

## **OBITUARY FOR IVAN ALEXANDER BURNHAM-KING (MULLINS 1965 - 1969)**

In the early hours of Wednesday morning 19 September 2018, Ivan Burnham-King, one of the finest swimmers to grace the St Andrew's College swimming pool, passed away from cancer. He leaves behind his wife Andrea and two daughters, Tasha and Ilka.

Keith (Huck) Scott and I were Ivan's best friends at College, having started as new-boys in Holland House in 1965 and matriculating from Mullins House in 1969. We have been friends ever since, always getting together a few times each year.

Ivan did not enjoy rugby, cricket, tennis, hockey or athletics, but when it came to water sports he was a Giant amongst Giants. It was only after having obtained the College swimming records that I was reminded just what a superb swimmer he was; and feel that everyone could do with a reminder as to how his outstanding achievements dramatically raised the standard of swimming at College.

Here is an anecdote that I recount because it epitomises just how much he disliked running and how, years after this episode, he proved what his iron determination could overcome.

Like the other houses, Mullins had regular, compulsory late afternoon cross country runs during the winter months. As he hated running with a passion it was normal for Ivan, accompanied by "Odd Job" (Lindsay Ah Now – so nicknamed after a Chinese bad guy in the 1964 James Bond movie 'Goldfinger'), to come in stone last. In fact these two dudes were so far behind everyone else that they not only had to endure the discomfort of freezing cold showers but also missed out on their supper, which of course the more fleet footed of us did not let go to waste!

Okay, let's take a look at the Giant of Giants swimming record:

### **1966 – Under 14**

The swimming records for this year are not comprehensive but what we do know is that Ivan returned to a new school year and took the swimming world by storm and demolishing his reputation as a reluctant athlete. Not only did he win most of, if not all, the under 14 age group events but he also left all the senior swimmers in his wake in the OPEN freestyle 15 length race. That year he also won the Cowie River Mile race, was awarded his swimming colours and was selected for the Eastern Province swimming team.

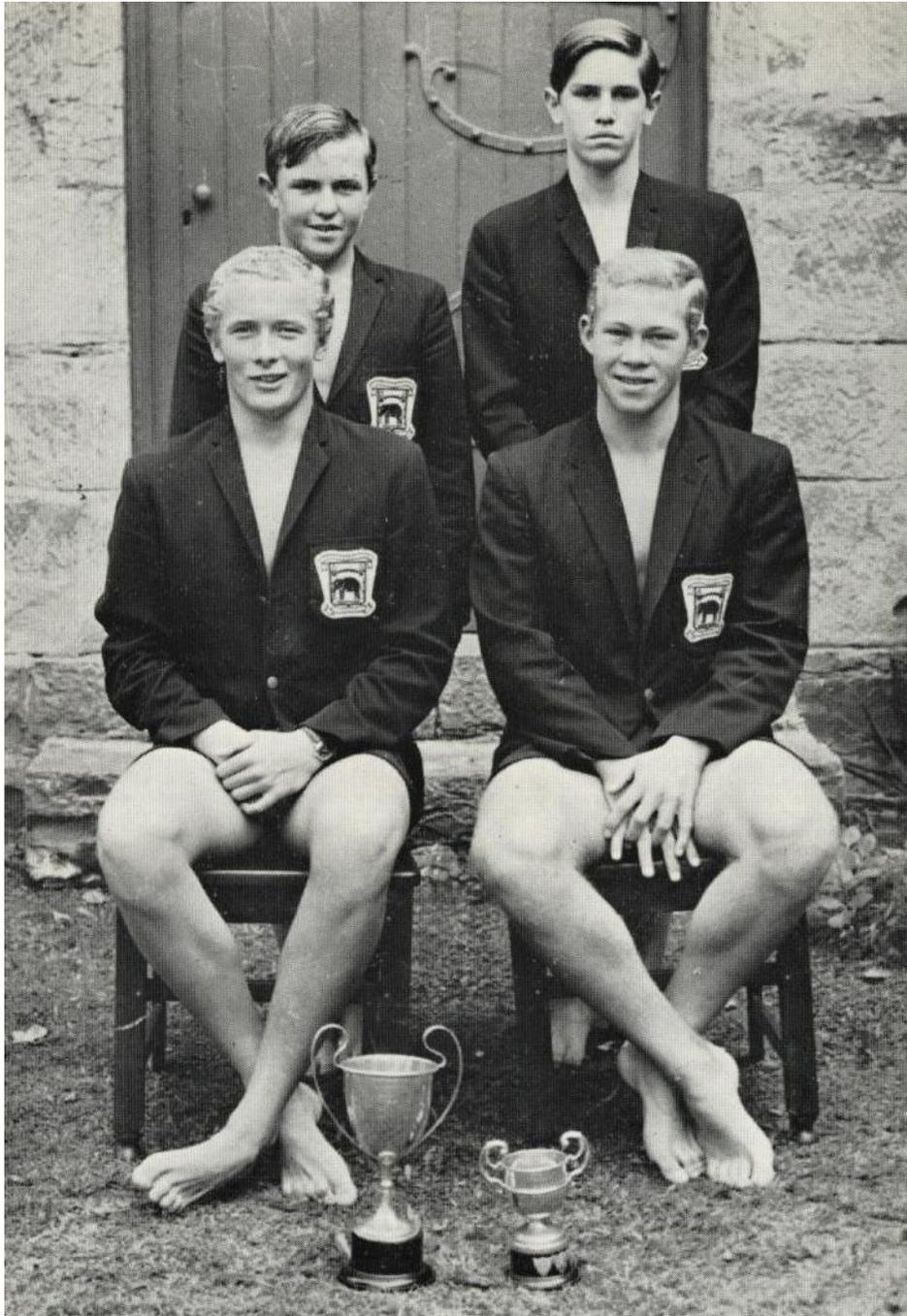
His achievements in the following years were:

