



Age is no Barrier



A History of Masters/Veterans Athletics in Australia



This page, from top: 3km steeplechasers proving age is no barrier; Karyne Di Marco; Don Quinn; Tom Hancock; Hugh Coogan; Tony Baker. Front cover, from top: Cliff Bould, Jack Pennington, John Gilmour; Peggy MacLiver, Marg Allison; Lyn Ventris; Heather Doherty; Kevin Solomon (yellow singlet, in Lahti field); Marie Kay.

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**A HISTORY of
MASTERS/VETERANS ATHLETICS
in AUSTRALIA**

**by
Bryan Thomas**

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A History of Masters/Veterans Athletics in Australia

Author: Bryan Thomas
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FOREWORD

As Australian Masters Athletics Inc (formerly Australian Association of Veteran Athletic Clubs) moved towards its 40th year of providing sound administration and competition at all levels for mature-aged athletes, it was agreed by the AMA Board at its meeting in March 2008 that its history needed to be consolidated and preserved whilst the memories of the founders of our great organisation were still sharp and the records from the early are still available.

Over the years several versions recounting the history of AAVAC have been produced and for these we are indebted to Jack Pennington OAM and the late Gloria Seymon. A further work by Jack Pennington has recently been published outlining 'The Evolution of Veteran Athletics 1966-1981' and with Jack's kind permission some of his material and several photographs have been included in this version of AMA's history, compiled by Bryan Thomas of ACT.

It has been a mammoth task and our thanks go to Bryan for the work he has done. He has researched and compiled the achievements of our state clubs and our national activities so that we now have a comprehensive and fascinating view of the growth of veterans/masters athletics in Australia. We are inspired too by the achievements of many of our notable athletes whose outstanding performances have made Australia one of the top countries in world competition.

Bryan also regularly contributes articles on Masters athletics activities in Australia to *Vetline*, the national magazine of New Zealand Masters Athletics, which reaches affiliates throughout the Oceania region.

As President of Australian Masters Athletics, I commend *Age is no Barrier* to you as a fascinating read.

Steve Lance
President
Australian Masters Athletics Inc
January 2011

INTRODUCTION

Age is no Barrier is my attempt to record the evolution of athletics for mature-aged persons within Australia. Therefore, it takes a national view and its main focus is on how the Australian Association of Veteran Athletic Clubs (AAVAC) (later Australian Masters Athletics) has influenced our sport.

This history seeks to describe how decisions made by our national association have affected the sport in general, and all of its participants. It describes major national and international competitions in which Australians have been involved and in so doing mentions some remarkable or significant performances by individual athletes and administrators.

As this history concentrates on the 'big picture' within Australia it does not dwell on the grass roots past of individual clubs, except where some special feature or activity at the local level has had, or could have had, an impact on the national scene.

Each state and territory club probably has a person or persons with the corporate knowledge and an enthusiastic interest in the history of their club and may have already written its history, or plans to do so in the future. That is the place for recording our grass roots history.

THE AUTHOR

My initial contact with veterans' athletics occurred in the early 1970s in the City of Hamilton, Canada when I was invited to volunteer as an official at the Ontario Masters Track and Field Championships held at McMaster University. I was assigned the long jump for older men. During the warm-up it was obvious most competitors could not reach the sand by jumping from the take-off board, so I called them together and suggested they might prefer to jump from the edge of the pit. All agreed, and the general comment was that it was 'a bloody good idea'. The performances and camaraderie of these mature aged runners, jumpers and throwers left an indelible and lasting impression on me. Over the next few years I watched a couple of Canadian friends, several years older than myself, participate in cross-country and road

aces and even in special indoor track races for men over 40 years-of-age at the Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.

It was during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games that on a platform of Munich Railway Station I accidentally met a couple of members of the Australian Veterans' team then touring Europe. Amongst the group, proudly wearing their bottle green blazers, I recognised Dave Power, Olympic medallist and world-class distance runner. I was thrilled to have a brief chat and wished him well for his new athletics career as a veteran athlete. Dave had been a hero of mine during my high school days in Wollongong, NSW. At the time I was an enthusiastic young middle distance runner and often witnessed and was inspired by Dave training on a local football oval or running along beaches.

Since returning home in 1974 I have enjoyed a long involvement with our sport, both as a participant and administrator at local and national level. I have been an active member of the ACTVAC since 1981. I was a committee member from 1982 to 1985, club president for 14 years (1986 – 1999) and granted life membership in 1999. I was AVAAC president in 1991 and 1992, and served as a national delegate at the WAVA General Assembly in 1987, 1989, 1991 and 1993. As a competitor I have participated at six WAVA/WMA Championships, all three World Masters Games conducted in Australia, five Oceania Championships and at all but three national championships since 1983.

Since standing down from the ACTVAC executive I have maintained a keen interest in the development, history and traditions of our sport. I have long been a regular contributor to the ACT club's monthly magazine *Vetrunner*, and since its beginning the annual *AMA Handbook* and more recently to *Vetline*, the official magazine of NZ Masters Athletics. In 2009 I accepted the challenge of writing this history.

JACK PENNINGTON'S CONTRIBUTION

In November 2007 the AMA Board of Directors accepted an offer by Jack Pennington to write a history of the beginning of the Masters/Veterans athletics movement in Australia. Ray Green, then AMA Director of Marketing, said in a letter to Jack: 'You are well positioned to undertake this role given your long involvement with the movement going back to its inception, your editing and writing of a masters journal for a number of years and your participation as an athlete, mentor and patron'.

Jack Pennington OAM, born December 1922 and Patron of the ACTVAC since 1994, has excellent credentials to record the early evolution of our sport. He has been involved with the veterans/masters movement from its beginning; he was a prominent middle distance runner, administrator, coach and writer. Jack was (and still is) a prolific writer. He maintained a regular correspondence with people abroad who were working towards establishing track and field for mature aged athletes, and edited and produced a national magazine, *The Veteran Athlete*, from 1971 to 1979. In 1972 he was involved in team selection and obtaining support for an Australian team that participated in the first international track and field championships for veterans (men over 40) in London and Cologne. He also participated in the inaugural WAVA Championships in Toronto 1975 and in two others, in Hanover 1979 and Christchurch 1981. Jack completed his manuscript *The History of the AMA: 1966 – 1981* in late 2008. This was then independently published by him in 2010 as *The Evolution of Veteran Athletics in Australia 1966-1981*. He has kindly given permission for his chapter titled *The Climacteric* to be reproduced as the major component of the first chapter in this new book.

Jack's contribution has been invaluable. Not only was he intimately involved in the establishment of veterans' athletics; he has a remarkable memory of events and personalities, and possesses an impressive collection of primary sources such as athletics magazines, handbooks, programs, result books, photographs, certificates and many letters and articles to support his views.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

A previous attempt to write our history was made in 1997 by Gloria Seymons, a talented NSW veteran athlete, who wrote *A History of the Veterans' Athletic Movement in Australia*. Gloria died in December of that year, several months before her thesis was published posthumously by AAVAC in April 1998.

I have made considerable use of *AMA Handbooks, Programmes and Result Books of AMA and WMA Championship*; publications such as *Veteris, Courier, Vetline*, both versions of *Veteran Athlete*, and club magazines, especially the ACTVAC *Vetrunner*. I had access to some *minutes and summaries* of AAVAC/AMA meetings. I have appreciated information provided by the clubs. The *internet* has been a most useful source; especially the official WMA, AMA and some club websites.

Special thanks to Michael Dwyer, Principal of the ACT University of the Third Age (U3A ACT), for proof reading the manuscript, attempting to identify spelling errors and incorrect grammar. Also thanks to Alan Wilson, a former librarian at Parliament House Library in Canberra and past secretary of the ACTVAC, who accepted the task to create an index and to Victor Waters, editor of the MAWA magazine *Vetrun* and the *AMA Handbook* for his efforts in designing and formatting the book.

My role in this project would not have occurred without the cajoling, encouragement and support of Lynne Schickert, the former AMA president and current Board member responsible for communications. Lynne also handled the collection of photographs.

Finally, thank-you to my wife Trish who put up with me spending many hours every week over the past few years sitting at the computer or digging into sources in order to write this history.

All the above have been enthusiastic participants in, and supporters of, our wonderful veterans/masters athletics movement over many, many years.

Bryan Thomas
January 2011

Abbreviations

AA – *Athletics Australia*
AAVAC – *Australian Association of Veterans Athletics Clubs (pre 2002)*
ACTVAC – *ACT Veterans Athletics Club Inc.*
AGM – *Annual General Meeting*
AIS – *Australian Institute of Sport*
AMA – *Australian Masters Athletics Inc (post 2002)*
AMG – *Australian Masters Games*
Board – *elected AAVAC or AMA Board of Directors*
IAAF – *International Association of Athletics Associations*
LOC – *Local Organising Committee*
Nationals or National Championships – *AAVAC or AMA Championships*
MAWA – *Masters Athletics Western Australia Inc (post 2003)*
NSWAAA – *NSW Amateur Athletics Association*
NSWMA – *NSW Masters Athletics Inc (post 2001)*
NSWVAC – *NSW Veterans Athletics Club (pre 2001)*
OAMA – *Oceania Association of Masters Athletics*
QMA – *Queensland Masters Athletics Association Inc (post 1998)*
QVAC – *Queensland Veteran Athletics Club (pre 1998)*
SAMA – *South Australian Masters Athletics Inc (post 2001)*
SAVAC – *South Australia Veteran Athletics Club (pre 2001)*
TMA – *Tasmanian Masters Athletics Inc (post 2001)*
VAAT – *Veteran Athletics Association of Tasmania (pre 2001)*
VMA – *Victorian Masters Athletics (post 2002)*
VVAC – *Victorian Veteran Athletics Club (pre 2002)*
WAVA – *World Association of Veteran Athletes (pre 2001)*
WAVAC – *Western Australia Veterans Athletics Club (pre 2003)*
WMA – *World Masters Athletics (post 2001)*
WMG – *World Masters Games*

Abbreviations used to identify members of state and territory veterans and/or masters athletics clubs: *Australian Capital Territory (ACT)*

New South Wales (NSW)

Queensland (Qld)

South Australia (SA)

Tasmania (Tas)

Victoria (Vic)

Western Australia (WA)

Chapter 1: Pre 1970s

A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT

The 'Running Boom' that infiltrated western society during the seventies was thriving in Australia where there existed a healthy jogging and fitness environment

The early 1970s witnessed a spectacular growth in jogging for fitness throughout Australia, and indeed the whole Western World. In 1962, Bill Bowerman, of the University of Oregon USA, visited New Zealand and was impressed by the number of older people jogging. Both Bowerman and New Zealand's Arthur Lydiard were world famous coaches of Olympic athletes and as such were influential in spreading the message of the benefits of jogging for people of all ages. In Australia at the time there were a small number of 'older men' and even fewer 'more mature women' (over 30 years-of-age) still competing with their local amateur athletics clubs. Within a few years some of these men would go on to be major players in the creation of the veterans' athletics movement within Australia and overseas.

Those who were not members of an athletics club but at the forefront of the growing popularity of jogging along footpaths trying to keep fit, were often faced with two difficulties – obtaining suitable clothing and sometimes confronting hostility from others. Unless one was a member of an athletics club finding suitable clothing for jogging was difficult. The standard attire for men was football shorts, old shirt and a pair of thin soled sandshoes; and for women it was worse as the sports clothing industry had not yet realised women also wanted to be active. Joggers were viewed by some as being eccentric and at times had to put up with stares, witty remarks and occasionally even verbal and physical abuse. But the social environment was changing. More people were increasingly concerned with health and fitness and some even wished to participate in sporting activities for longer. Another catalyst was that many parents, involved with the emerging Little Athletics movement, were introduced to the sport and some were even motivated to participate themselves.

JACK TELLS IT THE WAY IT WAS

Jack Pennington OAM (*refer to Acknowledgements*) has for many years been interested in researching and writing about the early history of athletics for mature aged persons. He believed that 1968 was a significant year in establishing the veterans' movement and titled his chapter on this period 'The Climacteric' as a critical turning point.

It is therefore appropriate that much of this chapter will be direct quotes from Jack's writing, for he is not only a respected authority but was also a significant and influential personality in this early period.

In the years before 1970 it was usual practice for top class sports people to retire soon after the age of 30, as reaction times become slower. In fact science can show that after the age of about 35years the oxygen uptake in maximal exercise reduces by about one per cent per year. This means energy available to muscle is also reduced by that amount. However, there were a few exceptions to the rule by some determined and obstinate men. For instance, in the 1920s a British born South African farmer, Arthur Newton, was dispossessed of his farm by the government. To bring attention to his plight, he trained for the Comrades Ultra Marathon held yearly in South Africa. At the age of 39 he not only won, but set the record, and repeated this every year from 1922 to 1927. In 1934 he also won the London to Brighton race in England at the age of 51. Later he set a World Record for the 100 miles, ran in Trans-Continental races across the USA and in Six-Day races on an indoor track in New York.

