

Tribute Poem to Cass

*'Twas an icy Wednesday morning on a golf course west of here
I was blessed with an occasion to absorb and now revere
Not for teeing up and swinging like some over-zealous brute
Not for chipping - not for putting, though I cherish the pursuit
No the act of playing golf gave not my source for inspiration
The magic of the memory was carved in conversation
He was waiting in that buggy and I saw it in his eyes
The aura of a man who knew the secret to the skies
And to questions one might ask, I harboured access to the answers
For I felt the warmth of wisdom when I sat beside Cass Francis
And Cass might not have known it for he seemed inspired too
But his 90 years spoke volumes in a manner tried and true
For the world was much the better when he thought to intervene
On that wonderful September day in Nineteen Seventeen
In a town called Mandurama - there he made himself a promise
To make proud his mother Ada and his working father Thomas
Flowers from his garden spread their colour through the street
Money from his vegies helped the family make ends meet
Children sleeping head to toe - the imagery enhances
The compassion and the honesty that marked the name of Francis
But a man who serves his family and loves them to the core
Is a man who serves his country when that country goes to war
They gave young Cass a tin hat and a uniform and gun
And his regiment was called on, back in April '41
With the spirit of the southern land, the pride and the precision
To Mechili, marched the 3rd Anti-Tank - they saved the 9th Division
But Rommel had them cornered and a break out was required
Like the deadly blaze at Trunkey, only bullets now were fired
Tobruk's brave Rats - El Alamein - the bravest stance of stances
But the ghosts of those they left behind still visit soldier Francis
Yes the best of mates were lost there - I suspect he can't forget
Though he found a friend forever when he followed up Audette
and he chased her like a kelpie with that Casanova charm!
Finally she fell...and then she saved his war torn arm
A love so pure and beautiful - the crux of that emotion
Is the undivided legacy of absolute devotion
From the Dalray/Rose Bay double and the old dry cleaning runs
To the ultimate trifecta! A special girl and two fine sons!
Theirs will surely rank as one of history's great romances!
As stunning as the day she signed her name as Audette Francis
There's a vast array of highlights but there's only so much page
Playing golf and winning trophies did, at times, take centre stage
Through the bloodlines of his Mum, his love of poetry confessed
When his son took guard in Baggy Green, his cricket pride was blessed
Adversity - he's seen it all - but never let it beat him
A smile of generosity for those who chance to meet him
Much of what he stands for when the final words are wrought
Is flying with the Aussie flag - the flag for which he fought
Soon 'the nervous nineties' but his dashing bat still dances
And we cheer the mighty innings of the legendary Cass Francis!
It was only just a moment in the greater scheme of life
But his pride shone like a beacon and his dignity was rife
Respect extols his virtue and his youthful heart amazes
His happiness glows daily in a frame of endless phases
I don't know what awaits me and I'm glad to some extent
But in fathoming his loyalty, I bow to what it meant
To his mother, to his father, to his sisters and his brothers
To his sons and to his daughter and a host of many others
His body might be slowing but his quality advances
And my life was better off for having sat beside Cass Francis*