

THE TORCHBEARER

NEWSLETTER 43.

"56ers Torchbearers Club Inc"

PO Box 2148, CAIRNS Q 4870

Committee:

Patron	Margaret Cochrane	
President	Jim Vallely	Tel 07 40532150
Vice President	Dennis Stevenson	Tel 07 40653223
Secretary/Treasurer	Bill Cummings	Tel 07 40312888

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Greetings to all 56ers and partners. Now that 2013 is coming to a close and our AGM is behind us for another year most members will be training their thoughts towards Christmas activities.

I am extremely pleased to announce that Margaret Cochrane present chairperson of the North Queensland Sports Foundation and former long serving Councilor of the Cairns City Council has accepted the position of Patron of our club. Margaret has been a close ally to the 56ers for a number of years and brings a wealth of expertise to our management team. The other office bearers were reelected. See the photo over.

The recent loss of our former President Con Verevis was felt by all who attended our AGM as he was an integral part of our group and having declared the meeting open a minute's silence was accorded to our very dear friend.

On a less solemn note I am happy to report, Cairns is experiencing its best tourism uplift in years and a call goes out to our southern members to head north and give one of the local 56ers a call for a chat over coffee. Sydney-sider, Ralph Schubert and his good wife Lillian, revisited Cairns earlier in the year and got amongst the medals at the masters games - nice work Ralph.

Now that all our 56ers have passed the three score years and ten mark, health is our number one priority, so I would like to wish one and all a happy and healthy Christmas and an even healthier New Year.

Regards
Jim Vallely



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The membership fee is now due. This was unchanged at the AGM so still stands at \$10 per annum (See tear off remittance below for cheque, money order or bank details for electronic funds transfer.)

Secretary/Treasurer

The 56ers Olympic Torchbearers Club Inc
PO Box 2148
CAIRNS QLD 4870

Attached please find Annual Subscription of \$10.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Tel No.: _____

EFT Payment Details:-

Bank: Bendigo Bank BSB: 633-108 Account: 117343277
Account Name: 56's Olympic Torchbearers Club Inc



The Torchbearers Club newly elected executive on the picture perfect Cairns Esplanade. Margaret Cochrane, Patron, Jim Vallely, President, Bill Cummings, Secretary/ Treasurer, Dennis Stevenson, Vice President.

STOCKHOLM OLYMPICS 1912

The Stockholm Olympic Games surpassed the three previous promotions in organization. The games attracted 2,484 men and 57 women. Women's swimming events were included for the first time and the modern pentathlon was also a first time event. This event was the brain-child of Pierre de Coubertin. Swedes gained the first four places. The first foreign place getter was G S Patton of the United States. This man was to turn out as the famous General 'Blood and Guts' Patton of World War 11.

Few people would dispute that Jim Thorpe was the best athlete of the games.

Tragically his name does not appear in the official records. He competed in four events. He won the track and field pentathlon and the decathlon with ease. The following year it was revealed that he had taken part in some professional baseball matches and on the orders of the IOC Thorpe's name was struck from the records. In 1913 Thorpe became a professional footballer and made a mark in this sport as surely as he had done in track and field.

In the 100 m five of the six medalists were American and this race was notable as there were no fewer than eight false starts.

Australians Fanny Durack and Wilhelmina Wylie were placed first and second in the 100m. Fanny set a world record in the heats.

ANTWERP OLYMPICS 1920

The Antwerp Games were the first stumbling attempt at a global get-together in a world recently shattered by war. The Olympic flag was unfurled for the first time and the Olympic oath was first introduced. But perhaps the most exiting of all Paavo Nurmi the phantom Finn made his debut winning the 10,000 meter and cross country (10,000 m) individual events and Finland won the team event. In spite of the new 30,000 seat stadium the crowd did not exceed 20,000 by very much.

The Belgium's did not invite any of the central Europe powers such as Austria, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. The new countries of Czechoslovakia and Estonia and Finland took part.

PARIS OLYMPICS 1924

'56ers will recall that Paris held an Olympics of sort in 1900. But the 1924 Olympics in Paris were the real thing and contrasted significantly to the chaotic games held in 1900. The winter Olympic Games and Rugby competitions were also held. The summer Olympics commenced on the 5th July and one of the greatest exhibitions of middle distance running was witnessed from the Finn Pavo Nurmi. Nurmi won five gold medals over six consecutive days, with notable wins in the 1500 m and 5000 m both in Olympic record times. Anthony Winter an Australian won the gold in the triple jump with a leap of 50feet 11.5 inches (*one of our members Tony Stevens could reach this distance*).