Jack Holden, a pre-war cross-country champion of England and Europe, not only resumed cross-country racing and represented England in internationals following WWII but at the age of 43 won the 1950 English, European, and Empire Games marathons.

In 1966, the UN World Health Organisation, produced a magazine called 'Condition' published in German by Meinrad Nagelle. He, with others, had formed a group of veteran road runners, called 'The Association of Veteran Long Distant Runners' under the German title IGAL. They competed in road races from 10km to the marathon in ten year age groups from the age of 40. Later it also reported that the first track competition for veterans was to start in San Diego U.S.A. in 1968 called 'US Masters Championship'. I contacted

Meinrad Nagelle and sent him a few results of Australian veterans who were still competing in open competition, like Wally Sheppard of Melbourne, Frank McCaffrey of Sydney, Cliff Bould in Perth and myself in Canberra.

Wally Sheppard was in his early forties and running sub-two minutes for 800m. Cliff Bould was nearing 50 and insisted on running the three and six miles and held up the program by being lapped several times, causing annoyance to officials. Cliff was also an official on the British Olympic teams of 1948, 1952 and 1956.

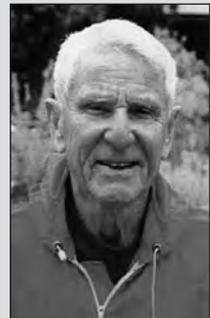
Frank McCaffrey was in the Australian Navy based in Nowra (NSW) where he formed the Nowra Athletic Club and was their running coach. He and I were in our late forties, running road and cross-country races. When I ran in Sydney we were rivals but he used to beat me. In 1965 Frank began producing a 100 page quarterly magazine called the 'Harrier Magazine' for which I became one of the feature writers. Geoff Watt (father of the Olympic cyclist Kathy), a distance runner in Melbourne, was also a writer. The 'Harrier' survived a few years and we believe it encouraged older runners to keep going.

In 1968 we were aware that IGAL advertised a 'World Best Marathon' in Baarn, Holland for men over 40 in ten year age groups. Frank McCaffrey participated and ran well. Later that year 'Athletics Weekly' reported there would be an American Masters Track and Field Championships in San-Diego, California to which Cliff Bould sent his entry. The organiser was a former English runner named David Pain, now an American lawyer, who invited Cliff to stay with him. He entered Cliff in the over 50 three and six miles and marathon, Cliff won all three. The following year, 1969, Cliff's publicity encouraged Col Junner and John Gilmour to join him in a three man Australian team. All three were still competing in the inter-club competition in Perth and this time John Gilmour won the US Masters three and six miles in the over fifty division.

Also in 1968, research into fitness by the USA Space Administration conducted by Air Force Major Kenneth Cooper MD and his medical team resulted in the book 'Aerobics' that became a best seller. The book based on many years of research into the fitness of Space-Administration staff of all ages, showed a comparison of the fitness of those who participated in a variety of sports. Using a total of 20,000 subjects it showed which sports used the most energy, which sports were the most efficient in using energy and which had the most beneficial effects on human health. The book led to about twenty million Americans of all ages taking up jogging, and even school children began



Their early drive and enthusiasm was the foundation of today's Masters/Veteran athletics. Clockwise from top left – Cliff Bould, Al Digance, Clem Green, John Gilmour leading Wal Sheppard.



running marathon distances until medical evidence caused this practice to become unpopular. The simple message was that 'Every body of any age should run or jog three kilometers three times per week and those who did more than that were doing so for reasons other than to maintain their health'.

This book began a revolution in the USA and brought about the concept of the Fun Run. But before then in the early 1960s in Auckland NZ, Arthur Lydiard, coach of Olympic champions Peter Snell and Murray Halberg, was employed to encourage office workers to become joggers. Earlier still, Percy Cerutti, coach of Herb Elliott, was also campaigning in an extrovert way in the 1950s by running marathons in his late forties and by making a public exhibition of himself especially at athletic meetings. He was an expert publicity seeker for his training camp at Portsea, and following Rome 1960, went on a lecture tour of the US with Herb. During lectures, Percy proved his fitness to show he was better than university students – even though he was well into his sixties. He told the audiences in no uncertain terms that they were 'fat and lazy'. He often appeared on television and wrote for magazines all over the world. In 1964 Cerutti lectured and demonstrated at the first national coaches conference at Narrabeen National Fitness Camp in Sydney. He was then 69 years-of-age and he showed how to run with a long stride and how intense training should be. At the following year's conference (1965), I was invited along with Ron Clarke to give the lecture on running.

The climate was therefore right for the conduct of Fun Runs in Australia, long before they became popular in Europe. Also during this period there were international athletic meetings in Melbourne which began to include a mile for men over 40. In 1968 and 1969 I competed along with Wal Sheppard and Pat Clohessy who was then teaching in Melbourne. The first time I lined up for the Veteran Mile the bloke next to me said 'I don't think we should be doing this' (I think he was concerned about his heart). These special Veteran Mile races were popular with the crowds.

Also during this time I was doing experimental training on a treadmill under the direction of the medical director and the Professor of Zoology, Alan Weatherley, at the National University (ANU) in Canberra. The professor had asked me to lend him my training diary which I had kept for 30 years and to commit to experimental training. In March 1969 I convened the local medical people to conduct a National Symposium on Fitness and Recreation in the A.C.T. During my talk I introduced Wally Sheppard and Max Van Apeldoorn (Max was running up to 100km per week at the age of 48. Two years earlier

he had been written off by a cardiologist and told to 'take it easy and keep warm'.) The lectures were published by National Fitness and the ANU under that title.

By the end of the decade the trend towards recognising that older men could safely participate in serious athletic competition was gradually becoming more acceptable. In 1969 Jack publicised the first Canberra Fun Run along the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. Later that year Australian Olympic and Commonwealth Games medallist Dave Power, now 40 years-of-age, ran in the IGAL World Veterans' 25km Championship in Germany. Also in 1969, Richard Nixon, USA President, gave the veterans' movement valuable credibility when he said in a letter supporting the 2nd US Masters Championships in San Diego: 'It gives men over 40 the opportunity to engage in athletic competition...Age should be no barrier in the pursuit of excellence'.

SAN DIEGO EXPERIENCE WAS CATALYST TO AN AMBITIOUS IDEA

The following year, Wal Sheppard travelled to San Diego for the 1970 US Masters Championships where he produced outstanding runs in both the half mile and mile races. His times of 2.03 and 4.39 were considered to be world best for 48 year olds. While in San Diego, David Pain, head of USA Masters Athletics and organiser of all three annual US Masters Championships, suggested to Wal that Australians should join the U.S. Masters tour of Europe which was planned to coincide with a visit to the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

Rather than link with the American team, Wal and others considered the exciting possibility of organising an independent Australian team to participate in Europe. So the seed was sown.

Wal Sheppard wound up a memorable year by being invited to be one of 12 runners, over 40 years-of-age, in a special veterans' mile. The Veterans' Mile was a feature event of the 'Record Breakers Track and Field Meet' at Melbourne's Olympic Park, 19 December 1970. The race was won by M40 Tom Worrell of Glenhuntly in 4.40.2 ahead of Wal 4.43.1 closely followed by another 48 year-old Les Perry in 4.43.9.

Chapter 2: 1971 - 1975

A FEW ENTHUSIASTS SOW THE SEEDS

A hectic era for Aussie veterans - a tour of Europe, two World Championships, five clubs and a national association established

Even before a club for veteran athletes was established in Australia, prominent NSW race-walker and secretary-manager of the Randwick Botany Sports and Social Club, Logan Irwin organised the first athletics carnival specifically for mature-aged men. This first NSW Championships, a full scale meet for men over 35 years-of-age incorporating all traditional track and field events, was held over the week-end 27-28 March 1971 at Hensley Field in Sydney. All events were conducted in four age categories: 35-39 years (designated as Juniors), then in ten year groups: 40-49 (Seniors), 50-59 (Masters) and over 60 years (Grand Masters). An interesting condition attached to a participant's entry requirements for these and other early veterans' championships, was that 'a Doctor's Certificate only required if you had not participated this season'. Wal Sheppard had driven up from Melbourne, not only to compete but also to advertise a proposed Australian veterans' tour to Europe next year, while Cliff Bould, encouraged by his experiences in San Diego a couple of years earlier, had flown from Perth.

The championships, were unanimously acclaimed a success. So much so that five of the most enthusiastic and influential participants; Wal Sheppard (Vic), Cliff Bould (WA), Al Digance (SA), Jack Pennington (ACT) and Frank McCaffrey (NSW) met with Logan and decided that the sport of veteran athletics should be promoted throughout the country. The meeting also agreed that because Jack was a writer (particularly on running, fitness and health matters) he should produce a newsletter in order to spread the good news.

Jack Pennington, who became patron of the ACTVAC in 1994 and later earned an OAM for services to athletics, had been involved with our branch of the sport from its very beginning; he was a prominent middle distance runner, coach and writer long before

the veterans/masters movement began. He was, and still is, a prolific writer on athletics and fitness, especially as it relates to people over 40 years-of-age. Jack had been a regular correspondent with a number of influential persons abroad (including David Pain of the USA Masters and Canadian Don Farquharson, WAVA president 1975-1987) as well as contributing articles to *Veteris*, the magazine of the Association of Veteran Athletics (UK), all of whom were working towards establishing track and field for mature-aged athletes.

Perhaps the most important vehicle in communicating to mature-aged athletes throughout Australia during the 1970s was Jack Pennington's magazine – *The Veteran Athlete*. Between 1971 and 1979 Jack edited and produced *The Veteran Athlete*. Although he wrote most articles, he had valuable support from fellow editors, Frank McCaffrey and Wal Sheppard, and input from a variety of credible national and international athletics and medical sources. In his editorial in the first edition Jack outlined the new magazine's philosophy. 'We are concerned primarily to promote running, which we consider every man's birthright. Not to be able to run is, in our opinion, an unfortunate condition and usually due to man's own neglect of an ability he was born with. Nevertheless, we shall from time to time report on other veteran activities which we consider to be of merit and interest.... We do believe that the medical profession is handicapped as they seldom ever see a fit human being....You are as old as you feel, and our Grand Masters (men over 60) look and clearly are, in the physical condition of men forty years younger. Fortunately many eminent medical researchers are having a look at what is different about veteran runners. Our numbers are growing, and so will their knowledge of us in particular and man in general'.

Thus 1971 witnessed the beginning of a successful publication aimed at Australian male runners over the age of 35. The first edition had 17 pages of local and international results, world rankings, a book review on the best seller *Aerobics*, a list of Australian athletes who had already paid their deposit for next year's European tour, a couple of articles relating to health and fitness, and of course an editorial. Because Jack wrote most content and even typed the stencils in readiness for printing on a

spirit duplicator, the cost of producing *Veteran Athlete* was kept to a minimum and for its first four years sold for 20c a copy. By 1978 *Veteran Athlete* had a circulation of well over 500 of which 300 were in Victoria. Despite its success as a means of keeping veteran athletes informed: and even after adding a more attractive cover, better quality paper and print, incorporating a couple of advertisements, increasing the cost to 35c a copy and receiving donations from several readers, financial difficulties and perhaps the heavy work load on Jack and his assistants caused its demise in 1979. Veteran athletics in Australia was fortunate in having such a knowledgeable and energetic scribe such as Jack to continuously and robustly push the issues that mattered most to the sport.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA, NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA ESTABLISH CLUBS

South Australia has the honour of being the first state to officially form a veterans' athletics club. In early 1971 Al Digance and Ron O'Neill, encouraged from afar by Victorian Wal Sheppard, discussed the idea of establishing a club for older athletes who at the time were participating in the regular Saturday afternoon inter-club competitions. Al, chairman of the South Australian Amateur Athletic Association (SAAAA) cross-country committee, was keen to have more competition for men over 40 in both South Australia and interstate. He arranged for persons interested in the concept to attend a meeting in his garage on 21 January. Within two weeks of this exploratory meeting the 11 attendees had drafted a constitution and forwarded it to the SAAAA. Then on 14 April 1971 another meeting was held at Al's home at which the 21 founding members voted in favour of forming the South Australia Veteran Amateur Athletics Club (SAVAAC). Three months later, 14 July 1971, the new club conducted its inaugural AGM in the Sportsman's Association Rooms on Greenhill Road, Adelaide. The meeting elected Alistair Gordon president and Al Digance as secretary treasurer.

