

Sign from heaven seals life of faith

PHILIP Crook was born to great rejoicing by his staunchly Anglican mother Florrie, his father Ernest (the fun-loving, musical, only son in an Irish Catholic family of six girls) and his sisters Judy and Suzanne.

The Crooks moved house often due to Ernest's work as a conductor and later station master with Queensland Rail.

Philip was often his father's companion on long train journeys, enjoying a wide exposure to people of many nationalities and interests.

Back home in Brisbane, Philip joined his sisters at West End State School, where he also met his future wife Judy Crawford.

Philip became a chorister and later head chorister at St John's Cathedral where his initials can still be seen deeply scored into the choir stalls he occupied for six years.

His education was completed at Brisbane State High and the University of Queensland, where he gained an economics degree.

By 28, Philip was marketing manager of Esso Australia, living in the northshore Sydney suburb of Mosman and driving a Triumph Stag.

Philip and Judy married in 1969 and daughter Margaret Elizabeth (Isobel) was born in 1973.

Travel again connected him with people of all positions and nationalities and he became particularly enamoured of all things Italian.

At 31, Philip was diagnosed with second stage kidney nephritis and spent several days in hospital, but quickly returned to good health.



PHILIP CHARLES ERNEST CROOK

Anglican priest

Born: August 4, 1946, Brisbane

Died: January 9, 2014, Gold Coast

He struggled during these years to reconcile the lifestyle he loved with the life he desired as a priest.

Faith was a constant in Philip's life. He later said he knew from the age of nine that he had a calling to the priesthood.

He left Esso and opened up two small businesses, one a chicken shop called The Parson's Nose which was next to a veterinary clinic.

Occasionally, Philip would take a frozen chicken and sit in the vet's reception, pretending to other pet owners that he was waiting with his pet. He would have a live chicken out back and would return after a chat with the vet, shouting "it's a miracle".

Finally, he asked God for help

with his dilemma and received an unmistakable sign directing him to the priesthood.

While waiting to begin three years' study at St Francis Theological College at Milton, Philip and Judy sold their possessions and took Isobel on a world trip.

On their return, the family moved into cramped quarters at the college and Philip sank his teeth into the complexities of theology. He later took sabbaticals to study at Cambridge in England and in Rome.

Thirty years' service as a priest followed, including at St James and The Glennie schools in Toowoomba, and 17 years as rector at St Mark's Clayfield. For short periods he filled in for priests at Lake Como in Italy.

Philip always saw his priestly duties as connected to the wider community. People engaged with his warmth and unorthodox style. His first service at St Mark's saw him dressed in full Superman costume.

In 2011 Philip accepted the chaplaincy of the junior school at The Southport School, declaring it was "like being a paid grandfather". The move also brought him closer to his beloved grandsons Zac and Sam.

Philip's death from melanoma cancer has left a hole in many lives but the memories of his witty, curious, intelligent and loving personality remain.

Philip is survived by Judy, his wife of 45 years, daughter Isobel, grandchildren Zac, Sam and Jenna and his sisters Judy and Suzanne.

SUZANNE BROOKS

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