It was at these Olympics that Johnny Weismuller (of Tarzan fame) won the first three of his five gold medals in the 100m, 400m, and he 200m freestyle relay. Andrew 'Boy' Charlton an Australian came third in the 400m behind Weismuller. Charlton was only 16 years old. Later in the games glory was to come to Charlton by winning the 1500m event with 33 year old Australian Frank Beaurepaire being placed third. The Paris Games were the last (save for recent Olympics) where tennis featured as a championship event.

56ers CORNER

NORTH QUEENSLAND RACQ INSURANCE GAMES: TOWNSVILLE 2014

An early reminder to all 56'ers that the above games are scheduled for 4-6th April 2014 in Townsville. Everyone is invited. A highlight for 56ers will be the 1500 meter men's and women's event, the prize money for which is donated by the Club. Members will witness many interesting things especially in the young athletes approach to athletic events-some of which are hilarious.

The Cairns games will be held two years following in 2016.



KEITH BARRETT

(13 miles North of Ayr or
60 miles South of Townsville).

Kindly contributed by Keith's wife Fay and daughter Kerri.

Keith was born in Charters Towers on the 19th March 1933, exactly one year after the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge something we were reminded of every birthday. He went to Boys School in Charters Towers until the age of seven when the family moved after his mother remarried. (His father died before Keith's second birthday).

They lived outside of Ingham for a short while where Keith went to Helen's Hill school (for about a week) before the family moved to Townsville. Keith first went to Garbutt State School then to West End State. He left school in 1947 after scholarship.

He missed a lot of schooling that year because of sickness but still passed scholarship with a pretty good pass.

His first job was messenger boy at Elphinstone's Ltd. auto parts specialists and he stayed.

He met Fay there and they were married on the 21st March 1959. They transferred to Cairns in 1960 when Elphinstones opened a new branch. He worked his way up to manager and remained with the firm until the branch was closed in November 1984. After the branch closed, Keith worked alone from the family house (expecting youngest child Glen, and Fay to do their bit for no salary!). The customers always came first with Keith even on public holidays he delivered orders. At age 55 his Elphinstone career finally ended and he went to work for Murray Staples at Autopro Spares until he turned 64, after 49 years working in the motor spare parts trade. He had hoped to work for 50 years but finally realized who would care if he worked 49 or 50 years.

From the time they moved to Cairns, Keith had a lot to do with basketball and was one of the first two people to earn Queensland referee status that gave him much satisfaction. He and a few others were committed to building a stadium in Aumuller Street. They ran Bingo and held chook raffles until it was paid off. The same people ran a Queens Birthday basketball carnival that was well patronized by teams from Thursday Island to Mackay.

Keith and Fay ran the kiosk at the Cairns Youth center for a number of years. One of the regular activities was wrestling. One time they transported two wrestlers back to the city: from the back seat it felt like the front wheels of the car were more often off the ground than on, especially going over bumps.

After he retired Keith started serious volunteering. He regularly helped at the hospital Kiosk but left when the hospital development began. He went every day on a meals on wheels run, eventually reducing it to one day a week which he continued until ill health stopped him driving.

Keith was always a keen sportsperson. Before his marriage he and his friends played cricket basket- ball and hockey. It meant a lot to him that he was one of the founding players in Commercials Hockey Club back in the 1950's. He kept in touch with his Townsville mates all his life. He played hockey in Cairns with

Brothers until work took up his time, then for many years wrote the hockey report for the Cairns Post.

For the 1956 Olympic torch relay Keith ran as no. 60 from Townsville. His run was near Giru around 2am. A far cry from the cheering crowds that greeted the Sydney torch runners, Keith waited alone at his marker in the dark with perhaps a few roos for company. Eventually he saw a faint light in the distance, signaling the approach of the torch. In later years he reflected that the time between first spying the light and the torch hand over to him felt like an eternity! He ran his mile in a little over the allotted time (he had played cricket all afternoon then been rushed onto the bus to travel to his appointed place) and duly handed the torch to the next runner. He remembered receiving his commemorative medal. After the torch hand over an organizer rushed up to him thrust the medal into his hand and said 'Here's your medal mate. Now get onto the bus.'

This was just fun at the time but it really didn't mean much to him until the 2000 Olympics to be held in Sydney. Then some of the old boys of the 1956 Olympics thought it was time to get together. Keith became enthusiastic about the 56ers Torchbearers Club and was actively involved in promoting until his death.

Highlights included traveling to Melbourne for the 50th Anniversary of the 1956 games in 2006 with the many '56 Torchbearers activities and the establishment of the Olympic Torchbearers memorial on the Cairns Esplanade along with the marking out of the mile run at the Northern end of the Esplanade.



Con Verevis and Keith Barratt speaking at the 50th reunion of the Melbourne Olympics. The attending '56ers are seated at the rear.

