

THE TORCHBEARER

NEWSLETTER 59

"56ers Torchbearers Club Inc"

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President's Comments

Greetings Torchbearers and Partners

On behalf of the 1956 Torchbearers Club I would like to convey our deepest sympathy to the family of Ross Cavallaro who sadly passed away in early May. Ross resided at Mossman and was a regular and popular face at our Annual General Meetings.

As a number of our members reside along the eastern seaboard between Bowen and Lismore I would sincerely hope Cyclone Debbie and its following rain depression spared you from major damage. Cairns and Townsville dodged a bullet as it could quite easily have been us in the firing line, having to rebuild at our age does not bear thinking of.

On a lighter note our two young assisted athletes have been going great guns. Montanna McAvoy was in stellar form at the recent National Titles in Sydney, winning 2 gold medals. 1 in the 3,000 metre flat race and the other in the 2,000 metre steeple chase, recording national records in both events placing her number 1 in the world rankings for a junior (under 18) at the steeple chase. Considering that she has yet to turn 17 is quite remarkable.

John Dodds, a junior took on the big boys in the open high jump finishing a very creditable third beaten only by two Olympians who competed at Rio. John is well on course to produce the goods as high jumping is a very technical event and he is fine tuning his skills as most high jumpers usually peak in their mid-twenties.

I won't take up any more space as I know Dennis has a mountain of information to tease you with.

All the very best of health

Regards
Jim Vallely
President.



FORMER ATHLETES OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Mildred 'Babe' Didrikson

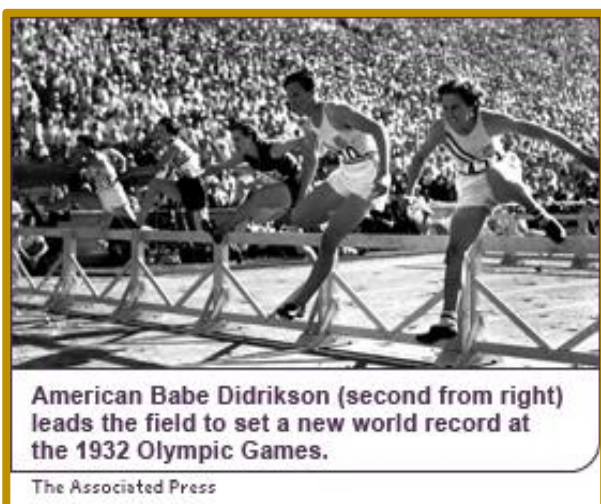
Mildred Didrikson competed at the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1932. She won the 80m hurdles and the javelin and was placed second in the high jump.



Bebe Didrikson.

Mildred Didrikson as a young person was a 'tomboy' type and rode rough shed over the ladies at the 1932 Olympics at Los Angeles. In coming second in the high jump she was beaten by fellow Olympian Jean Shiley on a jump-off but both women were credited with a world record of 5 ft. 5 inches. One report that was made, indicated that Didrikson was beaten because she was ruled to have used an incorrect technique.

Didrikson was a gold medallist in the 80 m hurdles.



Her second gold medal was in the javelin event with a throw of 143 ft. 4 inches.



Following the Olympics she became a champion golfer and completed the grand slam of the three women's majors in 1950. She had a museum constructed containing memorabilia of her significant sporting prowess.



She also had a sporting field named after her.



She married George Zaharis in 1938. She developed colon cancer and passed away from this ailment in 1956.

Bob Mathias

Bob Mathias won two Olympic Decathlon titles. At London in 1948 at the age of 17 and in the 1952 Helsinki Games.

Mathias in 1948 was an unknown high school track competitor in Tulare, California. He excelled in three events, hurdles, high jump and discus, so his coach suggested that he compete in the decathlon with an eye to the 1952 Olympics. He had never held a javelin or pole vaulted but he liked the idea and began training. He progressed at an astonishing rate and in summer he won the United States decathlon title and instead of waiting until 1952 he represented his country at the 1948 London Games. There are 5 events held on day one and 5 events on day two and at the end of day one he was placed third behind Enrique Kistenmacher from Argentina. Kistenmacher told Mathias that

mathematically you cannot beat me. But his mathematics failed him because after the hurdles and discus the American was in first place. He added to his lead with solid performances in the pole vault and javelin. He completed 12 hours of competition at 11:00 pm with the 1500m run. The 17 year old had won a gold medal.



One couldn't believe that Mathias grew up anaemic.





Bob Mathias on the victory stand receiving the decathlon gold medal at the Helsinki Games.

Following the Olympics Mathias enrolled at Stanford and played football. During Stanford's win over USC in 1951 Mathias ran a 96 yard touchdown run.

But as 1952 drew closer he concentrated on preparations for the Olympic decathlon events. At Helsinki the heavily favoured Mathias led an American sweep of the decathlon and broke his own record for total points.

He retired after the 1952 games undefeated in decathlon competition. He was the youngest athlete to win an Olympic gold medal and the only athlete to win two consecutive Olympic decathlon events. In 1961 he entered the US House of Representatives from California.

