

Servant of the Riverland

John Percival Jennings

Community leader

Born: May 9, 1923; Renmark

Died: December 16, 2003; Waikerie

JOHN Jennings was a leader in his community, a man of great integrity and energy who was respected and loved by those who knew him. He had an enormous love of life and was committed to the advancement of the Waikerie community and his church.

In 1982, John was awarded the Imperial Service Medal for 37 years of outstanding service to the Department of Agriculture. In 1978, he was awarded a Serving Brother, Order of St John, for his contributions to the Waikerie Ambulance Service; and, in 1999, he was awarded a Service Star for 30 years' service to Meals on Wheels.

John was a life member of many local organisations and was Riverland Citizen of the Year in 1980. He was a councillor on the Waikerie District Council for 12 years, and Jennings Park in Waikerie is named after him.

John was born at Renmark and attended Renmark High School, where he won a scholarship to Roseworthy Agricultural College. He graduated in 1944 with a Diploma in Agriculture.

In 1945, he was appointed the first assistant manager of the Berri Experimental Orchard, and in 1948 became the first officer in charge of the Viticultural Research Station at Nuriootpa.

In 1948, John married Erica Price and



they had a son and a daughter. In 1957, John was appointed horticultural adviser at Waikerie. He retired in 1982 as senior horticultural adviser, having had an enormous and long-lasting impact on the expansion and practice of horticulture in the region, particularly in regard to the use of integrated pest management, improved pruning techniques and more efficient watering systems.

John and Erica travelled widely. Erica died in August, 1992, after a long illness

through which John nursed her at home. John's second wife, Judy Good, died in October, 2002.

John conducted the soil surveys and was involved in the planning of Golden Heights Ramco Heights and Sunlands irrigation schemes, the first large private irrigation schemes in South Australia since the Chaffey brothers' at Renmark. He also operated fruit blocks in these schemes.

He was chairman/president or secretary of Meals on Wheels, Probus, SA Avocado Growers Association, SA Citrus Improvement Committee, Waikerie Ambulance Board, Waikerie Community Association and Waikerie Hospital Board.

A member of the Golden Heights Irrigation Area Board of Management, John was also on the Loxton/Waikerie Animal Plant Control Board, Riverland Community Health Services Inc, River Murray Water Resources Advisory Committee, Waikerie KESAB Committee, and Waikerie and District Caravan Park Controlling Committee.

He was also an elder and membership steward of the Waikerie Uniting Church. He took a keen interest in agricultural education, for many years conducting tours of the Waikerie district for students from Roseworthy Agricultural College and the Waite Agricultural Research Institute.

Only days before he died, John was volunteering at the Rain Moth Community Art Gallery and collecting for the Anti-Cancer Foundation.

Dr John T. Jennings

READER CONTRIBUTIONS

Readers are invited to contribute obituaries. These should include dates of birth and death, and a photograph. Contributions must also include the author's telephone contact details.

SEND TO Chris Brice, Obituaries, GPO Box 339, Adelaide 5001

PHONE (08)8206 2406 **FAX** (08)8206 3661 **E-MAIL** bricec@adv.news1td.com.au