

Chapter 13

Called to Higher Service

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Vernon McConchie (1980-1981)</i>	350
<i>David Stockman (1980-1991)</i>	350
<i>Bruce Knox (1992-1997)</i>	351
<i>Helen Robertson (1989-1991)</i>	351
<i>Greg Adams (1996-2003)</i>	352
<i>Duncan McKenzie (Hon. Member 1984-1998)</i>	352
<i>Jack Nankervis (DG at Charter)</i>	353
<i>Dick Sheridan (1990-1997)</i>	353
<i>Keith Glover (Hon. Member 1986-2006)</i>	354
<i>Ron Carnell (1980-2008)</i>	354
<i>Geoff Clark (1980-1991)</i>	355
<i>Max Hunter (1984-2009)</i>	355
<i>Ian Taylor (1995-2009)</i>	356

Called to Higher Service

At the time of writing (February 2010) we record, with many fond memories, the passing of the Rotarians who, at the time of their deaths, were either members of the Club, were recently retired members, or had close Rotary relationships with our Club.

We also record the passing of Jack Nankervis who was District Governor and who presented our charter in May, 1980, and his D. G's Special Representative, responsible for the formation of our Club, Duncan McKenzie.

Vernon McConchie

A Charter Member of the Club, Vern died on 21 August 1981. Vern had had illness for much of the latter part of his lifetime and only shortly before his death was being assessed for possible heart surgery.

Vern was a delightful member and a true friend who always participated fully. He frequently spoke of his career as a chemist in the paper industry and of his son asking of him if his work was FUN. This indicates why Vern always had fun and gave more than most of his time and effort because both were to be cruelly limited.

The writing awards established with the then Greythorn HS, now part of Balwyn HS, were renamed the Vern McConchie Awards in his memory.

David Stockman

It is only when we lose a mate that we realise the gap that has been created. That "straight to the point tell it as it is personality" David Stockman, who was a Charter Member, died on 9 September 1991.

A plumber by trade, in later years he worked as Caretaker at Fintona Girls' School.

David was Fellowship Director in the first year of the Club, followed this in 1982-83 as Community Service Director and was Treasurer for the three years from 1988 to 1991.

David was always first to volunteer or to be part of any project and his valued service was recognised by the Club naming him a Paul Harris Fellow in 1989.

David was one of those rare people of whom it could be said that we were all the richer for having known and been part of his life.

Bruce Knox

Professor Bruce Knox died on 10 August 1997 after a heart attack, while on holiday in Queensland, after a period of recuperation following a previous attack. It was no surprise that over 300 people gathered for his memorial service. His participation in Rotary was but one part of his busy life of academia, family, church and travel. His life touched many and the brief eulogies from his family and associates indicated the esteem in which he was held.

To us, Bruce was the modest, patient, gentle man with an infectious laugh, a soft Scottish voice and a glass of red wine never too far away and he participated actively in so many of our projects. Following his first heart attack, he regaled us with a detailed account of the high-tech treatment he received in Epworth Hospital. We envied his single-mindedness as he regularly exercised to shed the extra kilos and we listened attentively as he spread the gospel of low fat healthy living.

Bruce was inducted into our Club on 14 May 1992 having previously been a member of the Rotary Club of Melbourne. In his academic life as Professor of Botany at Melbourne University and as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, he was a highly respected researcher, writer and educator. He wrote a benchmark textbook "Biology" and over 240 research papers delivered nationally and internationally.

Helen Robertson

In 1998, Helen was referred to our club as a prospective member keen to become involved in community service. After visiting on several occasions, she was finally persuaded to join what she described as a "boysey club" and was inducted into the Club on 30 July 1998. She participated in club activities and thoroughly enjoyed a fishing weekend with the Club shortly after joining.

An inherently quiet professional person, Helen had established her own business as an interior designer and had won the contract to redecorate the Tullamarine Airport lounges for QANTAS. Regrettably, not long after this, she was diagnosed as having cancer. Such was her positive mental attitude that she decided to fulfil a long held wish to visit Antarctica and, in February 2000, she flew to South America and sailed south on a Russian ship out of Chile. It was a great experience, notwithstanding her poor health while on board. Her photos of the trip were stunning.

On her return, Helen's health continued to deteriorate and as a result she was an infrequent attendee at club meetings and was granted leave of absence for health reasons.

We were all distressed to learn of her continuing cancer treatment and of her death on 21 March 2001, at the age of 51, ending a young life far too early. Two comments from the tributes in *The Age* best sum up our feelings: "I am part of all that I have met" and "Grieve not that I die young; is it not well to pass away when life has lost its brightness."

The Club learned later that Helen had left a bequest of \$2,000 in her will to The Rotary Foundation.