### **1967 – Under 15**

- 2 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 3 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 6 lengths freestyle inter-house gala (*entered in U16*) – colours and record.
- 15 lengths freestyle inter-house gala (*entered in Open*) – colours and record 5mins 57.1 secs. What is significant here is that Ivan smashed the long-standing record set by Springbok swimmer Tudor Lacey (Mullins 1959) by 12.2 seconds!
- Winner U15 butterfly and backstroke.
- Inter schools gala on 11/03/1967: Placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the *Open 220yards freestyle*.
- Inter schools gala on 28/10/1967: Winner of both the *U16 100 yards freestyle and 2 lengths butterfly*.
- Selected for Eastern Province Swimming Team.

**1968 – Under 16**

- 2 lengths butterfly inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 3 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 6 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 15 lengths freestyle inter-house gala (*entered in Open*) – colours and record.
- Selected for Eastern Province Swimming Team.



**FOR EASTERN PROVINCE**

**The four College swimmers who were selected to represent Eastern Province Schools:**

**(Standing): A. W. Rampf and W. D. Mackenzie.**

**(Sitting): I. A. B. King and P. N. Bridges (who also captained the E.P. side).**

## 1969 - Open

- 3 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 6 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record.
- 15 lengths freestyle inter-house gala – colours and record. ***Ivan's time of 5mins 36.5secs was never bettered and was still standing in 1998 when the switch was made to the new metric Olympic size pool!***
- Winner of the Cowie River Mile.

### **Inter-schools' gala on 08/03/1969:**

- 110 yards open freestyle - record.
- 220 yards open freestyle - record.
- Open relay team with Ivan swimming the last leg - record.

Selected as Captain of the Eastern Province Swimming Team.

## Water-Polo

- Ivan was also a phenomenal water-polo player and represented College from '67 – '69.
- Mullins, under Ivan's leadership, absolutely dominated the '69 inter-house championships with a goal tally of 68 for and only 2 against.

Ivan was vice-head of Mullins in 1969 and should be given a huge amount of credit for raising the standard of swimming at St Andrew's and inspiring so many junior swimmers to go on to achieve success in what, until then, had been something of a Cinderella sport at College.

After leaving College Ivan did not pursue competitive swimming but instead switched to surfing and lifesaving – apparently because there were sexier girls on the beach than at the swimming pool, and with his good physique and good looks there were plenty of female admirers! Had he continued where he left off at College Ivan would undoubtedly have attained Springbok Colours.

Ivan attended the University of Natal followed by two stints of compulsory military service where he attained the rank of Captain and saw action in Angola.

After completing his military service Ivan entered the clothing industry in Durban. He also spent a few years in Johannesburg and eventually ended up in Cape Town running his own successful business until his death.

Ivan was an incredibly sociable person who people loved to be with and he was always the life and soul of a party. Wherever he went there were people he knew and strangers soon became close friends. That wasn't a surprise to those of us who knew him well: Generous, kind, charming, helpful and always ready for a laugh and a good time.

Motorbikes were also one of his passions. On one occasion, while riding in a somewhat inebriated state, he was pulled over by an irate traffic cop. But it was only a matter of minutes before the policeman had been charmed and transformed from a grumpy law enforcer into an extremely helpful and concerned friend!

Ivan also had formidable determination; if he put his mind to something he would let nothing get in the way of achieving his goal. I mentioned earlier his dislike of running. The following will put into perspective just how resolute he could be.

In November 1985 Ivan arrived in Cape Town and invited his mates to join him at the Chapman's Peak Hotel for a few slurps. There must have been about twenty of us and the drinking went on for a very long time. At some point we started talking about the Two Oceans Marathon and, out of the blue, Ivan stated that he could quite easily run the race. At that time he had put on a lot of weight, was smoking and, as we knew, a race between him and a toddler with loaded nappy would be anything but a certainty. So I jokingly offered him a R100 bet that he could not, would not, run the Two Oceans Marathon. 'You're on!' says Ivan, at which point everyone else jumped at the opportunity to make an easy hundred bucks! The next morning I called Ivan and suggested that he best contact his mates and ask them to nullify the bet because he was drunk at the time. 'What bet did I take?' asked Ivan. Once I'd told him he said, 'Don't be bloody ridiculous Reggie, you know I can't run'. 'Yes' I said, 'that's why we all jumped at the opportunity to make some easy cash!'. Silence for a moment. Then he said, 'Reggie I'll f\*\*\*\*\* do it!'

Not only did Ivan come back the following year and run the Two Oceans, he completed the next two Comrades Marathons - all well within the cut-off times. And, being Ivan, not only did he not call in the bets, he was the first one to buy a round of drinks at the end of each of those races.

Although Ivan's last few months were not easy for him, his mates popped in regularly for drinks, to chat and to watch rugby. I saw him for the last time on the Saturday before he died. He was heavily sedated, slipping in and out of consciousness and had difficulty speaking. Andrea and I sat on his bed chit-chatting and, every now and again, Ivan would open his eyes and make some remark or other. His last comment was the funniest of all and had Andrea and me in stitches. Although I dare not repeat what he said what I can say is that, right to the very end, Ivan was able to see and reflect on the pleasurable aspects of life!

His two daughters flew in from Australia on Tuesday morning and were with him at the end. I believe he held on until they arrived.

To Andrea - thank you for being such a wonderful partner to 'Big Boy' – he could not have wished for better!

Rest in peace my very dear friend!

**Jonathan (Reggie) Voss**

**Mullins 1969**