

Tiny Ellis

Eulogy by Ian Reade at Tiny Ellis' funeral.

I met Tiny at Olympic Park which is where the Bank's footy side trained in 1957.

After a couple of nights I was told to join in on a drink after training.

The venue was Checker Hughes pub about 1 km from the ground and as the coach finished training about 5.30 so that, he thought, you couldn't get to the pub before 6 O'clock closing. He was wrong but you had to move quickly.

Only the fastest and fittest made it.

My first time I thought I was in the leading group going in to the pub, but there was Tiny at the bar shoes undone, probably only one leg in his trousers, shirt half on, jock strap around his neck and on his third pot. I had met Tiny!

It didn't take long before I realized that he could play a bit, he was a beautiful high mark, the best in the comp (A grade), and he knew how to palm the ball. I won't talk about his kicking but he did kick a few out of bounds from the goal square. He was a left footer!

He won the B & F, gained interstate selection and was invited to train with Melbourne next year.

He kicked 4 goals in a practice game, but they advised him he was too old; any way I couldn't imagine him hitting it off with Norm Smith. They had different ideas about training and the M C G was further away from Checker Hughes pub.

One of Tiny's attributes was that he could sing, once he almost got me killed and once he might have saved my life.

After playing footy on Saturday, if it was a hot day we might have a couple of beers

A few of us were in, I think, The Domain Hotel in St Kilda Road; it's gone now. They had a floor show upstairs with a band and a beautiful girl singer. It must have been a very hot day because we were still there at half past.

Some time in the night I don't know how but Tiny took over the microphone from the girl singer and he sang "Too young"

He got as much applause as the girl singer and after a quick chat with the band came back to his seat and suggested that I should go up and chat up the young lady, which I did.

Tiny told me later he knew she was married to the Gorilla playing the piano. I got back in through the back door.

It was years later, this century even, and we had met for lunch in a pub in Oakleigh aptly called the blood house.

We had been there a while when 4 or 5 rough looking buggers walked in, they looked like Garbo s or slaughter men just knocked off work.

They kept staring at us and were obviously talking about us and seemed to take exception to us being in their pub dressed as we were, clean clothes and teeth, one of them with very heavy Irish accent was really menacing.

Tiny and the Irishman were up at the bar at the same time and Voices were raised and a bit of pointing going on so I turned around to plan my escape route, turned back and Tiny had his hands on the Irishman's shoulders. I thought good he is going to strangle the bastard. He didn't; he started singing "Galway Bay". The Irishman joined in and over the next hour, arms around each other they sang every Irish song ever written and a few that were never written.

We forgot lunch!

Probably more than anything else Tiny will be remembered for his personality and humour.

He was the funniest bugger I have known. He didn't have to tell jokes; he was just funny with quick retorts and repartee. He could make something funny that wasn't.

He could see the humorous side of any subject in any company. Be in the same room for 2 minutes and he would have the tears running down your legs.

A lot of people are going to miss him.