

Just as last month's Bully Tin was on its way to the printers I received the sad news that Leigh Mathews has finally succumbed to the cancer with which he'd lived for some time. Here are a couple of fitting tributes to Leigh

VALE LEIGH MATHEWS.

One of our original yarn spinner/bush poets, the Henry Lawson look alike, Leigh Mathews, passed away Thursday May 22. When I originally promoted the idea of forming an Association and it was in the paper, Leigh was one of the first to phone me about joining up with this new (in WA.) group of Bush Poetry enthusiasts.

At the time he was the resident yarn spinner/ story teller/ bush poet at Pioneer Village in Armadale and a regular contributor to the ABC's afternoon programme. He brought a touch of authenticity to our musters at the old camp, the Raffles Hotel, when he was a regular attendee, he gave the appearance of the quintessential fair dinkum Aussie and had a permanent spot on the lobby where he could smoke his roll your owns with impunity.

Leigh was a good bloke to perform with, with his laid back casual style and his yarns about the fictitious character 'Gudga Smith'. Over the last few years, we haven't seen much of the Vietnam Veteran, he had done up his old caravan and headed north where he found his niche on a station which catered for tourists in the Northern Territory where he spent the winter entertaining the tourists and doing a few jobs around the station homestead, he told me that he enjoyed it.

Bush Poetry attracts some real characters, the likeable Leigh Mathews was surely one of them.

Rusty Christensen.

Leigh Mathews

Boyup Brook in 2008, Where the great Bush Poets rhyme
I saw our mate Leigh Mathews, for what was left of his time
Though his body was barely holding together, Humour stayed intact
I watched in disbelief as he delivered his humorous act

Though down to forty kilos, to me he was a big man
I'd often have a yarn to him, by his funny little caravan.
He loved the bush, he loved Australia, he loved comedy and vertse
But the dice didn't roll his way, and he was hit by cancer's curse

I remember his days in the bush band, the hotel was literally pumping
At the front with bottle tops jingling, Leigh's lagerphone was thumping
They called him "Splinter Lawson", as he resembled the famous bard
And like the man himself, his life was fairly hard.

Like Henry as well, he had an affinity with the common folk
In Aussie vernacular he'd be described as a bloody decent bloke.
So Bush Poetry has lost another one, we'll miss his wizened frame
Though probably St. Peter has him, so heaven wont be the same

He's probably talking to young Bill McAtee, You can imagine
what they'd say
"Pull up a cloud, you people, there's a Poets Breakfast on today"

Peter Capp May 2008