

THE TORCHBEARER

NEWSLETTER 51

"56ers Torchbearers Club Inc"

PO Box 2148, CAIRNS Q 4870

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President's Comments

Greetings Fellow Torchbearers and Partners.

I trust all members are dodging the winter chills and are in good spirits.

Ron Clarke's recent sad passing sends a message to us all that we should make each day a winner where possible. Ron made middle distance running his own during the late 50's and early 60's gathering an incredible 17 world records along the way. The lighting of the Olympic Flame in 1956 is undoubtedly one of the most lasting images that emerged from the Melbourne Games. So much has been said and written about Ron Clarke's magnificent career I feel I would do him an injustice by revisiting the many triumphs.

Ron had a private family funeral followed by a public service on the 11th July at which our club had a tribute read to the gathering. I would like to thank fellow club member, Paul Eggers a resident of the Gold Coast for his valued assistance in organizing the tribute and fellow torchbearers Leo

Solinas Trevor Jones for making themselves available to be in attendance at the public service held at the Runaway Bay Sports Centre.

It is comforting to know we can call on members even though they may be 1200 miles away to assist at short notice.

A smorgasbord of sporting events has occurred since our last newsletter, commencing with the South Pacific Athletic Championships at which countries such as New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa,

Guam, Vanuatu, New Guinea, and a number of smaller Pacific Islands including a strong contingent of Australian Athletes striving to qualify for the 2016 Olympics. Montanna McAvoy took out both her 800 and 1500m events while a 16 year old school boy from Malanda cleared the bar at 2.15 metres 7 feet 1/2 on the old scale to take out both the Junior and Open High Jump, a leap that would have landed him the Gold Medal at the Melbourne Olympics.

A reminder that our AGM will be held at the RSL on Saturday 7th November commencing at 11.30 am (Please see notice last page). I look forward to our annual gathering.

Regards,
Jim Vallely



EARLY NOTICE

60TH ANNIVERSARY DATE CLAIMER

The club proposes to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the 1956 Relay in conjunction with the North Queensland Games being held in Cairns with participation in the opening ceremony on Friday evenings 26th June 2016, with a special anniversary dinner on evening Saturday 27th June 2016.

SPECIAL LATE NOTICE

As part of Townsville City's 150th Anniversary celebration, the organisers are looking to include a 1956 Olympic Torch Relay Re-enactment. The 56ers Club is working with the NQ Games organisation to help organise the event. If you are interested in being involved, please contact the secretary on 0740312888. We are particularly keen to contact runners who participated in that section of relay.

FORMER OLYMPIC GAMES

SEOUL 1988

The Seoul Olympics were the second to be held in Asia and were the last Olympics for two of the worlds dominating sports powers-the Soviet Union and East Germany. At the opening ceremony white doves were released as a symbol of world peace but tragically some were burnt alive by lighting the Olympic flame.



The official Olympic torch used in the Seoul Games.

A point of conflict was the involvement of North Korea in hosting the games. This was supported by Cubas Fidel Castro. The North Koreans demanded a number of Olympic events be held in the North. This was rejected by the IOC. North Korea boycotted the games supported by Cuba, Nicaragua and Ethiopia.

Now to the important and relevant events of the Seoul Games.

- The Olympic Torch was carried into the stadium by SonKee- chung who won the 1936 Games marathon. The torch was then relayed to three athletes who lit the caudron.

