the project as soon as possible. This was no mean feat, even though the data base itself was not a problem. The issue I was faced with was the scanning and the character recognition program. In those days optical character recognition (OCR) was not the best and not all characters would be recognised, which meant that thousands of records had to be completed manually. Suffice to say, once this was completed the remainder of the electronic data base was easy and a windows environment all "jazzed up" with buttons, whistles and other dials were added to make it look like an impressive piece of data.

John was impressed and thanked me and the CEO, Peter Jasonides for the data base and we went our separate ways. A couple of years later I applied for and was successful in managing another welfare organisation that had won the contract for the third largest Work for the Dole program in Australia. I was chuffed about this because it was a huge challenge and my third managerial role since leaving the Australian Defence Force. When I entered the office for the first time, who should I be greeted by but no other than John Patsikatheodorou or "John Patsy" for short. It was a huge relief for me and good thoughts and memories flooded in which made my life and role much easier.

As the years went by and I moved onto other managerial positions, John and Helen along with my wife Yovanna remained good friends and we would often have them over for dinner or chats over coffee. Joh had reinvented himself and had bought a small business which enabled him to keep him in the style he was used to while at the same to keeping in touch with his community commitments of which were many, varied and numerous one must say.

Multiculturalism within Victoria was being developed to a high degree of efficiency in which John and his wife Hellen had much to do with. John was politically astute, knew those in power and one could say that he was the oil within the political machinery that kept the various cogs moving along quite nicely without having to clog up the political processes. If you need a hand, John and Helen were always available. In fact Joh could be accused of sometimes taking his commitments seriously and even bringing along their three sons to events, meetings and other political and/or community events.

John's skills were always called upon to diffuse, make deals, create environments that were conducive to long term relationships and it mattered little what side of the political fence one was. John was a man's man, solid as a rock and always dependable. Why his peers and colleagues did not nominate him for the Order of Australia is beyond me, but such is the life of those selfless human beings who consistently keep on giving to their community's with a thought of monetary compensation or acknowledgements. A real lovely bloke, who others can better describe his achievements, his wealth of knowledge, his kindness and steady hand during a crisis.

John will be sadly missed by the many, his legacy and mentoring will live on long after we have all gone and I am proud to have called him a mate, even though I am not happy the bastard left us without saying goodbye. Mate, cobber, John, what can I say other than I would like to think that before you decided to soar through the heavens that you saw the plaque on marble with yours and Helens name on it as a measure of my respect for you. This plaque is located in Pellana, Lakonia, Greece, the birthplace of Helen Troy and her husband Menelaus, Master of the War Cry. Our respects to his lovely wife Helen, sons Dimitri, Strato, Nicholas and daughter in law. This brief article does not do John justice, but I do hope that people who read it will understand that although John has gone, he will not be forgotten. May others do a better job of describing John's life better than I.



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