Keith really enjoyed all he did on the '56 Torchbearers especially producing the newsletter- researching past runners and their stories and discovering tidbits about the Olympics. He was hoping he could produce one more newsletter but passed away before it could be done.

Keith died on 8th February 2010 from complications relating to pulmonary fibrosis.

Editor's note: I recall Keith at the 50th anniversary celebrations for the Melbourne Olympics. We had all marched onto the MCG and listened to the speeches and Keith took off on a run about the oval. When he returned I asked him why the exercise? 'I've all my life wanted to experience a run on the MCG and I have just achieved that objective' The club has a lot for which to thank Keith Barratt.

ANTHONY (TONY) STEVENS (9 miles South of Newcastle)

Having just started 4th year in high school (year 10 on today's standards), I was conscious of the forthcoming Olympics in Melbourne. I had just turned 14 years old (on the 3rd January) and was aware applications would soon be sought to carry the torch for the relay.

I was also a member of the Hamilton Amateur Athletics Club (Newcastle NSW). I was the district champion in high jump, triple jump, pole vault and competed in all field events and the decathlon.

The applications were called and I was successful, although I had to do a 'trial run' in a few weeks time. My nerves got the better of me and I was violently ill on the night of the trial, so I could not compete. I thought my chances had flown out of the window.

However I was allowed a separate trial on the cinders track at Newcastle and easily completed the mile in the required time. I seem to remember the time required was 6 minutes.

Eventually the big day arrived. My 'leg' was from Charlestown (a suburb of Newcastle) shopping center through Bennett's Green to Belmont North.

I was all decked out in white and was dropped off at my starting point well in advance of the starting time. The Army truck was near by and I received instructions on how to light the torch, etc. I couldn't believe how light it was. At the completion of my mile I couldn't believe how heavy it was.

I finally saw the runner who was to hand the 'flame' over to me, and I was exited beyond belief. Thousands of spectators were lined along the whole route.

The torch was lit and I started to run steadily as told. The carbon Tetra Fluoride in the torch head started to drip and was blowing onto my legs, so I had to hold the torch out to my right side. This caused the torch to become very

heavy, but I managed to hold on and complete my mile.

Along the route I was conscious of the spectators, and several called out my name but I did not recognize anyone. I remember a man standing on top of one of those white posts along the roadside with a movie camera but to this day I have never seen any of this footage.

Several months after the Games, a man came to my parent's home at Walls End and gave them 4 photos he had taken, and I still have them.

On completing my mile I was ushered onto a bus with the previous runners and we stopped at Wyong Railway Station (in the car park). Another bus then continued the route to Sydney with the next batch of runners. We were then issued with our medals whilst seated in the bus. Of course I still have mine.

On perusing the book kindly forwarded to me by the 56'er Torchbearers club of Cairns, I note that my name was miss-spelt A Stephens instead of A Stevens.

I competed every weekend at Newcastle in all field events and the 100m. I hated long distance races so cannot believe I carried the torch for 1 mile.

Editor's note: Tony is being quite shy in not telling more about his illustrious athletic career, he competed against Chilla Porter, Tony Sneaswell, Laurie Peckham and Graham Morrish in the 1961 Australian Championships. In Tony's words 'I did not run a place against that field'. Tony's best jump was 6ft 4ins and he was/is only 5ft 9ins high. Tony was chosen for the 1962 Empire Games in the triple jump but couldn't afford the fare to Melbourne for the trials. He was able to jump around the 51feet mark. He also was the district champion in pole vault being able to clear around the 12 ft mark. What a performance from one of our members.

EXPLORE YOUR OLYMPIC POTENTIAL

Bill O'Neil (Mirriwinni) forwarded this article about the Sherbrooke Little Athletic Club. This athletic club gives children the opportunity to run, jump, throw and leap towards achieving their best in a family friendly environment. As well as track and field events the club caters for novelty days such as the Sherbrooke Gift, Mini Olympics, and Grandparents races. The club has wonderful facilities such as a soft grass track, parking, shady spectator areas, children's playing area and a canteen.

They have coaches for all events and free trials are available for new members.

Awards are offered throughout the year and two annual presentation days are held where every qualifying athlete receives an award. Costs are very affordable with a one off annual fee and there are no on going weekly fees or hidden costs.

What a wonderful way to encourage future Olympians. Further information on this wonderful initiative can be obtained by contacting Richard Wicks on 97542759 or the website <http://sherbrookelac.org.au>



NEWSLETTER ITEMS

A plea is made to all members to forward stories pertinent to your mile or other news of interest to the editor for publishing in the newsletter.

DEATH OF ALBIE THOMAS

Albie Thomas the wonderful mid long distance Australian athlete passed away on the 27th October 2013 at the age of 78. The illness that caused his passing was with him for 12 months.