Within a week of the South Australian decision Logan Irwin called a meeting at the Randwick-Botany Sports Club for 20 April at which 26 enthusiastic mature-aged athletes attended. Logan

outlined some of his reasons why a veterans' athletics club should be formed in Sydney when he said: "Many athletes, some in their mid 20s were contemplating retiring, most under the impression they couldn't compete against the young athletes successfully. I am convinced they would stay longer in athletics if competition was available in their age-groups to take the pressure off them." Having convinced those in attendance, the meeting agreed to form the Wirrinum Veteran Athletic Club and elected Denis Wilson and Logan Irwin president and secretary respectively. An interim committee decided upon a club badge (an hour glass with wings) and set about drafting a constitution.

Almost exactly seven months after the inaugural meeting the club's constitution was approved by the NSWAAA on 18 November 1971. The objectives of the new club as stated in its constitution were: 'To encourage and promote all amateur athletics, including jogging, for persons over 35 years-of-age, and provide competition and training for its members'. The Wirrinum Club was to be self sufficient by providing for its own competitions and awards but as it was a specialist club it could not compete as an identity in AA Association meets.

On learning of the establishment of the NSW club Al Digance of South Australia wrote in *Veteran Athlete*: 'We congratulate NSW for the formation of a veteran club. Our club was formed on the 14th April 1971. Will Victoria take up the challenge and form a third force?' He didn't have long to wait, for in November a steering committee met to investigate the possibility of forming a club in Victoria.

The sport of veteran athletics had enjoyed significant growth during 1971. The first athletics championships for men over 35 was conducted in Sydney, *The Veteran Athlete* commenced publication, veteran clubs were formed in South Australia and NSW while it was being talked about in Victoria, mid-week competitions were held in both Adelaide and Sydney, and many mature-aged runners were participating in the new phenomenon that were the community fun runs. The largest and most prestigious fun run was the Sydney City to Surf. The inaugural City to Surf, 9.4 miles from the Sydney Town Hall to Bondi Beach,

attracted over 2000 runners of which a number of men, and a few women were over 40 years-of-age. Frank McCaffrey wrote: 'The City to Surf of '71 will long be remembered as the greatest, most enjoyable, most publicised, most watched, most commented race in this city's history'.

The steering committee of Victorian veteran athletes that emerged from a meeting held on 29 November 1971 encouraged interested persons to attend a meeting at the Walkers Club in Albert Park, Melbourne on Monday 24 January 1972 with the aim of forming a Victorian Veteran Amateur Athletics Club (VVAAC). Mike Porter and Keith Routley were elected as the inaugural president and secretary/treasurer respectively. The new club hoped it would be permitted to participate in the existing graded AAU inter-club competition.

THE 1972 EUROPEAN TOUR

In October 1971 David Pain of the U.S. Masters International Track Club, and wife Helen, travelled to Europe to prepare for the 1972 tour that was to include athletics meets in London, Helsinki, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Cologne. Jack Pennington had been corresponding with both David Pain and Jack Fitzgerald of the Association of Veteran Athletics (UK) about the planned International Veterans' Athletics tour of Europe. This tour would include the first international track and field championships for veteran athletes (men over 40) at Crystal Palace, London and Cologne in Germany to coincide with the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

Jack Pennington and Wal Sheppard were involved in team selection and obtaining government support for an official Australian team to participate in this historic tour. They successfully convinced the Australian Amateur Athletic Union (AAAU) that they had assembled a team of athletes worthy of representing Australia. The team was granted permission to use the official AAAU badge incorporating the Australian Coat of Arms and the words 'International Veteran Athletics, Cologne 1972' beneath. They were also fortunate in receiving some government support and private sponsorship money enabling each member of

the team to be outfitted with a green and gold track suit. Team members purchased their own bottle green blazer on which the official badge was embroidered upon the upper pocket. The team looked resplendent.

The team, with the exception of John Gilmour (WA) who linked with the US team in Sweden, assembled in Sydney and flew to San Diego, California. Here the team participated in a warm-up meet at Bilbao Stadium against some of the local veteran athletes. Wal Sheppard was in excellent shape setting world best performances for an M50 in both the 800m and 1500m in 2.06 and 4.24.2 respectively.

On arrival in England the Australians were invited to an international cross-country race over 5 miles (8km) at Epping Forest, north of London. However, as most of the team would be racing on the track at Crystal Palace the following day, only 12 participated. John Gilmour (M55) was the best of the Australians finishing sixth outright in a field of 160.

Their next competition was a highlight of the tour, an international meet featuring the United States, Great Britain and Australia conducted over two days (24-25 August) at Crystal Palace. Thirty-eight Australians participated, winning six gold medals and one silver medal. Wal Sheppard was again one of the most outstanding athletes, setting new M50 world bests in the 800m (2.05) and 1500m (4.20).

The team then attended the Munich Olympics. Following the Games 48 Australians participated in the highlight meet of the tour, the International Athletics Championships for men over 40 years-of-age conducted over two days (13-14 September) at the ASV Stadium in Cologne, West Germany. The championships were a far cry from what they have since become. Competition was conducted in four 10 year age-groups; designated as Grade 1 for men born before 31 December 1932 (in modern terminology we would classify most of this group as being M40-49), Grade 2 those born before 31 December 1922 (M50-59), Grade 3 athletes were born before the end of 1911 (M60-69) and Grade 4 born before 31 December 1901 (M70+).

Although the track was cinders it was considered to be of international standard, and as it was only a two-day meet it was difficult for competitors to participate in more than one event. The 326 participants were made up of 123 West Germans, 110 from the USA, Australia 48, Great Britain 15, Canada 11, Sweden 9, France 4, Netherlands 3 and three other nations each with a sole representative. There were many prominent athletes amongst the competitors, including former Olympians and national champions. The Australian team included two Olympians and several British Empire/Commonwealth Games representatives. Dave Power ran both the 5000 and 10000m in the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games then in Rome 1960 won bronze in the 10000m, while Ray Smith finished 6th in the 50km race-walk in the Melbourne Games. Anton Tesija had been the Yugoslav throwing coach at the 1956 Olympics. He stayed behind after the Games, eventually settling in Canberra where he became involved both as a coach and a competitor.

Despite wet and cold conditions and competing under floodlights on a cinders track the Australians performed well, winning five gold, seven silver and two bronze medals across a variety of disciplines. Gold medals were won by Wal Sheppard in both the grade 2 800m and 1500m, John Gilmour grade 2 5000m, Tom Kelly grade 1 steeplechase and Gus Theobald grade 4 in the 10000m race-walk. Gus, at 75 years-of-age, was the oldest competitor at the championships and at the time had been a competitive race-walker for more than 40 years.

Three days later several Australians participated in the World Best Championships for veteran long distance runners held in Bensberg, about 20km from Cologne. This two day event (17-18 September) included a 5000m, 10000m and marathon again conducted in 10 year age-groups.

The tour came to an end in Bensberg. According to Jack Pennington: "It was a tour never to be forgotten and the championships in Cologne were reported as being the World Championship in the *New York Times*, the *London Guardian*, several West German newspapers and even in the *Canberra Times*". *Veteris*, the magazine of the Association of Veteran Athletics (UK), also

reported favourably on the historically significant events that had occurred in Europe during the late summer of 1972. 'When US and Canadian Masters, and Australian vets visited Europe in 1972 the move towards competition for men over 40 really took off. The visitors had already made progress at home and found that Britain had a number of well established veteran clubs. After the Crystal Palace Meet age-group competition had come to stay and at bigger meets the 10 year age classes should be split into five year divisions'.

OUR 1972 TRAILBLAZERS

It is important to identify the Australian men on the 1972 tour as trailblazers for the sport within Australia. This was the first Australian contingent of veteran athletes to participate in international track and field. All of the team were active members of Athletics Australia (AA) clubs, but over the decades since, fewer Australian veteran/masters athletes who compete at a World Championships are affiliated with an AA club. Many of this successful team returned home to become enthusiastic administrators promoting veterans' athletics throughout Australia.

All those listed below proudly wore the green and gold in Cologne, and all but ten also participated at Crystal Palace. Medallists in Crystal Palace (*London*) and *Cologne* are identified in *italics*. For most competitors each of the four age grades are almost equivalent to the modern format; for example most grade 1 competitors would nowadays be classified as M40-49, grade 2 as M50-59, and all grade 3 as M60-69 and grade 4 as M70-79.

Frank Bonecker (Vic) grade 1 middle and distance runs

John Bowles (Vic) grade 1 (*javelin silver medal in Cologne*)

Cliff Bould (WA) grade 2 distance runs

George Brain (Vic) grade 2 distance

Don Brodie (NSW) grade 1 (*110m hurdles bronze medal in Cologne*)

Bill Caudle (SA) grade 2 distance and steeple

(*3000m steeplechase gold medal in London*).

Earl Cook (?) grade 1 pole vault

Les Cotton (NSW) grade 1 long and triple jumps

Bill Coyne (?) grade 1 distance
Hal Dalheim (ACT) grade 2
(3000m steeplechase silver medal in Cologne)
Norm Duff (Vic) grade 1 distance
Bill Ford (Tas) grade ? race-walks and marathon
George Freeman (?) grade 1 distance
John Gilmour (WA) grade 2 (5km road race gold medal in London and 5000m gold medal in Cologne)
Arthur Gourlay (?) grade 2 (5000m bronze medal in Cologne)
Syd Hesketh (NSW) grade 3 distance
Laurie Hill (Vic) grade 1 distance and marathon
Rudi Hochreiter (Vic) grade 1 sprints and multi-events
Col Junner (WA) grade 2 distance
Tom Kelly (Vic) grade 1 (5km road race gold medal in London and 3000m steeplechase gold medal in Cologne)
Alex Lampard (SA) grade 2 (high jump silver medal in Cologne)
Rad Leovic (ACT) grade 1 sprints
Jim Liascos (SA) grade 1 sprints
Pat Manning (NSW) grade 1 sprints
Wally McCabe (WA) grade 1 distance
Frank McCaffrey (NSW) grade 2 distance and marathon
Harry Merkel (?) grade 2 throws
Mike O'Neill (Vic) grade 1 middle distance
Theo Orr (Vic) grade 1 middle distance and distance
Jack Pennington (ACT) grade 2 middle distance
(1500m and 5000m silver medals in Cologne)
Mike Porter (Vic) grade 1 race-walks and marathon
Dave Power (NSW) grade 1 distance
Bruce Russell (Vic) grade 1 sprints and middle distance
Wally Sheppard (Vic) grade 1
(800m and 1500m gold medals in both London and Cologne)
George Simpson (Vic) grade 3 (3000m steeplechase gold medal in London and silver medal in Cologne)
Ray Smith (Vic) grade 1 race-walks
Arch Southward (NSW) grade 3 distance
Jack Stevens (Vic) grade 2 middle distance
Anton Tesija (ACT) grade 3 (hammer throw silver medal in Cologne)
Gus Theobald (Vic) grade 4 (10000m race-walk gold medal in Cologne)

David Tooley (?) grade 2 distance
Peter Waddell (ACT) grade 1 race-walks
Geoff Warren (Vic) grade 1 (5000m silver medal in Cologne)
Tom Watson (Vic) grade 1 distance
George Wilson (Vic) grade 3 distance and marathon
Norm Windred (NSW) grade 1 sprints
Tom Worrell (Vic) grade 1 distance
Fred Wrightson (NSW) grade 3 (marathon silver medal in Cologne)
Ron Young (Vic) grade 1 (3000m steeplechase silver medals in both London and Cologne)

BACK HOME

On his return Jack Pennington reported in *Veteran Athlete* # 8 1973 that as there had been so many good performances in London and Cologne, some had been overlooked. He wrote: 'The daddy of them all was Gus Theobald of Victoria who won the M70 10km walk in 75min 45secs at the age of 75. Fred Wrightson of Sydney, aged 67, missed winning the M60 marathon by only 12 seconds in wind and rain recording 3hrs 56mins 15secs. Syd Hesketh also of Sydney had run 5,000m in 19m46s at the age of 67.



Jack Pennington in 1973

Anton Tesija from Canberra was placed second in the M50 hammer at the age of 59 years with a throw of 40.82m. This was done despite having an arm in a splint due to a ruptured bicep which he sustained a few days before leaving Australia. He had refused surgery rather than miss the tour'.

It was originally hoped the first Australian Veteran Championships would be held in Melbourne sometime around Christmas 1972. However, as a large team of masters athletes from the US were expected to visit Australia towards the end of next year, it was decided to conduct the inaugural championships while they were in Australia.

Less than three months after its formation, the Victorian Veteran Amateur Athletics Club conducted their first state championships at the Box Hill Track on 14 April 1973. The program was ambitious for a one day carnival as it incorporated four age-groups (35-39, 40-49, 50-59 and over 60 years) in most traditional track and field events.

The Wirrinum Veterans' Athletic Club (original name of the NSW club) organised the inaugural National Veterans' Cross-Country Championships Saturday June 9 1973. The 10km race was run on an undulating grass course within Sydney's Centennial Park. Gold medals were won by Stan Chorlton in the M40 category, Jack Pennington M50 and Harry Batterham M60. As it was the Queen's Birthday long weekend, two days later (Monday June 11) the first Australian Veterans 25 kms Road Running Championships were also held within the Park. Stan and Harry made it a double gold medal weekend by winning the M40 and M60 age-groups respectively. Vic Townsend was best of the M50s.

