



MAGISTRATES COURT *of* TASMANIA



CORONIAL DIVISION

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

Coroners Act 1995

Coroners Regulations 1996

Regulation 14

Form 4

No. 14/2001

I, Ian Matterson, Coroner, having investigated the presumed death of

Geoffery Rupert RALLINGS

WITHOUT HOLDING AN INQUEST

FIND THAT :

Geoffrey Rupert RALLINGS on Friday the 22nd day of December 1995 was formally reported to police as a missing person by members of his family. I am satisfied that the deceased was last seen alive by members of his family on the 21st December 1995 however, there is clear evidence and I find that the last confirmed sighting of Mr. Rallings was on Wednesday the 27th day of December 1995 in the Elizabeth Street Mall at Hobart.

I am satisfied on the evidence before me, that a full and detailed investigation into the disappearance has been made and a comprehensive search for Mr. Rallings was undertaken. He has not been located nor is there any evidence to suggest or infer that he is still alive. I am therefore satisfied on the evidence that he is missing, presumed deceased.

I formally record an open finding.

Geoffery Rupert RALLINGS was a married man who was born in the United Kingdom on the 2nd day of May 1930, was aged 65 years and was a disability pensioner by way of occupation.

CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE DEATH : -

Geoffrey Rupert Rallings and his wife, Beryl Florence Rallings, emigrated to Australia from England in 1965 and subsequently had two children. In 1975, Mr. Rallings and his wife moved to a residence at Lady Bay Road, Southport.

I accept Mr. Rallings was an active man who had been employed by both the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Education Department whilst in Tasmania. He was also quite involved with community activities having been a scout, a patrol leader and a rover scout and as a result, was quite well known within the community.

Evidence from Ralling's wife as given in her statement to the Coroner, indicates that in the few years up to 1995, his memory began to fade "*and where the mind was willing, the body failed.*"

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A subsequent medical examination diagnosed Mr. Rallings was more likely than not, suffering Alzheimers Disease.

Mr. Rallings was always a very religious person and wanted to talk to others about religion. A medical report by Dr. J. Mathew, psychaitrist, dated 17 March 1995, indicated he considered Mr. Rallings was unable to take any responsibility and *"has become child-like in his behaviour and expression. He sometimes forces himself on other peoples homes and refuses to leave. His wife has noticed that his ability to retain information, especially of recent events is considerably impaired. His personality has deteriorated as well."*

Dr. Mathew goes on further to indicate Mr. Rallings was showing signs of memory impairment, disinhibited behaviour and personality deterioration. The results of a CT scan were very suggestive of a dementing illness which was likely to progress further. According to other evidence in Dr. Mathew's report, two other psychaitrists concurred with this diagnosis and indicated they believed the disinhibited behaviour displayed by Mr. Rallings was mainly due to this condition.

A few months prior to his 65th birthday, Mr. Rallings was granted a disability pension. From the 9th day of May 1995, upon agreement of all relevant parties, this pension was paid into his wife's bank account. Further, due to this illness, Mr. Rallings had handed over control of a number of matters, (including financial matters), to his wife.

On Monday the 4th day of December 1995, Mr. Rallings' wife left Tasmania and travelled to England. Mr. Rallings accompanied his wife to the airport and gave her the impression he was quite happy to leave her there and travel to Hobart to busk in the Elizabeth Street Mall. This was the last sighting Beryl had of her husband.

The evidence contained in the file suggests that Mr. Rallings began a habit of banging out a beat on any water tank or drum that he found. He would partake in this activity usually first thing in the morning, at lunch time and again in the evening in the year prior to his disappearance. Further, Mr. Rallings would visit his daughters home a number of times quite regularly during the day.

On Thursday the 21st day of December 1995, the usual beating on the tank was heard, however Mr. Rallings failed to visit his daughter and son-in-law during that day. This did not cause any undue alarm until the next day, Friday the 22nd day of December 1995 when the banging was not heard and there was still no visit.

A check made of his residence revealed items that would have been taken if Mr. Rallings was going on a long outing were still in place including his "going out" shoes and his money.

Police were then contacted and appropriate proceedings were instituted. Thorough searches of Dover and the surrounding areas were conducted and all possible sightings were fully investigated, however to no avail. Sightings were reported between 22nd and 27th December 1995 at Hobart, Dover and Geeveston.

COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS -

When all immediate investigations failed to locate Mr. Rallings, checks were then made of his bank account and telephone records. No activity was reported with any bank accounts (and recent checks made by my investigating officers indicate this is still the situation today) and a check of telephone records was unable to provide any additional information. It appears that a

psychiatrists appointment made for Mr. Rallings with a Dr. George for the 2nd day of January 1996 was never kept by Mr. Rallings.

I note Mr. Rallings had no motor vehicle and no access to money since his wife had assumed control of managing his accounts. I think it important to also note that Mr. Rallings once said to his son, Timothy, that in the event of him ever contracting a terminal illness, he was going to wander into the bush and not return. This is a consideration that I must take into account however, due to the fact I have no other evidence to support this theory, I am unable to place any significant weight upon it and treat it as an unsubstantiated theory only.

Friends and acquaintances of the Rallings family from all over Australia were contacted however, again, it appears that Mr. Rallings has not been in touch with any of them.

Various other avenues were canvassed in an attempt to ascertain the whereabouts of Mr. Rallings including the TT Line at Devonport.

On the 7th day of February 1996, a male person (who was unclothed) fitting the description of Mr. Rallings was observed to leave the bush area at Raspins Beach. Orford (near the East Coaster Resort), walk to the water, wash themselves and return to the bush. Although the family did not obtain details of the informant or the time of day of the sighting, the family did indicate the fact this male was naked and the way in which this person washed himself were the same traits that Mr. Rallings had.

A search of this area was conducted and local business' in Orford and Triabunna areas were canvassed and posters regarding Mr. Rallings were left at these businesses for display. Unfortunately, all searches and enquiries failed to reveal any additional information.

Further, I note that the disappearance of Mr. Rallings received extensive media coverage however, this too failed to produce any significant information to lead those searching for Mr. Rallings to his location.

In this case, one must carefully balance the known facts in relation to the disappearance and what has then occurred subsequent to this. As already alluded to, I am satisfied that Mr. Rallings has not made contact with any member of his family or known acquaintances nor has he accessed or attempted to access any bank account funds.

Having carefully considered and reviewed all the available evidence, I am satisfied that Geoffrey Rupert Rallings is missing presumed deceased. I am unable to properly hypothesise as to the actual circumstances surrounding his presumed death. It is for this reason that I must return an open finding.

Before I conclude this matter, I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Rallings.

This matter is now concluded.

DATED : Thursday, 25 January 2001 at Hobart in the state of Tasmania.



Ian Matterson
CORONER