'56ers will remember Albie for his pace setting actions for Herb Elliott and John Landy and was placed fourth in the 5000 m event at the Melbourne Olympics.

Albie was one of five athletes who broke the four- minute mile at Santry in Dublin in 1958 and was timed at 3.58.6 and was paced 5th. (See the report on this race in this newsletter).

A GREAT DAY FOR THE IRISH AND A MEMORABLE MILE EVENT

Dublin is a friendly grey city 300 miles from London and does not worry about world matters. The city had few heroes. One such hero however was Ron Delaney, a dark crested fellow with long legs a cheery grin, a jerky dancing run that won him a gold medal at the Melbourne Olympics. The track at Santry was quite new and a promoter named Billy Morton along with Ron Delaney drew up the idea of a super mile event at the Dublin track, including Herb Elliott and Delaney. Morton first arranged a magnificent supporting cast to include Merv Lincoln, Alby Thomas and Murray Helberg and then worked out a pacing arrangement that would almost certainly result in a world record. Thomas was to be the 'bunny' and was to gallop for his life over the first two laps aiming at a time of 1min 58 secs and then finish the best way he could but he had to finish. Thomas did cover the first two

laps in the required time that showed the quality of the man.

The clash between Delaney and Elliott was the topic of discussion in Dublin irrespective of counter attractive events. Percy Cerutti was in Sweden but he had pep talked Elliott.

Thomas was so anxious about his front running mission that he stumbled as the field got away but by the middle of the first curve he had reached the front ahead of Halberg, Lincoln and Delaney. At the completion of the first lap he timed at 56secs and was well ahead of Lincoln and Halberg. At the start of the bell lap Elliott tore ahead of Thomas but Lincoln was making a bid on the outside and led for ten seconds but Elliott regained the lead and the fans were bellowing harder than any athletic crowd had done. As Dublin's beloved Delaney made his way from third place the noise was deafening. But the Irishman had no hope as Elliott had stretched out smooth and lovely to watch. His driving elbows lowered a little as he hit the tape 10 yards in front of Lincoln. 12 yards back came Delaney with his blow- torch finish but within minutes he was reaching violently as officials tried to shield him. Halberg finished inches behind Delaney (the judges could not separate the times) when Thomas crossed the line.

The five place getters all registered times less than 4 minutes. Elliott 3.54.5, Lincoln 3.55.9, Delaney 3.57.5, Halberg 3.57.5, Thomas 3.58.6 : a fitting achievement for Albie Thomas. But Thomas' achievements did not end there. Elliott recognized his debt to Thomas and he settled it in the way that only great athletes can. The next night he arranged to be the 'bunny' and he ran himself almost into the ground setting a pace for Thomas over the first 6 laps of a two miler. The World record of 8.32 went to Thomas and Albie's first words after the race were 'Gee thanks Herb.'

VALE ALBIE THOMAS.

Acknowledgment is made to Harry Gordon on his story in the book 'Young Men in a Hurry' The story of Australia's fastest decade.

JOKERS CORNER

Two red Indians and an Irishman were walking through the woods. One Indian suddenly ran up the hill to the mouth of a cave and called out wooooo! wooooo! wooooo! and heard a similar reply. He tore of his clothes and ran into the cave.

The Irishman was puzzled and asked what it was all about. It is our custom during the mating season that when men see cave they call out and if there is a squaw in there they get an answer back. Just then they came upon a second cave and the other Indian called out. Immediately there was an answer from deep inside. He tore his clothes off and ran into the opening.

The Irishman wandered around the wood alone and spied a third cave. Hoo, man look at the size of this cave. Its bigger than the Indians found.

There must be really big fine women in this cave, so he stood outside and hollered the Indian call. Like the others he then heard the answering call WOOOOO!, WOOOOOOOOOO!, WOOOOOOOOOO! And with a gleam in his eye and a smile on his face he raced into the cave tearing his clothes off as he ran.

The next day the head-line of the local paper read was you will like this (read the line below backwards)

!!niart yb revo nur namhsiri dekan.

Only a farm kid

A Queensland farmer drove to a neighbors farmhouse and knocked at the door

A boy about 9 opened the door. 'Is your dad or mum home?' said the farmer.

'No they went to town.'

'How about your brother, Howard?' Is he here?'

'No he went to town with mum and dad'

The farmer stood there for a few minutes mumbling to himself.

I know where all the tools are if you want to borrow one or I can give dad a message.

Well said the farmer uncomfortably "I really wanted to talk to your dad. It's about your brother Howard getting my daughter Susie pregnant.'

The boy thought for a minute...

'You would have to talk to dad about that. I know he charges \$500 for the bull and \$50 for the pig, but I don't know how much he charges for Howard.'

I join with the President in wishing members a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!



D M Stevenson
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