QUEENSLAND FORMS A CLUB

Nine men attended a meeting at the Toowong RSL Club in Brisbane, on 24 September 1973 to establish the Queensland Veteran Athletics Club (QVAC). The inaugural officers of the new club were – Jack Cook president, John Bailey vice president, Sid Bray secretary and Ray James treasurer. A month later (21 October) 40 competitors took part in the club's first track and field meet that consisted of 60m, 100m, 800m run and walk, long jump and shot put events. The new club was for men only. This did not change until women were granted associate membership in 1975 but it would be 1983 before they were accepted as full members. The QVAC was incorporated in 1988 and in 1998 its name was changed to Queensland Masters Athletics Association, thus becoming the first Australian club to use the title 'Masters'.

The QVAC, and later QMA, were keen to spread the message of mature-aged athletics further a-field. In conjunction with other athletic organisations the club has been involved in state half marathon, marathon, cross-country and road walk championships on behalf of its members. On Australia Day 1985 Daphne and Mick

Pirie successfully conducted a Gold Coast Veterans' Championships and continued to do so for several more years. Daphne was awarded an MBE in 1989 for her contribution to sport.

From this tentative beginning during the late 1980s interest in veterans/masters athletics in South East Queensland increased and in 1997 the Gold Coast Masters Athletics Club was formed. A decade later the Ashgrove Rangers and Sunshine Coast Clubs linked up with the QMA in 2006 and 2008 respectively.

In April 1995 the QVAC was involved in helping organise and conduct the inaugural Queensland Masters Games held in Townsville. These Games also incorporated the 1995 Australian Veterans' Championships. The club also organised and conducted the athletic events held during the Asia Pacific Masters Games from 1998 to 2002, and then for the Pan Pacific Masters Games that has been held at the Gold Coast every other year since.

INAUGURAL 'NATIONALS' HELD IN MELBOURNE

The first Australian Championships were held over the weekend of 22 -23 December 1973 at the Box Hill Track in Melbourne. A large team of 51 USA masters, led by David Pain, participated in the championships alongside veteran athletes from Australia. Although most Australian competitors were from Victoria, there was also healthy representation from NSW and several from both South Australia and WA. Official competition was for men over 40 years-of-age conducted in three 10 year age-groups (40-49, 50-59 and over 60). However, there were also unofficial events for pre-veteran men aged from 35 to 39. Despite the track being bitumen there were many outstanding performances. Pat Clohessy (Vic) featured in two exciting close finishes: he was a narrow winner of the 40-49 800m in 2.02 and was just beaten in the 1500m by a mere 0.2 of a second (4.12.4 to 4.12.6). Another thrilling finish was in the pre-veterans' 800m in which Victorians Noel Clough and Trevor Vincent ran 1.56.2 and 1.56.9. Dave Power won both the 40-49 5000 and 10000m in 15.12 and 31.42, while John Gilmour romped home for an easy win in the 50-59 5000m in 16.22. Lloyd Snelling (SA) was the standout sprinter, winning both the 40-49

100m in 12.1 and 200m in 24.3. Of the throwers the best were probably: 60 year old Anton Tesija (ACT) hurling the hammer 42.36m, and two Victorians P. Leane and Harry Wynhoven competing in the 40-49 age group tossing the javelin over 50m and the hammer just short of 40m respectively.

By the end of the year some form of organised athletics for veteran men had been established in many European countries, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. There had already been talk of a possible international structure for the sport, but there were several important issues requiring debate before this could occur. The professional/amateur controversy was perhaps the biggest obstacle at the time. But there were other issues needing resolution: how and when to conduct the World Championships, what are the most appropriate age-groups, what implement weights, hurdle heights etc are suitable for different ages and how should records be ratified and maintained?

In January 1974 many competitors in the Australian Championships, including all of the USA team, crossed the Tasman to participate in a special two-day international veterans' meet in Christchurch, NZ prior to the Commonwealth Games. Legendary New Zealand distance runner Jack Foster was the most outstanding athlete winning the 40-49 10000m with a sensational time of 29.38. One week later he was the silver medallist in the Commonwealth Games Marathon in 2.11.18.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA CLUB FORMED AFTER LONG GESTATION

The idea of establishing a Western Australian veterans' athletics club was first mooted by Cliff Bould, John Gilmour and Col Junner following their successful trips to San Diego to participate in the USA Masters Championships between 1968 and 1971. All three enjoyed success at these championships and also during the 1972 tour of Europe. John had been especially successful throughout this period setting a number of World Records. Cliff was a regular participant in events for mature-aged athletes wherever they were conducted across Australia and was always prepared to be involved in formal and informal discussions on the development

of veterans' athletics. By late 1972 a small group of enthusiasts had formed a loose association of veteran athletes; but it was not until 1974 that the Western Australia Veteran Amateur Athletic Club (WAVAAC) was established. Dick Horsley, then president of the WAAAA and a world-class race-walker, recalls: "April 1974 saw the inaugural meeting to form the WA Veterans with seven people turning up. These were Cliff Bould, David Carr, Jack Collins, John Gilmour, Dick Horsley, Keith MacDonald and Jim Smith." Keith was elected president and Cliff accepted the dual office of secretary/treasurer. The new club began promoting special events for members within the existing Saturday afternoon athletics program at Perry Lakes Stadium as well as continuing with their regular Sunday morning runs at McCallum Park. During these early days Dulcie McDonald was the only woman to be a regular participant. The club's first newsletter, edited by David Carr, was published in July.

Theo Orr, having just turned 50, enjoyed a remarkable weekend of racing during the 2nd Victorian Veterans' Athletics Championships. On Saturday 6 April 1974 Theo won the 1500m in a World Record 4.15, taking five seconds off Wal Sheppard's time set in 1972. Fifteen minutes later he ran the 3000m steeplechase in 10.23 for another WR. On Sunday he won the 800m in 2.15.5 then the 5000m in 16.07, only two seconds outside of John Gilmour's World Record.

Atrocious weather (heavy rain and wind) over Easter 1974 was not enough to spoil the 2nd Australian Championships held at the new track at the Hensley Athletics Field at Botany in Sydney. Although official championship events were again restricted to men over 40 years-of-age and conducted in 10 year age-groups, pre-veteran men (35-39) were catered for in the program. Six Queenslanders, the first from their state to participate at the national championships, were amongst the 105 competitors.

AAVAC IS BORN

By far the most significant outcome of the championships was the establishment of the Australian Association of Veteran Athletic Clubs (AAVAC). This was an historic product of a meeting of the

five established veteran athletics clubs at the Randwick-Botany Club, Saturday 20 April 1974. Present were: Logan Irwin (Convenor and chairman); Norm Windred (NSW); Garvin Brown and Des Frawley (Qld); Alan Gottschalk and Ron O'Neill (SA); Mike Porter, Keith Routley and Wal Sheppard (all from Victoria), and Cliff Bould and Dick Horsley (WA).

The *Minutes of the Meeting for a National Association of Veteran Clubs* recorded that –

‘The chair outlined the advantages for forming a national body –

Regular interstate competition.

Unified thinking on matters effecting veteran athletics in Australia.

Greater chance of government assistance for national and state teams.

Having a truly representative Australian team.

A bigger voice in Australian Athletics.

Australian wide agreement on events, weights, heights etc, which can be submitted to overseas bodies.’

The motion, ‘That we form a National Body’, was then put and returned a unanimous vote of ‘Yes’. It was resolved the new national body be known as the Australian Association of Veteran Athletic Clubs (AAVAC) and the incoming secretary was to apply to the AAU of Australia for affiliation. The meeting proceeded to elect its office bearers: N. (Ron) O'Neill became president and Wal Sheppard secretary/treasurer. It also elected: Jack Pennington senior vice-president and records officer; Cliff Bould and Al Digance vice-presidents; Logan Irwin, Jack Pennington and Wal Sheppard as Australian Team selectors.

Having established AAVAC, several items of general business were debated and voted on. Some important decisions were: that each state club pay an affiliation fee to the Association of 20c per member; the next three national championships would be in Adelaide in 1975, Brisbane in 1976 and Perth 1977, and the championships be conducted by the home state subject to Association rules and requirements. Other matters included a description of the national uniform for overseas competitions,

how Australian Records were to be ratified, and that standards would be set for each event to assist selectors and even determine awarding of medals at national championships. Minimum requirements for winning Australian medallions during the 1970s were complicated. If the first three placegetters achieved the standards, gold, silver and bronze medals would be awarded. However, when the standard was not achieved, the number and colour of medals will be determined by the number of participants. If the event had only one to three competitors, only a gold medal would be presented; if there were four or five competitors, two medals (a gold and a silver) would be awarded, and if there were six or more in the event, a gold, a silver and a bronze would recognise first, second and third place.

Shortly after accepting the presidency of AAVAC, Ron O'Neill wrote in *The Veteran Athlete*. 'In the forming of an Association, one must speak of the men who have put so much into the foundation, for a building must have a sound basis...Jack Pennington, Wally Sheppard and Logan Irwin were the foundation stones, cemented together by men like Cliff Bould and Frank McCaffrey.'

The first official competition conducted under the auspices of the newly formed national association was an Australian Veterans' 10000m Cross-Country Championship held in the Shepherds Hill Recreation Area, Adelaide, Sunday afternoon 16 June 1974. Exactly a year before, a special veterans' cross-country race in Sydney's Centennial Park, organised by the NSW Club, attracted 23 runners participating in the three 10 year age-groups. However, this year the LOC had introduced five-year age groups for the first time in Australia. There were 33 competitors: 11 in the 40-44 age-group (designated as 1A), eight in the 45-49 (1B), nine in 50-54 (2A), three in 55-59 (2B) and one representative in the over 60 years category (3). An interesting condition for entry stated in the printed program was that 'all competitors must be registered members of their State Veteran Club, affiliated with their respective Amateur Athletic Association.'

A general meeting of AAVAC, as a follow-up to the historic April meeting, was held in conjunction with the cross-country

championships. The meeting discussed several matters concerning national championships, such as: cross-country championships should be an annual event, possibly held at the same place as Australian AAU Senior and Junior titles; medals should be presented 'on the spot' at championships, and a marathon champion to be recognised each year based on the best time recorded in any marathon. The treasurer was pleased to report the newly created national body had a balance of \$110.08. Alan Gottschalk (SA) successfully put forward a design for the Association badge or logo. The new badge was a solid green circle on which was depicted in yellow, a kangaroo, the Southern Cross and the mathematical sign for infinity. The design was surrounded by the title of the Association. Because of lack of time a proposed constitution could not be discussed so a draft edition prepared by NSW would be circulated to the states for closer examination.

The new NSW club was occasionally referred to as the Sydney Veterans but by late 1974 had changed its name from Wirrinum Veteran Athletic Club to NSW Veteran Amateur Athletics Club (NSWVAAC).

The 3rd annual Australian Veterans' Athletics Championships were held over the 1975 Easter weekend at Olympic Park, Kensington in Adelaide. More than 200 men, including three Queenslanders and several from Western Australia, participated. This was the first time at a national track and field meet that events were conducted in 5 year age-groups. However, athletes more than 60 years-of-age were still grouped together in one category. Some of the more outstanding performances were by: Lloyd Snelling (SA) winning both the M40 100 and 200m in 11.5 and 24.2 respectively; M45 Rudi Hochreiter (Vic) earning gold medals for the two sprints, all jumps (including pole vault), and all throws (except he was runner-up in the discus); Theo Orr (Vic) running the M50 5000m in 16.11 and the 10000m in 34.43; while a pair of NSW Olympians, M40 Albie Thomas and M45 Dave Power, gave a great demonstration of distance running. Albie ran the 5000m in 14.50, the 10000m in 31.00 and also won the 1500m in 3.55. Dave stopped the clock on 15.33 and 32.35 in the 5000 and 10000m respectively.

AAVAC's first AGM took place during the championships, one year after its establishment. In his annual report, secretary/treasurer Wal Sheppard said: 'Membership has grown in all states and is at a good level. At the commencement of the current season the total was 247 and as the Queensland club has only commenced operations this season yet has the extraordinary membership of 100 so it is obvious that our overall members must be between 600 and 700. Congratulations to the Queenslanders. We only need Tasmania to join us and all states will be represented.' Wearing his treasurer's hat Wal was pleased to report: 'The financial affairs of the Association are satisfactory. There is a credit balance of \$143.02 (cash at bank).' The practice of electing the president of the state club that will conduct the next national track and field championships to the AAVAC presidency was now established when Ron O'Neill stood down and was replaced by Jack Cook of Queensland.