Greg Adams

Greg, who joined the club in 1998, was one of our younger members. He was affectionately known as “Grizzly”, yet he was a gentle giant of a man and an enthusiastic Rotarian, whose role in the club included Chairman of the Fellowship committee and Counsellor for one of our overseas Rotary Exchange students.

Many members will remember Greg for his part in a skit at the club with Judy Reddish and others when the zip in his old-style swimming costume gave way to reveal a large part of his hairy chest – much to the amusement of those present.

Greg was a keen rugby follower, but really enjoyed being the goal or boundary umpire for his son Rory’s Aussie Rules matches.

Having helped out as a racing mechanic before he came to Victoria from New South Wales, Greg was an avid “rev-head” and enjoyed volunteering to assist at the club’s catering activity at the Grand Prix, where he was entitled to free entry after his work was finished.

His interest in cars led to his employment as Manager, Motor Claims with Allianz Ltd.

On 20th April 2003, the Club was stunned by the news of Greg’s sudden death in a car accident as he was returning home from a motoring event in Geelong.

Duncan McKenzie

Affectionately known as the “Father” of our Club, Duncan was a Charter Member and Past President of the Rotary Club of Balwyn and was the District Governor’s Special Representative with responsibility for the formation of the Rotary Club of North Balwyn.

Duncan was a tower of strength in our formative years and set for us the pattern of “enjoy yourselves as you enjoy Rotary”. On many occasions Duncan was very proud and outspoken about his admiration for the Rotary Club of North Balwyn and its achievements and, although he really did enjoy the fun and fellowship, he was very serious about his Rotary.

Of the many people we have named as Paul Harris Fellows, Duncan McKenzie was the first and this took place in May 1984.

After retiring from the Rotary Club of Balwyn and moving to his property at Bolinda to breed his beloved Clydesdales, Duncan was invited to become an Honorary Member of our Club and did so on 18 October 1984. He retained this membership until his death on 29 March 1998.

Duncan was hospitalised on several occasions and underwent heart surgery. However, in all his activities relating to family, business, community and Rotary he subscribed totally to the Rotary theme of “Service Above Self”.

Jack Nankervis OAM

There was a special relationship between Jack and the Club dating from 1979-80 when, as District Governor, he made the decision to charter the Rotary Club of North Balwyn.

Jack was very proud of the North Balwyn Club and stated that "The Rotary Club of North Balwyn has become one of the most vibrant and active Rotary clubs in Australia". From that time until his death, Jack and Marj never missed the opportunity to participate in special meetings or activities at the Club. Jack epitomised 'Service above self'.

Apart from being a husband, father, humanitarian, soldier, intelligence officer, businessman, sportsman and churchman, he was a passionate Rotarian. He was recognised as a Paul Harris Fellow (Ruby), the equivalent of seven Paul Harris Fellow recognitions, received the Rotary International Service above Self Award, The Rotary Foundation's Citation for Meritorious Service and Distinguished Service Award. Through his vigour, knowledge and commitment to the Rotary Foundation, hospitals were equipped, schools were built, medicine was distributed and fish farms were constructed.

Jack was dedicated to literacy programs throughout Asia and Oceania. He was also passionate about the Rotary International Literacy Program and made ten visits to Bangladesh and elsewhere to introduce the program.

His outstanding contribution to Rotary and to the community was acknowledged when both he and Marj, who provided constant support to him, were awarded the Commonwealth Senior Achiever Medal in 1999. In October 2001, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his work for Rotary and many other community organisations. It was a great loss to Rotary and to the Club when Jack passed away after a long illness on 13 July 2002.

Dick Sheridan

Dick was proposed as a member by PP Clive Hughes and was inducted on 18 January 1990. He was the former head of AMP Property Division and also held several senior positions with the Business Owners and Managers Association.

Like so many of his fellow Rotarians, Dick was a keen golfer and, as a member of Green Acres Golf Club, enjoyed fellowship with other North Balwyn Rotarians there.

Dick will be long remembered as the proposer of International Toasts when he introduced a weekly toast to obscure International "something-or-other" Day in some equally obscure country. He demonstrated his dry sense of humour and his dedication to fully research the subject of the toast.

Dick resigned from the Club on 30 June 1997. Sadly, he died in December 2003.

Keith Glover

In 1985-86, Keith was master of ceremonies of a District 9800 Conference in Canberra for the third time. At that conference, Past District Governor Jack Nankervis awarded him a Paul Harris Fellow for his outstanding support and contribution to Rotary.

As he and his wife Gwyneth lived in North Balwyn, our Club also considered him for membership. However, in those days, the membership rules were much stricter than today and he was not eligible due to his position with the ABC which was not a management role.

Paul Fitz subsequently inducted him into the Club later that year as our first non-Rotarian Honorary Member. From that time on, Keith and Gwyneth became regular attendees at the Club's special events.