NORMAN ALFRED MAY



Composed and submitted by Ron Royes (20 miles north of Ingham).

Members will recall the first part of the story of Norman May in NL 58. Ron Royes brilliant story of Norman May now continues.

May's special 2.5 hours remembrance television broadcast from Munich Germany in 1972 following the assassination of several Israeli athletes was memorable. More so when one knows he was celebrating following the completion of the Games swimming events. He had returned to the Olympic village in a rather inebriated condition (his words) very late and had actually heard the gunshots but did not realize at the time what was happening. He was awoken by his television producer at 5.00am and told he was required to perform the live broadcast of the remembrance service for Australia.

May was the host of the ABC Sportsman of the Year television programmes for 20 years. The show was produced live in front of an audience. It was not uncommon for him to do ten straight interviews without any break before the announcement of the winner. His only script was the names of the people he had to interview. There were

no auto cues or prompters, as happens in modern day television.

He possessed a very retentive memory which offset his eye disability. He was a master of the *ad lib*.

Norman May retired from full time work with the ABC in February 1984 after 26 years of service. He subsequently worked as a freelancer on special assignments.



Norman May with Jacqueline Lawrence (K-1 Beijing 2008 silver medal) at an Australian Olympic Team fund raising appeal Sydney 2010.

He did not marry, probably because he was his mother's only carer until he was 54 years. Following her death in 1982, he moved from Curl Curl to Sydney's eastern suburbs at Bondi.

One of Norman Mays best friend was Arthur Denovan a Brisbane based work colleague. Similarly to May Denovan was also born in 1928 and did not enter the marriage stakes. They first met at an ABC Training Course in the late 1950's. They covered many Olympic and Commonwealth Games, together even extending to annual holidays mainly at the

Gold Coast at Broadbeach where Denovan owned an apartment. ABC staffers affectionately called them **The Odd Couple** after an American television comedy show of the same name.

Norman May was awarded an **AOC (Order of Merit)** in 1989 and the **Olympic Order** in 2000. He was inducted into the Australia Hall of Fame in 2004 and appointed an **Order of Australia (AO)** on the 26th January 2009.

To be continued.

56'ERS CORNER.

Members will recall the great story in NL 58 of the Olympic Torch passing through Proserpine by Ernie Rowe. The story continues with further submissions by Ernie and comments by the Proserpine Guardian.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PROSERPINE GUARDIAN

8TH JUNE 1956.

Les Johns won the Olympic Torch Bearers trial mile run at Saturday's Sports in the good time of 4.45 minutes and three seconds. It was a bad track having been bumper disced and rolled only the previous week and was very dusty. Young Les is cut out for a distance runner said one of the officials on the day for selection. Given a good trainer and spiked shoes, in time he could turn out to be a four minute miler. Lex Hughes came second and Norm Gray third. A list of the runners was included, Les

Johns ran 17 miles south of Proserpine, E Gray 25 miles south and L Hughes terminated at Yalbaroo. The author of the article Ernie ran 7 miles south of Proserpine.



Ernie Rowe looking back to where he received the torch one mile back on the old Bruce Highway.

16th NOVEMBER 1956.

One of the most animated crowds ever to assemble in Proserpine greeted the arrival of the Olympic Torch in Main Street on Sunday afternoon. Kevin Bauer of Bowen was the last runner in from the north, with James Casey setting off a few minutes after the scheduled time of 5.45 pm.

However the Proserpine runners had no trouble in making up the lost time. In fact they had to be held by the official car at several points on the run to Yalbaroo, as they were getting ahead of the schedule.

On the torch arrival in Proserpine it was received on the dais by the Shire Chairman Cr. W A Pepper with members of the council staff Miss Betty Baker and Kay Muller attired as Greek Maidens, Girl

Guides bearing an Australian flag were also stationed at the dais.



Repeat photo of the Proserpine runners and the Greek Maidens Betty Baker and Kay Muller.

There was a tremendous crowd at the Golf Club that evening for a barbeque, drinks and fellowship.

19th December 2016.

Mayor Andrew Willcox welcomed torch runners and guests to the 60th anniversary celebrations. There was a number of apologies. Including one of the 1956 Greek Maidens. 'How great is today to be celebrating with you the diamond Jubilee of the Torch Relay in 2016 of your historic feat of conveying the Olympic Flame from Cairns to Melbourne to start the 1956 Olympic Games on the 22nd November which was officially opened by the Duke of Edinburgh. The 1956 Olympic Torch Relay was the first in Australia and indeed the first in the Southern Hemisphere, and now takes its place in Australia's sporting history. As you would know, to qualify, participants had to be able to run 1 mile (1.61 km) in 6 minutes and the relay was

not open to women or professional sportsmen.

A total of 2831 torchbearers carried the torch 24 hours a day down the Eastern coast line for 13 days. An amazing privilege for you. I know you must have great memories of your run on that day-11th November 1956-when you carried your torch, when you ran that mile, and when you received that bronze medallion.