FIRST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AND BIRTH OF WAVA

The year 1975 was an exciting and momentous time for veteran athletics, both at home and abroad. Our national association (AAVAC) had just enjoyed its first year of existence, during which time it had become a lean and efficient organisation looking after the best interests of athletics for mature-aged Australian men. It had successfully overseen a national cross-country championship and an Australian Track and Field Championships. Now the focus was on looking forward to the inaugural World Masters Athletics Championships in Toronto, Canada in August.

Because the 1976 Olympic Games were to be held in Montreal, the Canadian Olympic Committee was interested in using the 1975 World Masters Championships to train officials. Therefore the Canadian Government allocated C\$100,000 towards their cost (eventually it was revealed that the Games probably cost closer to C\$200,000).

Having learned from, and being inspired by the success of the Crystal Palace and Cologne meets in 1972, the Canadian LOC, under the leadership of Don Farquharson, planned for a much larger and more complex championships. These championships would be conducted over five days instead of two, a fairer age-

group system was introduced and women were invited to participate. In 1972 the 10 year age-groups were based on year of birth, not date of birth. However, in Toronto it was decided to conduct events in 5 year age-groups based on age on the day of competition, and although women were invited, the only events offered to them were the 100, 400, 1500 and 5000m on the track and the marathon.

There were two major issues confronting both the international veteran athletics movement and the LOC. They were the on-going amateur versus professional athletics debate, and the sanctions imposed by many Western nations against the apartheid government in South Africa. Both issues would prove controversial and problematical for organisers.

The memorable and successful 1972 European Tour had been undertaken by an officially recognised Australian Team. In keeping with this philosophy, Jack Pennington approached the newly appointed Commonwealth Minister of Sport seeking assistance for an Australian Team to participate in Toronto. He was advised that if they were to receive financial assistance the team should be competitive. Therefore, Australian selectors: Jack, Logan Irwin and Wal Sheppard published a set of performance standards for athletes wanting to be part of the official Australian Team; although, not being able to meet the standards did not preclude an Australian from participating in Toronto. The selectors claimed the standards took into account four aspects: 'a linear loss of performance with age, the depth of performances by Australian men, comparisons with overseas performances and improvement in standards during 1975'.

Some examples of the standards -

Event	M40	M50	M60
100m	12.1	13.3	15.3
800m	2.05	2.17	2.36
5000m	15.40	17.15	19.20
Marathon	2.45	3.05	3.40
5000m Race-walk	25.00	26.15	28.30
High jump	1.60m	1.50m	1.40m

<i>Long Jump</i>	5.50m	5.10m	4.30m
<i>Shot put</i>	11.00m	12.00m	11.00m
	(16lb shot)	(12lb)	(8.5lb)
<i>Javelin</i>	48.00m	42.00	36.00m
	(800gm jav.)	(800gm)	(600gm)

Of the 100 Australians who achieved the standards, 52 made up the official team and each received a government grant of \$200 to help cover costs. Our team consisted of 20 Victorians, 14 from NSW, seven Western Australians, five from Queensland, four South Australians and two from the ACT. But no women! As amateur athletes, under the rules of the Australian Amateur Athletics Union and IAAF, they were required to sign a declaration of their amateur status in order to be eligible to compete.

On the way to Toronto, 18 Australians participated in the USA Masters Championships in White Plains, New York, 8-10 August 1975. A group of athletes from the Republic of South Africa (RSA) also participated in this meet and were made welcome by the LOC. However, because of international sanctions against the RSA at the time, they would not be permitted to participate in the World Championships in Toronto the following week. The Canadian Track and Field Association banned the South Africans after the Canadian Ministry of Health threatened to withdraw their C\$30,000 grant if they took part.

The 1st World Veterans' Track and Field Championships held in Toronto, Canada 12-16 August 1975 were a great success. There were more than 1400 competitors from 27 countries, including 80 women. Participation was particularly strong from the USA, Canada, Western Europe, New Zealand and Australia. The Australian team was very successful, winning 16 gold, 12 silver and 12 bronze medals. Four Australians were multi-gold medallists: M50 Theo Orr stood on top of the podium three times, for winning the 3000, 5000 and 10000m; M55 John Gilmour won both the 3000 and 5000m; Dick Horsley set World Records for the M60 5000m and 25km race-walks, and Albie Thomas won both the M40 1500m and 3000m.

During the championships a meeting was held at the University of Toronto to which all participants were invited to offer their views

on the formation of a World veterans/masters athletics association. The meeting established a steering committee to plan for such an international body: Jack Fitzgerald (Great Britain) was elected chairman, Don Farquharson (Canada) secretary/treasurer, and another eight ordinary members. Wal Sheppard (Australia) and Clem Green (NZ) were two of the ordinary members. Clem successfully proposed the new international organisation should be known as the World Association of Veteran Athletes (WAVA). One of the major obstacles that would confront any new association was the amateur versus professional athlete controversy that was still causing division amongst veteran athletes around the world.

December 1975 the Western Australia Associated Sporting Committee announced John Gilmour as WA Sportsman of the Year. Their citation stated: 'The lifetime commitment to athletics by John Gilmour, and his involvement in administration and coaching, makes him an extraordinary example to other sportsman and illustrates a dedication found in few people.' Such words of praise about John could be repeated for all of the many awards he won throughout his long and brilliant athletics career.



Australia's 1972 team to Europe for the first international veterans' championships at Crystal Palace, London; and above, Ron Young on that track.

Chapter 3: 1976 – 1980

THE MOVEMENT SPREADS ACROSS THE NATION

By 1979 all states and the ACT had established veterans' clubs and women win battle for recognition

Mt Gravatt Track, Brisbane was the venue for the 4th Australian Championships (April 1976), and as four West Australian athletes had made the long journey from Perth it ensured these championships were definitely 'national'. As in Adelaide last Easter, all events were conducted in five-year age groups up to the over 60s. An important milestone in the evolution of our sport was that a small number of women were permitted to participate in three non-championship events – the 100 and 200m sprints and the javelin throw, all won by Heather Doherty (Old). Four other women competitors – two from NSW, a Victorian and another Queenslander – also had their first taste of veterans' athletics at the national level.

Cliff Bould (WA) was appointed AAVAC president at the third AGM, held in conjunction with the Brisbane championships, where it was reported the association now had 560 members across the country and an annual income of \$103. The meeting determined there should be no minimum standards required to participate in the championships or win medals.

The status of women in veterans' athletics was heatedly debated and the minutes illustrate the situation of women within the clubs at that time. NSW reported that they were 'not keen to accept women as it would require changing their constitution. However wives and female friends could compete unofficially'. Heather Doherty approached the Queensland VAC at the start of the 1975-76 athletics season with regards to women joining and participating in events, and as a result women were given permission to participate in invitation events. But for some time she was the only competing female. South Australia said: 'A number of women were interested but were not allowed to register with the club'. Victoria had some women members and

WA would put on one event only. The outcome was that the meeting recommended women should form their own clubs but share competition.

Glorious weather favoured the 5th national championships at Perth's Perry Lakes Stadium over Easter 1977. Although 5 year age-groups had been used in Australia for the last three years they were still being designated by the codes 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B. John Gilmour (WA) was declared 'Man of the Meet' after convincingly winning the 800 (2.22), 1500 (4.31), 5000 (17.00) and 10000m (34.58) in the 2B category (M55).

Until now cross-country had been separate from the track and field championships but Perth conducted an 'unofficial' 10km race. The race was won by Jack Pennington (then representing NSW but many years later he became patron of the ACTVAC). The cross-country event was considered a success and so it was proposed it be incorporated into next year's championships.

The 1977 championships had almost a threefold increase in the number of events for women (a 100, 200, 800, 1500, 5000 and 10000m, plus a long jump and discus throw) but still in only one division. Kath Holland (WA) was the most successful of the five women participants (three West Australians and two Victorians), winning five events (100, 200 and 800m, long jump and discus). Former Queensland champion race walker but now representing Victoria, Betty Newman ignored derogatory comments by some officials and participated in both the 3000 and 5000m race walking events. Despite the success of this year's nationals the WA president wrote in the *Results Book* '...I cannot let the opportunity pass to say that the Perry Lakes Stadium is a disgrace to a fine progressive city...'

WOMEN GET A FOOT IN THE DOOR

Even as far back as 1974, the editor of *Veteris* commented on the status of women in veterans' athletics: 'Veteran athletics is not yet established in the women's ranks to the same extent as men's. Perhaps the acknowledgement of advancing age is harder for a woman to accept than a man. However, two women gave the women's movement a boost in 1974 – Joyce Smith (36) and Maeve

Kyle (46) both mothers. Joyce was the fourth woman to break 9 minutes for 3000m and Maeve ran 400m in 61 seconds.' At the beginning of the 1975-76 track and field season, Heather Doherty approached the Queensland Veteran Athletic Club (QVAC) regarding women joining the club and participating in athletics events. As a result women were given permission to participate in special 'invitation events', but for some time Heather was the only competing female.

Following the token efforts to cater for women at the previous two national championships (in Brisbane 1976 and Perth 1977) and the addition of the long jump and discus at the next World Championships encouraged both the Queensland and Western Australian clubs to accept women as members. The QVAC admitted women as Associate Members with their subscription being half that of members (men). Heather Doherty, who had led the push for female participation, was approached to form a Women's Committee within the QVAC. Heather declined as she believed: "All veteran athletes (male and female) should be equal and should work together as a united force". Modifications to their constitution permitted female membership but not as equals – however as Heather said: 'They had a foot in the door'. A representative of the WA club stated in Gloria Seymons' *History of the Veterans' Athletic Movement in Australia* that: 'In 1977 it was realised that lady members should be admitted to the Club and from then on women have been an integral part of club activities.'

AAVAC conceded that 1 January 1978 would be the official starting date for accepting Australian Records set by veteran-aged women athletes.

Peg Smith (Vic) wrote in *Veteran Athlete* magazine November 1977: 'I am trying to co-ordinate the veteran women on a national basis so that we can compete in the men's competition. I can't imagine a better venue than the *Veteran Athlete* for women to air their views and to forward results and articles. A World ranking for women is being compiled...'

Five years later in November 1982 another Victorian, Dot Browne, presented a paper *Women in Sport – Motivation to Participate* to the Australian Sports Medicine Federation at Ballarat. In her

presentation Dot discussed some of the difficulties limiting the involvement of women in physical activity and concluded by pointing out the benefits they would enjoy from such participation. Dot said: "In our society, the female has expected to be the passive onlooker, the spectator and supporter at male sports. She has been seen to be physically weak, non-aggressive and non-competitive...In athletics particularly, women have been treated rather like children. They have not been allowed to make their own decisions about what distances they run...Yet those female athletes who have broken the social barriers to become participating athletes, have been shown to be physically strong, with excellent endurance and stamina qualities and can be as aggressive, competitive, assertive, determined-to-succeed as their male counterparts..."

THE BIRTH OF WAVA

The 2750 competitors, including 241 women (slightly less than 9 per cent), from 44 countries who participated in the 2nd World Veterans' Games in Gothenburg, Sweden in August 1977 almost doubled the numbers in Toronto two years earlier. The addition of two field events, long jump and discus, to the women's program may have encouraged more women to participate. Several former Olympic medallists participated, giving the event valuable publicity and credibility. Australia had a smaller team than at Toronto but again there was some outstanding performances; for instance, our M55s were particularly impressive - John Gilmour (WA) winning both the 800 and 5,000m, George McGrath's (NSW) victory in the 10km cross-country and Alan Merrett (SA) winning the 3000m steeple. Former Commonwealth Games champions Tony Blue (Old) and Noel Clough (Vic) finished first and second in the M40 800m with the same time (1.54.8). Noel also won the gold medal in both the 400m and 400m hurdles. Kath Holland (WA) won the W40 400m in 56.5 and Clare McKerr (Vic) was the silver medallist in the W50 1500m.

Even before the start of competition bitter controversy arose over the participation of known professional runners. Two who caused most debate were Australians M40 Reg Austin from NSW and M55 Queenslander Bernie Hogan. Although their entry was opposed

by Australian team managers, as they believed it was against IAAF regulations, the Swedish LOC granted them the right to compete. Both Reg and Bernie won the 100 and 200m sprint double in their respective age-groups. Jack Fitzgerald (UK), a member of WAVA executive and editor of *Veteris*, wrote in his editorial October 1977: 'As team manager I was sickened that two Australian professional sprinters were allowed to compete.'

A steering committee had been elected at the 1975 Toronto championships to consider establishing an international organisation to specifically cater for veteran athletics. Because the two attempts at conducting world veterans' championships had been so successful a group of enthusiastic officials met during the competition to formally establish such a body – thus the World Association of Veteran Athletes (WAVA) was born.