He is especially remembered for his fine chairmanship of dinner meetings, his expert handling of the role of Master of Ceremonies at District Conferences as well as many special events of the club. He was a frequent guest speaker at Rotary and Probus meetings.

Keith, the man with the golden voice, passed away on 3 February 2006.

Ron Carnell

A Charter member of this Club, Ron became Club secretary in our third year, and carried out his responsibilities outstandingly for ten years. Ron's record term as secretary set a very high standard for those who followed.

In recognition of his detailed knowledge of Rotary he was appointed the first Manager of the Victorian Districts Information Service in 1991 and continued in the role for another four years.

Ron was the first recipient of the President's Trophy – a trophy that was renamed "The Ron Carnell Presidents Trophy" in honour of his eightieth birthday and, in 1999, the Club named him 'Rotarian of the Millennium'.

He remained an active member of the Club until 2003 when he was forced to retire because of poor health. However, he continued to handle dinner meeting apologies for some years.

Ron pioneered the "Rotary Hour" radio program on 96.5FM that still continues to this day. He was a mine of information about Rotary.

Nothing pleased him more than coaching Rotarians and Rotaractors to victory or high distinction in keenly contested Rotary debates and quizzes. Ron was recognised as a Paul Harris Fellow for his outstanding service.

'Radio Ron', as he was affectionately known in the Club, died after a long illness on 25 August 2008.

Geoff Clark

Geoff was Charter Vice-President of the Club in 1980, which meant that he was also President-Elect. He subsequently became the second president of the Club in 1981-82.

Geoff is particularly remembered for his hilarious presidential acceptance speech.

Geoff was recognised as a Paul Harris Fellow and, along with our Club "Father" Duncan McKenzie and Charter President Stan Hibbert, helped establish the fellowship theme that became synonymous with the Rotary Club of North Balwyn.

After resigning from the Club, Geoff and Dorothy moved to Marysville where they lived for 15 years, Geoff rejoining the local Rotary club. Subsequently, they moved to Bendigo in order to be closer to health care and medical support.

Geoff died in Bendigo in July 2009.

Max Hunter

Max Hunter was a member of the Club for almost 25 years and was committed to the Rotary ideal of Service above Self. Max seldom sought the limelight, but his commitment was self evident.

His fellow Rotarians were aware of his contribution to the Club and its programs and activities, especially when, as a member of a three-man team, he went to the Solomon Islands to help build a school and pass on skills to the locals.

Max's younger daughter, Jenny, was the Club's third outbound exchange student, and Max joined the Club on Jenny's return from her year in Japan.

Max was a loyal member of the Club and was universally respected by all who had contact with him. Max was a distinguished Rotarian who was an active contributor to the Club's service and fellowship, and his work was acknowledged with a Paul Harris Recognition.

PP Clive Hughes was asked to nominate a member of the Club to join the board of Eva Tilley Memorial Home, a local residential aged care facility. Clive invited Max to represent us, and Max became a tireless worker for Eva Tilley where he was Honorary Treasurer for nearly fifteen years.

Max passed away on 17 July 2009 and Club members contributed to the purchase of a lasting memorial to him in the form of a painting of the foreshore at Blairgowrie that was presented to Eva Tilley in September 2009.

Ian Taylor

Ian was a member of the Club for fifteen years. He demonstrated values and standards to match those of the best Rotarians around the world.

Ian was a great family man, a lover of golf (a sport which he played extremely well) and was the quintessential Rotarian which was reflected in his commitment to the Rotary ideal of 'Service before Self'. His membership of service organisations began when he joined Apex in Western Victoria, working energetically for the community, displaying a propensity for fund-raising, and was appointed District Governor.

Ian joined our Club in 1995 where he made an enormous contribution. Much of his work was done without fanfare as he preferred mostly to work behind the scenes.

He is remembered as a fund raiser 'extraordinaire', for his efforts in the early days of the Grand Prix marshals' breakfasts, and the Hole in One Golf that preceded the annual Charity Golf Day. Ian also provided focus during development of the annual Christmas raffle, identifying and negotiating selling sites, obtaining permits, arranging rosters and selling tickets. Many thousands of the dollars the Club has provided for community projects can be directly attributed to his systematic and business-like approach to fund raising.

Ian never showed a desire to be president: his preference was to roll up his sleeves and get on with the job at the work face. His efforts were rewarded with two well-deserved Paul Harris Fellow recognitions.

Ian also enjoyed fellowship in the Club and both he and Pat were active participants in the social activities. During his last two years, Ian was Director of Club Service, and despite his declining health, he remained on the Board until the new Rotary year began – this was a measure of his determination to continue to serve the Club.

Ian died on 24 August 2009 following a long battle with cancer.

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