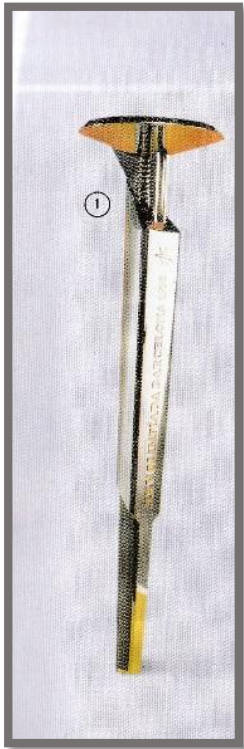
- Carl Lewis set a world record in the long jump with an astonishing distance of 8.72m.
- Florence Griffith Joyner following setting a world record for 100m at the Olympic trials won the womens 100m and a then world record of 21.34 in the 200m dash. To these gold medals, she was a member of the gold medal 4x100m relay and was a member of the 4x400m silver medal relay team. A wonderful result. She announced her retirement just following the games.
- Canadian Ben Johnson won the 100m final with a new world record but was disqualified after testing positive to a performance improving drug.
- Suriname won its first gold medal when Anthony Nesty beat Mat Biondi to win the gold medal in 100m butterfly event. This upset Biondi's object of breaking Mark Spitz' record of seven Olympic medals.
- Tennis returned to the Olympics after a 64 year absence. Steffi Graf won gold in the singles event.
- A total of 8391 athletes competed of whom 2194 were women.

BARCELONA 1992

Preparation for the Barcelona Games took the opportunity to correct much of the areas of the city that needed modernization but the Olympic Stadium was upgraded from one that was built in 1929. A 26 mile ring road was built so as to create a games where all but four sports were largely centred closely around the hill of Montjuc and the Olympic Stadium.

In the stadium a number of powerful events occurred. A Spanish runner Fermin Cacho Ruiz won the 1500m event in 3,40.12 .He amazed himself as well as spectators as he repeatedly glanced back after racing to the front when he should have been fixed on the tape. In Atlanta four years later he gained the silver medal in the same event. Linford Christie of Great Britain won the 100m event for men and Gail Deivers of the USA won the womens event. Devers also ran in the 100m hurdles but fell and allowed a Greek woman Patoulidou to be the first Greek woman

to win a gold medal and in fact the first to win a medal in any sport.



The Barcelona Olympic Torch.

The womens 10,000m was won by an Ethiopian runner Derartu Tulu and so became the first female black woman in sub-Saharan Africa to win an Olympic gold medal. The runner up was a South African Elana Meyer. Both women did a victory lap and the symbolism of this action brought the crowd to its feet and would not have happened if South Africa had not ended apartheid and returned to the Olympic competition.



The winners of the womens 10,000m event Tulu and Meyer.

In other athletic events Fermin Cacho from Spain won the 1500m event and Hwang Young-cho from South Korea won the marathon. United States won all three places in the long jump.

In womens events Jackie Joyner Kersee of the USA won the heptathlon with 7044 points.

A strange motion was passed by the IOC in favour of the 'Olympic Truce'. This motion decided that between the 7th day before and the 7th day following the games the 'Olympic Truce' be observed. During this period all armed conflicts and any acts related to, inspired by or akin to such conflicts shall cease, whatever the reason, cause or means of perpetration thereof:

The article does not indicate if any conflicts did materialize. A strange appeal by the IOC.

WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THEM.

ALBIE THOMAS

Albie Thomas was an Australian middle and long distance runner who set world records at two and three mile events. He was born in Hurstville in New South Wales. Thomas set a new world record for three miles at Santry in Ireland in July 1958.

He returned to Santry that summer and was pace maker for Herb Elliott where Elliott set a new world record in that mile race of 3,54.5. Albie Thomas had sufficient strength to complete the race in sub four minute mile time of 3,58.6. This was his first four minute mile. All five place getters, Elliot, Merv Lincoln, Ron Delaney, Murray Halberg and Albie Thomas all broke the four minute mile barrier- what a wonderful performance. The following day Thomas ran a two mile event in world record time of 8,32.0.

Thomas competed in three Olympic Games 1956, 1960 and 1964 running 5,000m on all three occasions. He also competed in the 1500m in the latter two. His best place in the 1500m was 5th in 1956. He also competed in Commonwealth games in 1958, and 1960 winning bronze and

silver in the mile and 3 mile events respectively. He beat Herb Elliott in one race.