One of the major issues confronting WAVA was the debate whether professional athletes should be or not be part of this new international association. The IAAF president said at the time: "Competitors obviously enjoyed themselves so much that something should be done about a special status." Some months later IAAF granted WAVA permission to decide who could participate in their events including professional athletes, or those who had lost amateur status. They were granted the right to participate in veterans' athletics so long as men were over 40 years-of-age and women over 35. It was determined that the WAVA General Assembly, its main decision making body, would meet biennially during the World Championships and elect the executive, decide on constitutional and policy matters and sanction future championships.

The first official newsletter of the NSWVAC was published in September 1977. Some years later it would become the *Waratah*, the club's monthly magazine. In this first edition Logan Irwin wrote: 'Probably the veteran athletics movement came of age with these Games and in coming of age they exposed problems.....The main problem is the large number of competitors, plus the need of more rigid qualifying standards.' He also mentioned the on-going problem around the debate over the recognition of professional athletes. 'Unfortunately, we had the

same trouble as before with two professional 'Gift' runners from Australia running for the USA.' However, in the second issue of the newsletter, the editor had changed his mind about the professionals. He was now in favour of the US model that accepted that anyone over 40 years-of-age, amateur or professional, should be able to participate in veteran athletics; but it would take another two years for such a rule to be introduced in Australia. The second edition of the newsletter also contained a letter from Ken Daniels in Canberra enquiring about how to set up a veterans' athletics club in the ACT.

In January 1978 the NSWVAC *newsletter* reported that a steering committee had been elected to form a NSW Country Veterans' Athletics Club with the aim of conducting events outside the metropolitan area. Later in the year Jim Beisty was listed as being secretary/treasurer of the Newcastle Vets and Kevin Hopkins was a correspondent for Dubbo Vets. Whatever happened to such a progressive idea? It's a pity the concept of establishing different venues throughout the state didn't take hold as it did in Victoria.

WOMEN ATHLETES BECOME A FORCE

The 6th Australian Championships held at Olympic Park, Melbourne over Easter 1978 were historically important because they were when female veteran athletes demonstrated that they would soon be a significant force. Five women were grudgingly permitted to participate in a paltry three events in Brisbane in 1976 and the following year the same number was involved in the five events offered. But this year in Melbourne 32 women ranging in age from W30 to W55 ran, walked, jumped and threw. The championships being in Melbourne meant the majority of these trailblazing women were from Victoria with 20, South Australia had six, NSW four and Tasmania and West Australia each had a representative. Several of these women would go on to be major players in the future of our sport. Three who made their debut in competitive veterans' athletics in Melbourne have gone on to enjoy more than three decades as international champions; for example W50 Shirley Brasher (Tasmania) in all events from 800m to the marathon, W35 NSW Olympian Helen Searle (nee Frith) began her outstanding veterans' career by winning the 100m, long

jump and shot put while W45 Shirley Young's (Vic) achievements in the marathon and ultra marathon runs are legendary. Three other Victorian women, Anne Callaghan, Jean O'Neill and Peg Smith went on to make their mark as successful administrators in the sport. Pre-veteran men (M35) also received encouragement by being allowed to participate in non-championship events in all disciplines. Following the success of the trial in Perth the previous year, a 10km cross-country for both men and women was officially incorporated into the championships. Several athletes produced world class performances; such as by M40 NSW athlete Doug Worling 3000m steeple 9.44, and Victorians Noel Clough M40 400m 51.3 and 800m 1.59, M55 Jack Ryan 1500m 4.20, M60 Royce Foley discus throw 40.26m and M65 Stan Nichols 5000m 18.57. At the AAVAC AGM held during the championships it was agreed that former professional athletes would be able to join veterans' athletics clubs.

VICTORIAN CLUB SPREADS ITS WINGS

Six-and-a-half years after the establishment of the VVAC in November 1971, the Croydon Venue became the first subsidiary organisation to conduct regular competition for Victorian veteran athletes. As numbers of veteran participants increased throughout Melbourne, the Box Hill track, that had been the venue for the club's weekly track and field meets since the beginning, was becoming increasingly costly to hire forcing the club to relocate to the Collingwood Track. However, as Collingwood was also a long way from many members' homes the idea of conducting some events in other locations was attractive.

The Croydon Venue of the VVAC competed for the first time on Tuesday evening 4 July 1978 under the guidance of Ray and Anne Callaghan and so became the first satellite venue. According to a history of the Croydon Venue *30 Years On* (2008): 'Ray Callaghan negotiated with the local council and the Little Athletics Club for the Vets to compete on Tuesdays at the present location in Norton Road and use the Little Aths equipment shed.....For lighting we relied on the street lights...and an electrical cable was run from the shed to the finish-line with a 150watt globe as lighting for the timekeeper and recorder.' From such a cautious

beginning, averaging about 25 competitors each week during the first year, more than double that many were regular participants the following year. This growth has continued through to the present when it is not uncommon for between 80 and 100 competitors participate in the final event of the evening.

Following the successful experiment at Croydon, a number of other venues operating under the auspices of the VVAC (later Victorian Masters Athletics) have since been established throughout Melbourne and across the state. For many years Peter Colthup OAM produced a popular monthly newsletter *Around the Grounds* that contained results and information concerning the various venues.

The Hensley Athletics Track at Botany in Sydney was the venue for the 1979 7th Australian Championships where for first time women were officially permitted to participate in championship events. The remarkable increase in the number of female participants over four years suggest they had now arrived on the veterans' athletics scene. There were 51 women competitors ranging from seven W30s to a W65.

The two biggest teams were from Victoria and NSW with 21 and 20 representatives respectively, while South Australia had seven. There were three each from both Queensland and Tasmania and one from WA. Both Helen Searle and Shirley Brasher reproduced their outstanding performances from last year; Helen again winning the W35 100m, long jump and shot put while W50 Shirley was simply world class with her easy wins in the 1500m (5.19), 5000m (19.13) and 5000m walk (28.23). Heather Doherty, one of the original five women to compete in the 1976 championships was once again one of the stars winning the W45 100m, shot put and javelin. Making her debut at Botany and demonstrating the form that would see her win many medals at World Championships for many years into the future was W30 Mary Thomas (NSW). Mary won the javelin with a mighty throw of 45.78m and put the shot 11.18m.

There were of course outstanding performances by many male athletes at these championships including those by a trio of NSW athletes; Olympian Dave Power won the M50 5000m in 16.20, M40

Gregor Nicol hurled the javelin more than 57m and M40 John Bowers (NSW) ran 4.11 in the 1500m. Victorian Gus Theobald was the oldest competitor winning his M80 age group in the 5000m walk. Gus was a late starter in athletics coming to the sport at the age of 35. However, for several decades thereafter he was very involved both as a participant and administrator with the Glenhuntly Club in Melbourne. He also worked as an athletics official during the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. Sadly, in August 1990, 93 year-old Gus was killed while crossing a road in suburban Ormond.

The AAVAC AGM held during the 1979 championships recommended that clubs delete the word Amateur from their name and accept membership from both men and women. A motion that members of veterans' athletics clubs must be registered with their state AAU was lost.

TASMANIA AND THE ACT ESTABLISH VETERANS' CLUBS

Clive Roper's advertisement in the *Hobart Mercury* in January 1979 invited interested persons to participate in a series of four 'Come-and-Try' athletics events as part of the Tasmanian 'Life Be In It' program conducted in Hobart throughout February. As a result of good attendances at these meetings held at the Domain Athletics Centre, in May a second advertisement was placed in the *Mercury* calling for a meeting to establish a club for mature-aged athletes. The inaugural AGM took place at the Rosny Matriculation College on 15 May 1979. The meeting attracted approximately 20 persons and was chaired by Clive Roper, an active senior athlete and physical education teacher. Ken Davey was elected the club's first president and declared: "The main object of the Club was to provide enjoyable, satisfying activity in the company of similar minded people". Phyllis Hancock and Mick Blazely were appointed secretary and treasurer respectively.

From the beginning the Veteran Athletics Association of Tasmania (VAAT) included women as members. In October approximately 25 men and five women participated in their first official competition; an athletics meet consisting of six races (200, 400, 800 and 3000m and hurdles), a high jump and shot put. Because

members participated in, or were involved in organising and assisting at fun runs and major events such as the Southern Cross Marathon and Half Marathon, it didn't take long for the influence of the club to spread from Hobart to other parts of the state. Their newsletter *Footnotes*, first published in 1981, further helped strengthen the identity of this new athletics association. Twenty-one years later (2002) the VAAT changed its name to Tasmanian Masters Athletics Inc (TMA).

Seventeen persons responded to Ken Daniels' advertisement in the *Canberra Times* (February 1979) and attended a meeting held in a private home with the aim of forming an ACT veterans' club. After several other informal meetings, the inaugural AGM chaired by 1956 Olympic shot putter Peter Hanlin was held, and the ACT Veterans Amateur Athletics Club was born. The meeting elected Peter Frylink president and Ken Daniels secretary. It also agreed to apply to become a district club within the ACT Branch of the NSWAAU. However, the local athletics establishment was not keen on admitting this new club into their organization. Even by changing their name to Canberra Veterans Amateur Athletics Club and adjusting their constitution they were still not accepted. Shortly after this rebuttal the club officially became the ACT Veterans' Athletic Club (ACTVAC), and like Tasmania women were encouraged to become members right from the beginning.

Within the next few months many of the ACT club's favourite institutions and practices were established; for example in July 20 runners completed the first running handicap event in Stromlo Forest, a newsletter (shortly to become *Vetrunner*) was published in August, the first track meet consisting of 100, 200, 400, 1500 and 5000m races (note that there were no field events) was held at Bruce Stadium on a September Sunday morning, and the following month 42 men and 13 women participated in its first fun run.

The 3rd World Veterans' Games in Hanover, Germany (July – August 1979) attracted 3400 participants from 57 countries. Women, now able to participate in almost all events, made up over 12.5 per cent of the entries. The Australian team of 93, our largest to date, included 16 women. Because of the agreement

between the IAAF and WAVA following the Gothenburg championships these were the first to be open to all men over 40 and women over 35years-of-age, both amateur and professional. M60 John Gilmour winner of the 800, 1500 and 5000m and marathon was undoubtedly the most outstanding athlete of the championships. Other Australian men to win gold were – Reg Barlow in the M75 10000m, F. Duchene M75 100m, Merv Jenkinson M70 400m, while professional sprinters Reg Austin and Bernie Hogan won the M40 200m and both the M55 100m and 200m respectively. Two Australian women also returned home with gold medals: W55 Aileen Hogan won both the 100 and 200m sprints and Kath Holland won the W35 400m.

WAVA President Don Farquharson from Canada reported to the General Assembly that the association was experiencing financial difficulties. As its only income was derived from levies paid by athletes attending the World Championships the WAVA executive had to pay for their own travel to attend meetings. This would have the effect that only relatively wealthy men could accept administrative roles within the international organisation. Australia featured prominently at the Assembly; Jean O'Neill from Victoria was elected Women's Representative while both Australia and New Zealand put forward excellent bids to stage the next championships. However, it was reported the Australian Government had already let it be known it would not finance any sporting event that included South Africa as they did not wish to compromise the 1982 Commonwealth Games to be held in Brisbane. Christchurch (NZ) was granted the right to conduct the next World Veterans' Championships in January 1981.

Between 1971 and 1979 Jack Pennington produced and distributed more than 60 editions of the original *Veteran Athlete*, an informative magazine for interested persons around Australia and overseas. Jack's publication consisted of about 20 closely typed and stencilled A4 pages of news, results and articles dealing with athletics and fitness stapled together in a magazine format. Many articles were submitted from abroad and many were written by Jack. After a decade of circulating valuable information about the relatively new sport of competitive athletics for mature-aged persons Jack handed his magazine over to the national

association for it to become an official publication. Despite Jack volunteering to continue to edit and produce the *Veteran Athlete*, the association formed an editorial board and appointed a Sydney journalist as its editor. Sadly, the new team failed in its task and this popular magazine passed into history.

The 8th Australian Championships were conducted at Olympic Park, Adelaide over Easter 1980. Although several Canberra and Tasmanian athletes had competed previously it was not until now they had the opportunity to represent their own territory or state club at the 'nationals'. Coincidentally, both new clubs each had a gold medal winning athlete amongst their relatively small contingents. Nigel Spurling from the ACT won the M35 800 and 1500m, his 1.58 for the 800m was the fastest of the meet; while Tasmanian K McConnell had a clean sweep of all three M55 jumps and the sprint hurdles. The most impressive male sprinters were the duo at the centre of the amateur versus professional debate in Gothenburg 1977: M40 Reg Austin (NSW) and M55 Bernie Hogan (Qld) easily won both their 100 and 200m finals while Reg also won the 400m. Kath Holland (WA) was the most outstanding women competitor winning the W40 100, 200, 400 and even the 800m. Middle and long distance races attracted large fields; in fact both the M40 and M45 5000m had to be run in two divisions and these same two age-groups had 45 and 36 competitors respectively in the 10km cross-country. The throwing events, especially shot put and discus, were also popular. M40 Nick Birks (SA) produced the mightiest throw when he hurled the javelin over 62m. Perhaps the most exciting races at the championships were the duels between John Gilmour (WA) and George McGrath (NSW) in the M60 800, 1500 and 5000m all narrowly won by John. John also won a gold medal in the 10000m. The only other person who might have some claim to being considered the most outstanding male competitor would be New Zealander Derek Turnbull who convincingly won the M50 1500, 5000, 10000m and cross-country. Once again Victorian Gus Theobald was the most senior participant winning gold medals in the M80 3000 and 5000m race-walks.

