

Roy Atkins and “The Meat Palace”

As told to Don Clinch and Doug Prendergast by family members and from personal knowledge, July 2013



Sometimes a harsh childhood produces people of extraordinary character, kindness, remarkably free of bitterness, and just great to know.

You’d never believe Roy Atkins was an orphan. He set out to make his way in the world at the age of fourteen years.....with shoes and clothes carried in a sugar bag – his only possessions.

Fifteen years later he arrived in Woolgoolga from Grafton to manage “The Meat Palace” for Ernie Fogarty, and after two years, he was able to take the business over for himself.

He’d been in the Army in New Guinea during the Second World War. His service resulted in an intense interest in RSL matters and he was Treasurer of the Sub-branch for eighteen years during which time Branch matters prospered under good management. His service to successive committees

was recognised by a Life Membership Award.

His interests extended well past selling meat and making sausages.....and RSL matters. He served as Secretary on the Beach Management Committee for years during which time great improvements including new toilet block, manager’s residence, a raised level of presentation, the construction of Lake Road, and numerous upgrades came about, and he was vital in all these matters. Christmas time was arduous because daytime and night dances, concerts, housie and other fixtures were used requiring rostered supervision (sometimes well after midnight) to entertain holiday makers and their families. Despite having to start work before sunrise, he was always there sharing the responsibilities. His generosity in time was only matched by his industry, and these attributes applied to all his other civic positions and his attitude to the help he freely gave to those in need.

When the Woolgoolga Musical Activities Group’s Drama Section wanted to tour a production to Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Dorrigo and Macksville, whose truck transported the scenery and who drove it? Roy Atkins. Whose truck brought the logs from the bush in Barcoongere Forest to Hall’s Mill to be sawn up for the frame of the caretaker’s residence at the Beach Reserve. And who drove it? Roy Atkins. Who was part of the mill crew which sawed the logs up at the week-end at the mill? When the track to the lake was made into a gravel road, who was part of the three-man survey team who pegged it out – and then worked on the voluntary construction of it at the week-ends? No need to ask – he was there.

In those days of ice-boxes and holiday drip- safes, he kept his shop open for extended hours during the summer holiday season, so campers could take advantage of his shop cool-room to keep their food fresh.

Roy served Woolgoolga in all these capacities (and others) and as a butcher in his own right from 1951 to 1984 when ill health forced him to retire. The business stayed in the family. He died two years later.

Roy and Vera had seven children, four of which and their mother still live in Woolgoolga, but all of whom enjoy the reputation and security their husband and father built up from the time he set out in life ... with shoes, clothes in a sugarbag. The rest of the town recall his kindnesses and personality and the benefits of his dedication and devotion to progress, and making the place.....a better place.