

Keith Self’s life well lived

By Peter Foley

He was born Barry but known as Keith. To many, he was simply Selfie: an Ipswich larrikin, punter, businessman and family man; the sort of bloke you feel better for having seen.

He worked hard, travelled widely, built houses and businesses, had ideas, made friends, made money, gave money away, backed horses and people, looked after his family and had fun.

Keith Self died peacefully on July 24, aged 81. His memorial service on August 5 – his birthday – brought family and friends together to celebrate a life full of stories, schemes, work, mischief, kindness, laughter and love.

Keith and his wife Robyn were married for 61 and a half years and they raised two children: Sherree, married to Bruce, and Mick, married to Melissa.

He was Poppa to Kate, Amy, Chloe, Luke, Jake and Kane, and great-Poppa to Artis, Roman, Sunny, Azalea, Milania and Aliyas.

To his family, he was a proud provider, cheeky storyteller, adventurer, fixer of cars and toys, and devoted companion to his beloved American Staffy Lexi.

Keith and Robyn met at a dance in the Cambrian Hall in Ipswich. Robyn came in from Rosewood.

“He said to me: ‘Save the last dance for me,’” Robyn recalled. “So that’s why we played Save The Last Dance For Me at the funeral.

“To tell the truth, I was out with a boyfriend and I had a blue with him and he was out with a girlfriend and he had a blue with her.”

It was meant to be, she said. But it was not love at first sight.

“I didn’t really like him to start with,” she said. “He just kept arriving up at my house to see me. But I think he wore me down.”

A year and a bit later, they married at the Apostolic Church at East Ipswich in 1965. Robyn was a day shy of 19 and Keith was 20.

Robyn remembered Keith as jolly, smiling more often than not, until illness made his final years hell. Even then, his pride remained.

After finishing at North Ipswich State School in 1958, Keith worked at Burroughs Business Machines in Brisbane before building a career around cars.

He sold BMC, Holden and Ford vehicles – deep down he was a Ford man, then ran his own car yard, Keith Self Motors, at the Fiveways.

He was an early member of the Ipswich West Moreton Auto Club.

He later became a registered builder, built a childcare centre, imported furniture from Asia, ran a bar in Bali and, with Robyn, ran Sandy Gallop golf club for a decade.

Keith would build a home, move the family in, then sell it and start again, Sherree remembered, to avoid paying capital gains tax.

He played rugby league and hockey, boxed, swam, was an international precision stunt car driver and followed his son and grandsons through years of rugby league.

Racing was one of Keith’s great loves. He raced horses and remained an enthusiastic punter to the end. He went to Ipswich Cup Day in June.

A race named after him was run at Ipswich



Keith with his beloved American Staffy Lexi. Keith was devastated when Lexi died in late 2020.



Keith and Robyn Self on their wedding day. They were married in the Apostolic Church at East Ipswich. (Sherree Carmichael)



One of Keith’s passions was cars. He sold them, was an early member of the Ipswich West Moreton Auto Club and worked as an international precision stunt car driver.

two days after his funeral. Robyn said Keith would have loved that.

Keith was member number three of the Ipswich Turf Club and a key player on the club’s committees of the early 1990s when it had major challenges.

Chairman Wayne Patch said Keith was a colourful character who lived life to the fullest. The club remembered him as “a true Ipswich icon.”

Robyn smiled remembering “quite a few plunges,” including one on a horse called Wandering Duke.

Trainer John Wallace fondly recalled the betting plunge, saying Keith won lots of money after

the horse was backed from something like 100-1 into 6-4.

“He was a champion bloke, one of my best mates, and we had a lot of fun together. Won a lot of money together, too,” Wallace said.

“I don’t think he had an enemy in the world, Selfie. He was that sort of bloke. He was a real knockabout. He was different, and he loved a good time.”

Sherree remembered a father who believed in giving people a go, employing the “unemployable” at the golf club because he thought people deserved a chance.

The family home at Cascade Street, Raceview,

was often the afterparty. Keith brought people home, and some guests stayed for months.

Family holidays to Fraser Island and Double Island Point came with fishing while Keith’s infamous circus tent was “regularly visited by goannas and other creepy crawlies, not to mention sand in our beds.”

To his grandchildren, Keith was hardworking, intelligent, adventurous, generous and “always up to something.” There were always stories, often beginning with: “Don’t tell Nanna.”

Even when illness slowed him, he still turned up when he could – fixing a car, replacing batteries in children’s toys or tinkering in the shed with his great-grandchildren.



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