He coached for a number of years.



Albie Thomas and wife in the foreground of a coaching spell.

Tragically Albie passed away aged 78 in 2013.

ALAN LAWRENCE

Alan Lawrence was born in July 1930. He was a long distance athlete who competed in the 10,000m event in Melbourne in 1956 where he won a bronze medal in the time of 28.53. He was also qualified for the 5,000m event but did not compete as a result of a stained leg muscle.

At the 1960 Rome Olympics he competed in the 5,000m, 10,000m and the marathon. He was placed fourth in the 5,000m did not finish the 10,000m and was placed 54th in the marathon in the time of 2:37.

Two years after Melbourne he went to the University of Houston to run for the Cougars. In 1959-60 he captured successive NCAA cross country AAU XC wins. In 1960 he set a world

indoor record for a two mile event in 8:46 and six days later he won a AAU three mile event with another world record of 13:36.

Lawrence returned to America where he became an American citizen in 1980. He formed the Al Lawrence Running Club in Houston that remains today (June 2014).

OCEANIA ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

President Jim attended this wonderful athletic event and guess what he met up with a champion British Athlete Lord Sebastian Coe. What a wonderful experience. Lord Coe told the Cairns Post that he loved the Oceania Games, they were up to a high standard with guys running 20 seconds and a bit for 200m and girls running 11 seconds and a bit for 100m. Cairns is a part of the World I'm at home with because I lived in Australia for a few years. But this is my first visit to Cairns.

It is vital that young athletes experience this competition. Lord Coe was of the strong view that young athletes form good coaching relationships and be patient with achievement. He said that he joined a club when he was 11 but was 22 before he ran in an Olympic Games. Lord Coe indicated to the Cairns Post that the track at Barlow Park was a great facility bearing in mind that there has been talk of Cairns needing a rectangular stadium.



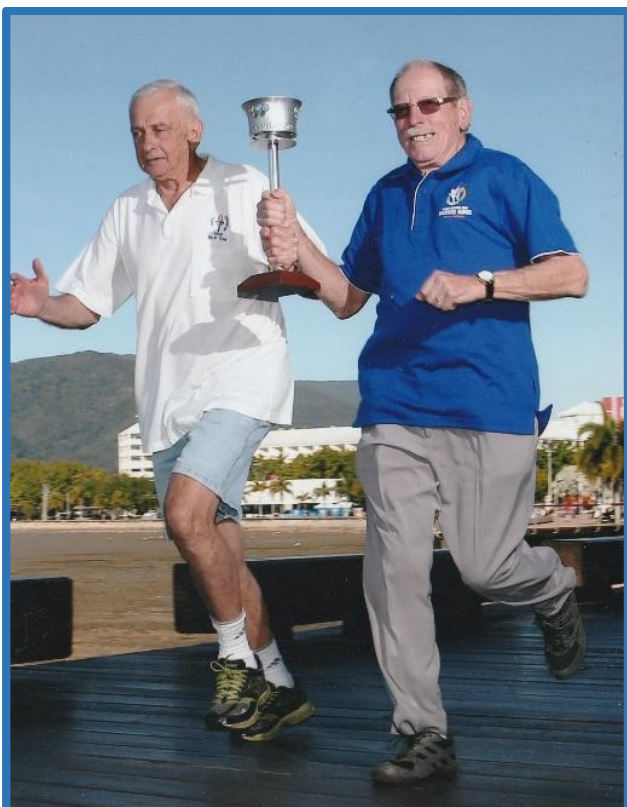
Lord Coe at Barlow Park Cairns. By courtesy of the Cairns Post.

56'ERS CORNER.

VISITS

Since the last newsletter we have received visits from two torchbearers from the South. Firstly Ralph Schubert (thirteen miles South of Gladstone) visited Cairns for the Barrier Reef Masters Games and competed and won the 200m event and Noel Azar (fifteen miles North of Gladstone) and wife Carla visited Mission Beach and Cairns for a holiday. Noel was one of 22 torch bearers who attended the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Melbourne Olympics in 2006.

