



DEXTER KRUGER

The documentary *The 100+ Club* follows three extraordinary centenarians, including former cattleman and great-grandfather of five, Dexter Kruger, who is 102 years and 23 weeks old. Kruger spent more than 65 years breeding and grazing cattle in south-west Queensland. While he still rides his motorbike around his grandson's outback property, he has also been writing books since the age of 86 and recently finished his seventh.

How did you get involved with the documentary?

I got an invitation from Anna Bligh the [former] premier of Queensland to have dinner with her and others of my ilk, that is to be over 100. After lunch the [documentary producers] Flickchicks approached me and asked me if I would be willing to take part in the documentary.

They thought I was an interesting-looking person. I am not an ordinary old bloke, I'm an extraordinary old bloke and to sort of prove that, I live here [in Roma] on my own and I almost look after myself. My hearing and my eyesight are not the best but I grope around and I look after myself and I cook for myself and do my house and there's not many who do that.

You weren't part of the 100 Club social club then, but you've since joined?

I can't go to their meetings and actually be part of it. But I get a letter every quarter with their activities and I sent them a copy of one of my books. They're putting out a publication called *Round The Coffee Table* and I think there will be quite a lot of my input in that.

Why did you start writing?

Being the age I am and being the kind of person who is known as a storyteller, I sort of took it on myself to record a lot of anecdotal stories of bygone days. And the people who have read them are really delighted. A lot of the stuff I've written has never been recorded and if I don't record them then they will never be. Because nobody else has been privvy to these stories.

What do you write about in your books?

They've been about 125 different things. One doesn't follow the other, I wrote them as I thought about them but there are stories there from 1840. I was born and raised in a place called Kilcoy which was one of the earliest districts that was settled in 1840. The Kilcoy library asked



me to write a story about the history and early settlement of the district and they were so pleased with it they asked if I would continue to record more.

What about your most recent book, *The Shepherd's Daughter and other stories*?

The setting is in Wales, it goes right back to the vikings. It's a long story, it's what I call a novelette. There's also personal stories [about my late wife Gladys and dog Snout]. Although I lost my wife 18 years ago, we did have 52 years together. I would say that having a good helpful wife contributed to being cheerful.

Had you ever expected you'd reach this milestone?

No but when I turned 98 I thought to myself 'I'm in there with a chance'. I wasn't feeling too bad and I made it and once you get through the barrier, it's easy. I'm not a big robust muscly fella at all. I have the physical capability of half a man and I've

done the work of a man and a half.

Any secrets to longevity?

Nothing at all, I've never ever spared my body, I've pushed it to the limit. Not being very robust, a lot of the work I did was very hard. It would not be so hard if I was a big muscly fella, but I wasn't.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

My biggest accomplishment and most useful to the cattle industry, I introduced the concept of live weight cattle selling at saleyards. My books are probably one of the greatest achievements, too.

Most important lesson you've learnt?

Be of good cheer. I think it's very important to be cheerful. The three greatest words in the English language are "It doesn't matter".

Helen Gregory

The 100+ Club will screen on ABC at 6.30pm tomorrow.

