



Speech by
Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard Thursday, 17 September 2009

BICKERTON, MR L

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (6.08 pm): I rise this evening to pay tribute to Mr Laurence Bickerton, a constituent in my electorate who sadly passed away on his 92nd birthday just over a month ago. Mr Bickerton, better known as Laurie, was famous for his football feats. Anyone who is a supporter of the Brisbane Lions Football Club or the former Fitzroy Football Club would recognise his name.

Laurence was born on 10 August 1917 in a little town on Melbourne's eastern outskirts. Laurie's mother Eva died in 1919 and Laurie lived with his paternal grandmother in Yarra Glen until the age of six. His three sisters and his brother then lived in Warburton with his father and stepmother. Laurie's first job was as a grocery boy, followed by various jobs in timber mills in the mountains. In 1938 Laurie married Lottie. Their first child Lawrence was born in 1939. Laurie then joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1941 as the Second World War was at Australia's doorstep. He was a member of the 31st Beaufighter Squadron and was on active service in Darwin when the bombing of airstrips and allied personnel took place.

In 1944 Laurie and Lottie had their second child, Gary. Laurie was subsequently posted to Laverton in Victoria. He went on to serve in Northern New Guinea, Morotai Island and Borneo. He was discharged from the Royal Australian Air Force in 1946. It was while serving at the Air Force base at Laverton in 1944 that Laurie was recruited by the Fitzroy Football Club, one of just 12 clubs playing in the Victorian Football League. Laurie played just one season for the club, but his influence must have been significant. Fitzroy finished equal top of the ladder after the minor rounds and went on to defeat Richmond by 15 points in the grand final. Laurie made his debut in round 5 against Footscray and played his last game for the club in the grand final win over Richmond where he played on the half-back flank. He played 12 games for the club, including two finals.

For the Fitzroy Lions this premiership was particularly significant as this was the last premiership the club would ever win. Football followers would know that at the end of the 1996 season the Fitzroy Lions merged with the Brisbane Bears, creating the Brisbane Lions Football Club. The Brisbane Lions of course went on to win the 2001, 2002 and 2003 premierships about which Laurie was very proud.

All in all, Laurie played for Warburton in 1933, Dandenong in 1937, Oakleigh from 1937 to 1940 and 1946 to 1948, and of course Fitzroy in 1944. After football, Laurie and his family moved to New South Wales and then back to Victoria before finally seeing the light and coming to the Sunshine Coast in 1987.

As a footballer Laurie was a hard player and as a fighter pilot in World War II he was a courageous officer, but as a man he was a family man. Those who knew Laurie would have said that they were blessed to be in his company. On behalf of the people of the Kawana electorate, I express my deepest sympathies to Laurie's family for their loss. Lest we forget.