So at the end of this five year period all states and the ACT had established forward looking veterans' athletics clubs, and women

Chapter 4: 1981 – 1985

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS COME TO SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

First opportunity for many Australians to experience a World Championships and Oceania gets off the ground

There was some trepidation as to whether veteran athletes from Europe and North America would be prepared to pay their way to the Southern Hemisphere to participate in the 4th World Veterans' Games in Christchurch (NZ). Not only was it far away but as the championships were scheduled for January 1981 they were well outside the Northern Hemisphere athletics season. The LOC need not have worried. The 2400 competitors (400 women) from 44 countries, only marginally fewer than the attendance at the 2nd World Veterans' Games in Gothenburg Sweden 1977, guaranteed the success of these championships. The Opening Ceremony was considered an improvement on previous Games. Participants entered the stadium in age groups, beginning with the youngest and finishing with the eldest, rather than in teams as previously. Following their entry, both competitors and spectators were then entertained with a parade of vintage cars and an exhibition of sheep dog trials.

Australia was well represented by more than 700 athletes. Despite most were participating in their first international competition, they performed remarkably well setting many new Australian and a number of World Records. Long distance runner John Gilmour was one of the most outstanding athletes, easily winning the M60 800, 1500, 5000 and 10000m. Three other Aussies were triple gold medallists: W40 Kath Holland (WA) and M45 Hal Thomas and M50 Lloyd Snelling (both from SA) each won the 100, 200 and 400m for their respective age group. The WAVA General Assembly elected Don Farquharson (Canada) president and Jean O'Neil (Vic) women's representative, while Wal Sheppard stepped down as the Oceania representative and was replaced by New Zealander Clem Green.

In the championship's result book the Mayor of Christchurch, Hamish Hay, wrote the following: 'The 1981 World Veteran Games was one of the most notable sporting events in the history of Christchurch, ranking with the Commonwealth Games of 1974. It was a privilege to host such a large contingent of athletes from around the world. Such an event would surely promote goodwill and peace between the competing countries. The impact of these Games will be felt in the whole of New Zealand for many years to come. We look forward to hosting many more veteran contests in the future'.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROBLEM

However, the championships produced their share of controversy when a group of athletes from South Africa were officially banned from competing. (Some South Africans may have participated as members of other countries such as the Netherlands and Rhodesia). Anti-apartheid demonstrations occurred daily outside the stadium requiring a strong police presence. There were several assaults. One young man even leapt from the stands and attacked the leader in a steeplechase race whom he believed was a South African. This issue of South Africa participation was not resolved by WAVA until the World Veterans' Games in Melbourne 1987.

Although Queensland, NSW and, to a lesser extent Victorian athletes made up the bulk of the competitors at the 9th Australian Championships in Brisbane, Easter 1981 there was also a sprinkling of representatives from the ACT, SA, Tasmania, WA and even New Zealand. Indicative of the 'running boom' at the time, standards in the long distance events were exceptional – especially by M35 Jim Hennessy (NSW), M45 John McDonald (NZ), W40 Dot Browne (Vic) and Olympian M50 Dave Power, who all won both the 5000m and 10000m in their age-group.

It was decided at the AAVAC AGM, held in conjunction with the championships, that Canberra would be the venue for a combined 12th Australian and 2nd Oceania Veterans' Athletics Championships during Easter 1984. Other significant decisions were to delete the word Amateur from the association's title, seek

affiliation with the AAU and that pre-veteran events (M35 and W30) should be included in the main program at future national championships. Wal Sheppard, as national secretary, was directed by the meeting to express their recommendations to overcome some issues that caused concern during the Christchurch Championships. These were that all events should be standardised, all age-groups in the same event should be held on the same day, and some events ought to be deleted in the older age-groups as they were considered dangerous.

Perth was the venue for the 1982 10th Australian Championships and because of an agreement made at the last AGM this would be the last time the nationals would be held in Queensland and Western Australia in consecutive years. W55 Tasmanian Shirley Brasher was the most outstanding female athlete of the meet, and a few months later she was honoured as the 'Female Athlete of the Year' by the Confederation of Australian Sport. The citation read: 'in recognition of outstanding commitment to athletics as a competitor and official and as a role model for older Australians'. It was reported at this year's AGM that there were now 2062 registered veteran athletes in Australia, which was a healthy increase of more than 33% over the last two years.

OCEANIA GETS OFF THE GROUND

A month later the inaugural Oceania Veterans' Athletics Championships were conducted in Suva, Fiji. The five days of competition, from 13 to 17 May 1982, coincided with the local school holidays so that students could assist officials. Each day's events began early in the morning, followed by a long lunch break to avoid the heat of the day, before recommencing in the late afternoon. The new regional championships were equally well supported by Australian and New Zealand athletes who made up approximately 240 of the 280 participants. The success of this new venture was encouraging and the delegates agreed that the Oceania Championships will be held every second year – the next in two years time in Canberra.

In 1983 the Veteran Athletics Association of Tasmania (VAAT) hosted a national veterans' marathon and half marathon

championships at Richmond. 260 long distance runners participated in the championships conducted as part of the annual Southern Cross Marathon and Half Marathon. Pressure from the Tasmanian association guaranteed that women were also recognised in the championship honours. Another memorable achievement occurred later in the year when ten Tasmanian men, all over 40 years-of-age, broke the World Record for the 24 hour continuous relay by running a total of 420.512km.

The VVAC, Australia's largest and most experienced veterans' athletics club, were first to organise the national championships for a third time. The Victorian club conducted the inaugural event in 1973 then again five years later in 1978, and now they were the LOC for the 11th Australian Championships in Melbourne over Easter 1983. The championships attracted a record number of almost 600 participants of whom 395 wore the navy blue singlet of Victoria with a red heart embroidered on the chest. Large fields contested all long distance races involving M40 and M45 runners. For example; heats were required for the 1500m in these age-groups, 34 and 23 finished the M40 5000 and 10000m respectively, while 27 and 24 M45s ran the same distances and there were 33 competitors in the 10km cross-country in each of these age-groups. The fledging ACT club, apprehensive about organizing next year's joint Australian and Oceania Championships, asked the AAVAC AGM not to incorporate both events, but the meeting denied the request.

A COUPLE OF 'OLDIES' IMPRESS A NATION

During the year two veteran-aged ultra distance runners proved to the wider Australian community that older athletes could accomplish remarkable feats of endurance, in fact even outperform many much younger sportsmen.

In 1983 40 year old Queenslander Ron Grant became the first person to run continuously around Australia. For 12 months before beginning his epic journey Ron was concerned that chronic back pain would hinder his attempt. On the other hand, he had put in the many, many kilometres of training and had already proved he was capable of completing very long and difficult ultra

runs. In 1980 he had run the Birdsville Track in just under five days and also ran from Cairns to Brisbane. In the winter of 1981 he ran across the Simpson Desert in four and a half days, and the following year he did it again, but this time during summer and in less than four days. Then in 1983, before setting out on his circuit of the continent he participated in the Queensland 24 hour Track Championships running 172km. Ron's run around Australia was in an anti-clockwise direction starting and finishing in Brisbane. In order for his run to be considered 'continuous' he had to run at least 20km every day and not miss a day. Despite suffering a stress fracture in his leg when he was near Perth and still a long way from Brisbane, he completed the 13,383km journey by averaging 61.67km for each of 217 days.

Ron Grant's remarkable achievement rightly received considerable media coverage. However, another veteran-aged ultra runner, Cliff Young, generated even more publicity for himself and the sport of ultra endurance running. When Cliff, the 61 year old dairy farmer from Colac in Victoria, surprisingly won the 1983 Westfield Sydney to Melbourne Race, he became an instant national celebrity. When Cliff announced to race organisers that he was planning to participate in the race he was apparently considered 'a bit of a character' and unsuited and ill prepared for such a run. For the first half day of the race from Sydney to Melbourne Cliff was a long way behind the much younger and faster runners. But by maintaining a gentle but efficient jog (later known as the Cliff Young shuffle) and not sleeping or stopping for rests during the first day and night he gradually moved up through the field of runners. By now the media and the public had become aware and amazed at the endurance and determination of this 'old man'. By the last day he had hit the lead and went on to win the 875km race to Melbourne in 5 days 15 hours and 4 minutes, breaking the record by 9 hours. Cliff participated in the Sydney to Melbourne race on five more occasions, but unfortunately because of injury he was forced to withdraw from three (in 1985, 1986 and 1989).

The majority of the participants in the annual Westfield Sydney to Melbourne Race, 1983 – 1991, were mature-aged athletes, and apart from Cliff some were also members of veterans' athletics

clubs. Tasmanian Andrew Law completed the gruelling event twice, in 1990 and 1991, finishing third in his second attempt in 7 days 9 hours 32 minutes.

Although the general public were impressed and inspired by the achievements of Ron and Cliff most were unaware of their accomplishments prior to them undertaking their memorable runs. Neither, Cliff or Ron suddenly became great endurance athletes for they both had many years of experience as competitive and successful ultra distance runners. As an M55 Cliff finished thirteenth in the 10km cross-country race at the 1981 World Veterans' Championships in Christchurch, NZ and then a couple of days later completed the marathon in 2.58. In 1997 at 76 years-of-age Cliff attempted to become the oldest person to run around Australia but withdrew after 6520km because his only permanent support crew member became ill. Cliff suffered a stroke and died at the age of 81 in November 2003.

Seventy Australians journeyed to San Juan, Puerto Rico in September 1983 to participate in the 5th World Veterans' Games. The number of competitors (1,960 from 48 countries) was the smallest since the first WVG in Toronto 1975; but the percentage of female participants (19 per cent) was the best to date. The championships were marred by chaotic organization mainly brought about by inexperienced administrators and officials. Two examples of mismanagement were - some throwing events did not finish until after midnight because their competition was interrupted by a local baseball game, and because officials interpreted the rule that 'athletes should not receive outside assistance' meant runners in long distance races were not to wear watches or be given lap times. However, both the Opening and Closing Ceremonies were considered the best ever.

The relatively inexperienced ACTVAC received much assistance from the ACTAA and many visitors in conducting the 12th Australian and 2nd Oceania Veterans' Championships in Canberra over Easter 1984. More than 700 (including many New Zealanders) participated and for consecutive years the annual championships enjoyed a record attendance. As these were joint championships, two sets of awards (Australia and Oceania) were

required for all events: the first three placegetters received attractive certificates as Oceania champions and the first three Australians were awarded gold, silver and bronze AAVAC medals. Therefore many Australians stepped down from the podium with both a medal and a certificate for their performance. A highlight of the championships was the dinner/dance that attracted almost 500 athletes and friends from all states of Australia and NZ.

WAL SHEPPARD RETIRES

A special milestone was reached at the AAVAC AGM when Wal Sheppard stood down as secretary/treasurer after performing the dual role since the inception of the national association in 1974. For 11 years Wal had been the most influential administrator in Australian veterans' athletics and his final act as treasurer was to successfully move that capitation be increased from 20c to 50c. The meeting also agreed that applications for both Australian and World Records for track events required the readings from two stop watches.

The following Easter, the other relatively small and inexperienced club (Veterans' Athletics Association of Tasmania, established 1979) hosted the national championships for the first time. The VAAT conducted the 1985 13th Australian Championship at the picturesque Hobart athletics track where more than 350 veteran athletes participated. Most 'mainlanders' took the opportunity to incorporate a tour of the island state following the four days of competition. Following the retirement of Wal Sheppard, Peg Smith (Vic) took over as secretary/treasurer of AAVAC. In recognition of Wal's outstanding contribution to the veterans' movement at home and abroad he was made a life member of the association.

A record 4360 veteran athletes (including 192 Australians) from 48 nations participated in the 6th World Veterans' Games in Rome, Italy (June 1985). Four stadiums, including the 1960 Olympic Stadium, were used in order to conduct an event of this size and complexity. However, the distances between some of the venues caused some criticism. One of the more outstanding athletes of the championships was South Australian sprinter Wendy Ey.

Before becoming involved in veterans' athletics Wendy had already enjoyed an illustrious career in the sport both as a competitor and as an expert commentator and administrator. She participated in the 1958 Empire Games and in 1977 was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to athletics. Apart from the athletics competitions in Rome, a highlight for many athletes and families was being officially welcomed by the Pope in St Peter's Square.