I'm sure it's a memory that virtually stays with you forever especially the honour of selection and the contribution each of you experienced as Torchbearers for the very first Olympics in Australia plus your special mateship with each other of 60 years ago.

Ernie thank you very much for that wonderful contribution. DMS.

JOKERS CORNER

This joke was voted the best Scottish Short Joke

A kiltie walks into a Glasgow library and says to the pretty librarian, "Excuse me miss, dey ye hae ony books on suicide?"

To which she stops doing her tasks, looks at him over the top of her glasses and says, "Bugger off, ye'll no bring it back."

The slapping lie detector robot

A father buys a lie detector robot that slaps people when they lie. He decides to test it out at dinner one night. The father asks his son what he did that afternoon. The son says, 'I did some homework.'

The robot slaps the son.

The son says, "Okay I was at a friend's house watching movies."

Dad asks, "What movie did you watch?"

Son says, "Toy story."

The robot slaps the son.

Son says, "Okay we were watching porn."

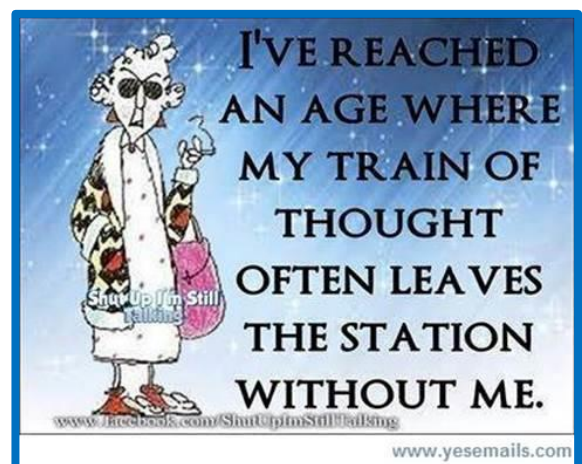
Dad says, "What at your age I didn't even know what porn was."

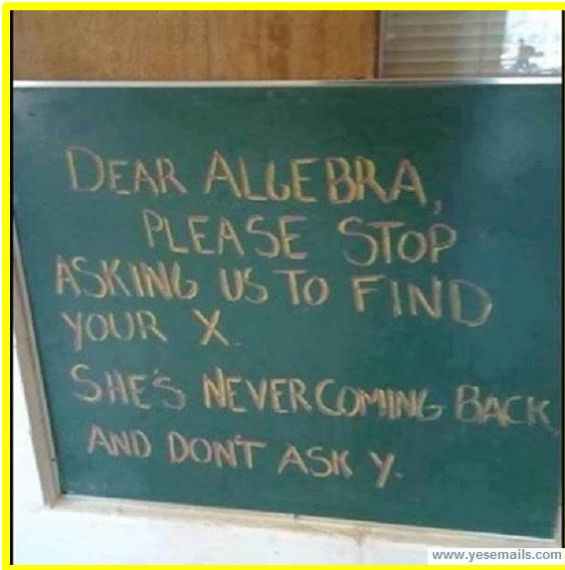
The robot slaps the father.

Mom laughs and says, "Well, he certainly is your son."

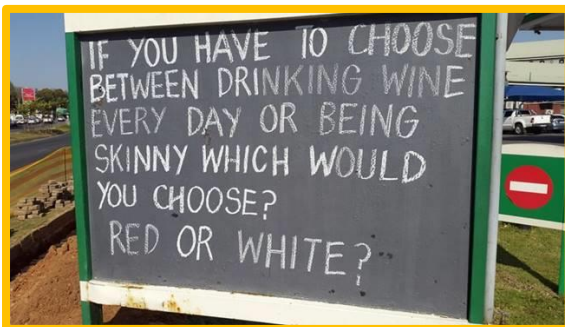
The robot slaps the mother.

A notice appeared in the local press, **Robot for sale.**





Algebra-ugh!



I will have red please.

HONESTY



Our teacher asked what my favourite animal was and I said 'Fried Chicken.' She

said I wasn't funny but she couldn't be right because everyone else laughed.

My parents told me to always tell the truth. I did. Fried chicken is my favourite animal.

I told my dad what had happened and he said my teacher was probably a member of PETA. He said they loved animals very much. I do too. Especially chicken, pork and beef.

Anyway my teacher sent me to the principal's office. I told him what happened and he laughed too. Then he told me not to do it again.

The next day in class my teacher asked me what my favourite *live* animal was. I told her it was chicken. She asked me why, so I told her you could make them into fried chicken. She sent me back to the principal's office. He laughed again and told me not to do it again.

I don't understand. My parents taught me to be honest, but my teacher doesn't like it when I am.

Today my teacher asked me to tell her what famous person I admired most.

I told her 'Colonel Saunders'.

Guess where the hell I am now?



Kind Regards

Dennis M Stevenson
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"The Running Scotsman"