The executive members were able to meet up with Ralph and Noel (Jim with Ralph and Jim ,Margaret and the editor with Noel) and some super tales were swapped. Ralph competed in the 60m event and was beaten by another 85 year old and he was mightily dissapointed but he made up for the defeat in the 200m event when he reversed the places. He and President Jim were photographed on the Cairns esplanade carrying the 1956 Olympic Torch.



What a great opportunity.

The executive with an apology from Secretary Bill had lunch with Noel and Carla at the Cairns RSL and were photographed at the Torch Relay monument on the Cairns Esplanade.



The editor, Margaret Cochrane patron Jim Vallely president and torch runner Noel Azar at the torch monument on the Cairns Esplanade.



The editor, president and Carla and Noel Azar at the torch monument.

Michael van Assche's Relay (Twelve miles South of Ballarat) Extracts from the 'G Time' the newsletter of the MCG.

'At 4 o'clock on a dark November morning I set off with mum in my trusty Peugeot along the Geelong-Bacchus Marsh road hoping to arrive in good time at the location where I was to carry the torch. I left the car with mum at the finish point of my one-mile designated route.

In the distance I spotted three Army trucks that were carrying equipment for the torch bearers as well as the stand-in athlete in case one of the selected torchbearers was unable to run.

On reaching me, they stopped and thrust a torch with its gas tablet into my hand. I had to hold it out straight well away from my body as I ran because sparks flew back into my face.

I recall the road being lined up with up to 30 children and parents who had woken early and were still in their dressing gowns just to see me and other runners as the sun rose. I ran from 6.36 am to 6.42 am precisely. We had been trained to make sure we completed the one mile in six minutes, no more or no less.

Once my leg of the torch journey was completed, I was presented with a medal, received a 'well done' tap on the shoulder and that was it. Simple as that. I duly drove home with my mum, quietly satisfied with my contribution to such a huge event.'

Michael was chosen for the relay because he was an established long distance and cross country runner who competed regularly for Old Xaverians Athletic Club and was known to the organizers. Later from 1979-1982 he competed Big M marathons. He is pictured second from the left in the finish of one of those marathons.



Michael van Assche completing the Big M Melbourne Marathon. He is pictured second from the left in the shade. He didn't win but also was not last.

Michael's involvement in the 1956 Olympics was not limited to his memorable torch run. As an official for the modern pentathlon, he had the important role of an attacher-recorder. This consists of a fascinating range of tasks. In the fencing event, he recorded 'hits' to the fencer. In

the cross country running it was falls that occurred, in the swimming, times swum, in the equestrian section fences hit or not hit.

Michael's official uniform gained him access to other events. He witnessed Dawn Frazer and Murray Rose's gold medal triumphs. He also took a special interest in John Landy's 1500m campaign in 1956 as John is a cousin of his wife.

Although Michael hails from Melbourne he is of Belgian descent. His grandfather who lived in Assche (close to Brussels) migrated in 1880 and married a former chief justice's daughter (Mr. Justice Holyrood).

Michael has had a long career in town planning. He was involved in the installation of lights in both the Sydney Cricket Ground and the MCG.

He has been a member of MCG for a period of 52 years.

SOME ENJOYABLE WORDS OF WISDOM

Every flower is a soul blossoming in nature.
(From the ABC)



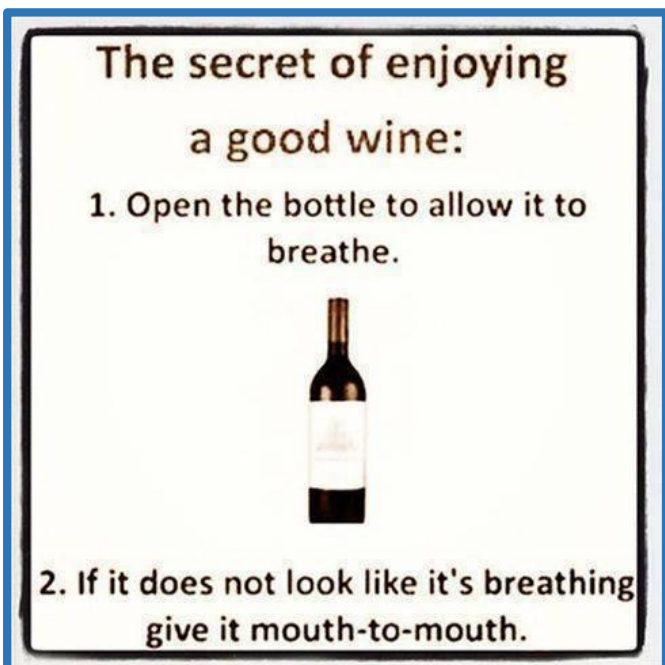
Life is too short to drink bad wine.

The easiest way to let yourself down is talk
yourself up.

**A WONDERFUL ADVERTISEMENT FOR A TAYLOR
AT JERILDERIE. (from Jim Vallely).**

Don't be alarmed! We are not here to rob you
but to stitch you up. (Ned Kelly country).

JOKER'S CORNER



An Irishman's first Drink with his son

On reading an article last night about fathers and sons, memories came back to the time I took my son out for his first pint.

Off we went to our local pub only two blocks away from the cottage.

I got him a Guinness. He didn't like it so I drank it.

Then I got him a Kilkenny's, he didn't like that either, so I drank it.

Finally, I thought he might like some Harp Lager! He didn't. I drank it.

I thought maybe he'd like whisky better than beer so we tried Jameson's, nope.

In desperation, I had him try that rare Redbreast, Ireland's finest. He wouldn't even smell it.

What could I do but drink it!

By the time I realized he didn't like to drink, I was so under the weather I could hardly push his pram back home.

QUICK INTERNATIONAL REPLY

Dean Rusk JFK's secretary of state was in France in the early sixties when De Gaulle decided to pull out of NATO. De Gaulle said he wanted all US military out of France as soon as possible.

Rusk responded 'Does that include those who are buried here?'



Kind Regards

Dennis M Stevenson

menafalls1@bigpond.com

IMPORTANT NOTICE**The Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the 56ers Olympic Torchbearers Club Inc 1A31083 will be held on SATURDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2015 at the CAIRNS RSL, 115 The Esplanade, Cairns, commencing at 11.30PM (← please note change on previous year)

Business:

- 1) Receiving all relevant club statements:
 - a. Management Committee Report
 - b. Financial Statements
- 2) Election of Management Committee
- 3) General Business

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Annual Anniversary Lunch will take place commencing at 12.30pm at which wives and guests are welcome.

Lunch can be individually purchased along with tea/coffee/drinks from the counter.

To help make suitable arrangements, could you please either: ring or email advice of your attendance, Bill Cummings 40312888, admin@56ers.org.au, or post back the slip below, PO Box 2148, Cairns.

The 56ers Olympic Torchbearers Club Inc

PO Box 2148, Cairns QLD 4870

We will be attending the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 7th November 2015

Number (wives/guests are welcome): _____ Name: _____

Tel No: _____

Please reply before 6th November

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

The membership fee is now due. This was unchanged at the last AGM so still stands at \$10 per annum.

EFT: Bank details for electronic funds transfer : Bendigo Bank BSB: 633-108 Account:117343277

Account Name: 56ers Olympic Torchbearers Club Inc.

(or) Post (tear off remittance below for cheque / money order / cash)

The 56ers Olympic Torchbearers Club Inc

Secretary/Treasurer

The 56ers Olympics Torchbearers Club Inc.

PO Box 2148, CAIRNS, QLD, 4870

Attached please find annual subscription of \$10.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____