The WAVA General Assembly, held during the championships, awarded the next World Veterans' Games to Melbourne. Delegates were confident the event was in good hands under the leadership of Victorians Peg Smith and Ray Callaghan as executive director and competition manager respectively. The Assembly had also hoped to select the 1989 site. But as they had only received a bid from New Zealand they were concerned that consecutive championships in the Southern Hemisphere would not be attractive to competitors travelling from Europe or North America. Therefore they held the decision over until Melbourne in 1987. For some time WAVA and IAAF had been involved in discussions about forming closer relations between the two international athletics organisations and the IAAF president was even a guest of honour at the Opening Ceremony. However, the major stumbling block to formalising a better relationship was that in this era when most countries blacklisted the apartheid regime of South Africa, the veterans' movement of that country was still affiliated with WAVA.

***Dot Browne;
and with
Theo Orr,
Box Hill
track, 1980s.***



Chapter 5: 1986 – 90

MELBOURNE CHAMPIONSHIPS FIRST INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR MANY

An exciting era of international competition and growth

Throughout 1986, with the realisation the next World Veterans' Games would be held in Melbourne at the end of the following year, there was a degree of excitement and anticipation amongst the more than 3000 registered veteran athletes in Australia. Peg Smith, secretary/treasurer of AAVAC, and a key person in getting the championships awarded to Melbourne, took every opportunity to inform members and the public of the progress leading up to the big event. Her message was very clear: "Do not miss the opportunity to participate in these Games. They will be big, they will be enjoyable and you may not have another chance, so plan now to participate". (Note that the WAVA World Championships were then known as World Veterans' Games).

PASSING OF A FOUNDING FATHER

Sadly, the ever-energetic and influential Wal Sheppard, one of the founders of WAVA, died of a heart attack while on a training run in April 1986. Wal missed seeing his dream of establishing Australia, and particularly Melbourne, as a desirable location for a World Championships. Fellow Victorian athlete Case Muskens, who through his travel business provided Wal with an office to carry out his work as national secretary, said in an obituary: "Wal was an ambitious man and one with great vision. The size and activity of the Australian Veteran movement is a demonstrative legacy he leaves behind. That vision will continue to influence and change the lives of many Australians. His senior position on WAVA is a positive recognition internationally of his pioneer work and dedication to the veteran movement."

Many others, who had known Wal, took the opportunity to praise the incredible contribution he had made towards the development of veterans' athletics both at home and abroad. An article in *Veteris* written in 1973, gave a British view of Wal's

influence on the early growth of our sport: 'If ever a man can claim to be the inspiration, and indeed the Founding Father, of his nation's veteran movement then the man is surely Wal Sheppard. Throughout the 1960s he trod a lonely furrow as the only Australian veteran athlete to hold his own in open company at all events from 100m to the marathon. His remarkable range of performances set an example to the younger athletes and commanded him great respect. A respect that has now become world-wide.'

It was extremely hot in Adelaide over Easter 1986 during the 14th annual Australian Veterans' Athletics Championships held at Olympic Park, Kensington. As many long distance races were conducted with temperatures in the high thirties organisers set up water stations on the back straight and encouraged runners and race-walkers to drink regularly during the event. A highlight of the Welcoming Ceremony was the presentation of a giant birthday cake and the singing of 'Happy Birthday' to Sydney identity Bill Empey who turned 90 that day. Bill subsequently went about establishing a couple of M90 Australian Records, including the 100m in which he was loudly cheered for every one of the 24.1 seconds it took him to complete the race.

It was anticipated we may have welcomed the Northern Territory into the fold at the annual conference of AAVAC held during the nationals, but there was no sign of the Territorians. A number of significant decisions affecting the conduct of veteran athletics in Australia were made during the five hour meeting. A move by NSW to lower the men's pre-veterans age from 35 to 30 years was soundly defeated, as was their motion to change the name of State and Australian 'Veterans' Championships to 'Masters'. The meeting agreed that the hammer throw and triple jump for all women, and the 300m hurdles for women over 50 years-of-age and men over 60, should be included in future championships. From now on AAVAC would have only one Records Officer instead of one for men and another for women. Royce Foley (Vic) was appointed Australian Statistician and any claim to him for national or world records must first be ratified by a club secretary. But perhaps the most progressive decisions made by the club delegates were that in future they would have half yearly meetings

and a proposal to reintroduce a national magazine was given the go ahead.

A NEW NATIONAL PUBLICATION IS LAUNCHED

From 1971 to 1979 Jack Pennington edited and produced a national news magazine *Veteran Athlete*, but it folded after being handed over to the national association to produce as an official publication. (Refer to Chapter 3). AAVAC now had a generous offer from Mike and Penny Hall, to produce a monthly national magazine in newspaper-format, similar to the *USA Masters News*. Both Mike and Penny were talented veteran athletes and enthusiastic members of the Victorian Veteran Athletics Club, Mike as a hurdler and sprinter and Penny as a race-walker. During the AAVAC meeting Mike impressed delegates with his excellent presentation that included a thoroughly researched statement of the costs and problems involved in editing, producing and distributing such a magazine. The meeting enthusiastically agreed to support the publication that was to be known as *The Veteran Athlete*.

In his editorial in its first edition (June 1986) Mike wrote: 'Well here at last is issue No.1 of our long awaited national publication *The Veteran Athlete*, your own national newspaper which is designed entirely to provide a comprehensive coverage of all activities within the Australian Association of Veteran Athletics and regular news from our counterparts overseas. Not since the late seventies and valiant efforts of Jack Pennington's very informative magazine *Veteran Athlete* have we been able to keep in touch with what is happening on the national scene.....'

'It is my sincere hope that each individual State Association will recognise and support this latest attempt to provide a much needed communication medium to all our members and ensure its success in our rapidly growing organisation.'

'As a gesture of confidence in the future success of *The Veteran Athlete*, it was decided to offer this inaugural first edition 'complimentary', thus ensuring all members of the Association receive their first copy free.' In fact the first two editions, June and July 1986, were issued free to all registered veteran athletes and

then they were encouraged to pay for \$20 annual subscription or \$2.50 per issue. Headlines for the first two stories featuring on the front page of the first issue were: 'Records smashed at National Championships, Temperature soars to 38 degrees in Adelaide' and 'Sad loss of founder Wal Sheppard'.

The new *Veteran Athlete*, averaging 24 pages of stories, photographs, competition results and coming events, proved to be a popular publication and played a major role in raising awareness and enthusiasm amongst its readers for the forthcoming World Games. In the lead-up to the Games the logo of the championships – a cheerful little running koala carrying an Australian flag – featured alongside the paper's masthead. One interesting article that impressed the writer was a story encouraging readers to seriously consider entering the World Championships by suggesting most of us were capable of performing better than those who had finished last in many events at the previous Games in Rome in 1985.

Between June 1986 and June 1992 60 editions were produced, including an attempt at a more up-market publication when a Queensland company, located on the Gold Coast, promised a more 'professional' 38 page bi-monthly magazine using better quality paper, print and coloured photographs. However issue #59 (January 1992), which featured a coloured close-up photograph of Queensland champion all round athlete and administrator Wilma Perkins putting the shot, was a one-and-only, and the venture failed.

The final issue (#60, June 1992) reverted to its original format and in his editorial Mike explained why he and Penny could no longer produce *The Veteran Athlete*. Mike wrote: 'I feel a deep sense of responsibility to officially advise all our subscribers, advertisers and loyal supporters that due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control, the publication will be discontinued. Insufficient funding to maintain continuity of future issues has left us with no alternative but to cease production. Needless to say after almost six years of regularly producing a monthly edition of *The Veteran Athlete*, we are naturally extremely disappointed of having to make this regrettable decision.'

Many veteran athletes throughout Australia and abroad, as well as others interested in sport for mature-aged persons, were saddened by the demise of this excellent publication.

In September 1986 the 3rd Oceania Veterans' Athletics Championships were conducted in Apia. As Western Samoa lacked both the expertise and necessary equipment to successfully conduct such a major carnival many Australian and New Zealand competitors assisted with officiating. Visiting throwers were even asked to try to bring their own implements to the championships.

MELBOURNE HOSTS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

In early December 1986, exactly a year from the VII World Veterans' Games, a delegation of WAVA officers visited Melbourne to view facilities and report on the progress of the preparation. During their visit a special athletics meet, attended by many veteran athletes from Victoria and elsewhere in Australia, was conducted at Olympic Park to test the systems to be used in twelve months time.

As the World Championships were being held in Melbourne later in the year there was more than usual interest in local veterans' athletics. Many competitors at the 15th Australian Championships at E.S. Marks Field in Sydney at Easter 1987 were primed for good performances, resulting in nine World and 22 Australian Records. M40 Garry Hand (ACT) was one of the more outstanding athletes winning all five middle and long distance running gold medals, including Australian Records in both 5000 and 10000m, less than a week after winning the Canberra Marathon in another Australian Record 2:19.00. The NSWVAC introduced two innovations that have become popular features of subsequent championships: a distinctive medal to replace the generic AAVAC medal that had been used in all previous national championships, and the first 'Champion of Champions' sprints. The annual AAVAC conference elected Peg Smith to her third term as secretary/treasurer and agreed that from now on hand times for track records must be given to 0.1 of a second.

The World Veterans' Games held in Melbourne (28 November – 6 December 1987) was the first taste of international competition for most of the large Australian contingent of almost 2000. The Australian team looked splendid in their brand new bottle-green track suits and green, gold and white competition uniforms specially produced by the international sports apparel company Nike. At the time it was the world's largest athletics meet, with 4817 competitors (22% women) from 51 countries. Former World Record holder for the mile, John Landy, opened the Games after Olympian Raelene Boyle had carried the commemorative torch into the stadium.

Despite difficulties caused by three days of torrential rain this was a high quality, efficiently conducted and friendly Games superbly organised by the Victorian Veterans Club under the leadership of Peg Smith as executive director and Ray Callaghan competition director.

It was not surprising that Australian competitors performed much better at these championships than ever before. Australians won 93 (56 by women and 37 by men) of the 412 individual events contested; that is an incredible 22.5 per cent of all gold medals. To add to this remarkable gold medal tally were those won by Aussie teams. Our relay quartets were victorious in five of the nine 4x100m and four of the 4x400m. In the road walks and cross-country our teams won most age-groups and Australia won all team events in the marathon. Of the 111 World Records set during the competition 40 (28 by women and 12 by men) were by Australians. Four Aussie athletes set two or more World Records. They were: W60 Shirley Brasher from Tasmania in the 1500m, 5000m and 10000m; and Victorians M65 Jack Ryan in the 1500m, mile and 5000m; W65 Gwen Davidson for high jump and triple jump, and M90 Gus Theobald in the 5000m and 20km race-walks. Although the marathon, conducted on a similar course to the 1956 Olympic marathon, began before dawn by the time runners entered the stadium for a final lap of the track many were feeling the effects of a very hot morning.

The women's hammer throw, conducted as an official competition for the first time, surprised dubious officials by the event's

popularity and quality of performances. The only events still not officially available to women were the pole vault and steeplechase but they had only to wait until the next World Games in Eugene 1989 for their introduction at this level. The weight pentathlon (incorporating the hammer throw, shot put, discus, javelin and heavy weight) was conducted as a trial event at the end of the championships. Australian women won three of the seven age-groups while the only male gold medallist was M70 Royce Foley (Vic). Roy was an appropriate and popular winner. He was considered the 'father of the weight pentathlon' as he had for many years lobbied for the acceptance of the event.

POST MELBOURNE OPPORTUNITIES

The Australian Confederation of Sport obviously saw an ideal opportunity to launch its inaugural Australian Masters Games in Hobart shortly after the World Veterans' Games. From the beginning athletics has always been a significant component of these multi-sport festivals and a number of overseas and interstate veteran athletes added the Hobart event to their competition program.

Just four months after the euphoria of Melbourne's World Games many veteran athletes were still enthusiastic and made the trip to Brisbane for the 16th Australian Championships. As 1988 was the Bicentenary Year the QVAC sought permission to incorporate the official bicentenary symbol into the championship's logo. It rained heavily throughout the weekend and the few times the rain eased the humidity was stifling. Some lucky visiting athletes enjoyed dormitory-style accommodation on the top floor of the QEII Stadium and could emerge from their warm and dry quarters just in time for their event, then retreat to its comforts soon after finishing.

It was revealed at the annual AAVAC Conference, held in conjunction with the Brisbane championships, membership had increased dramatically from about 3000 before the World Games to 4354. As it was anticipated the national body would have a larger role to play in future the capitation fee was increased from 50c to \$2. Despite all the positives for our sport at the time and

Peg Smith, AAVAC secretary/treasurer, arguing against such a move, the conference voted not to affiliate with Oceania. However this was not the reason for the poor attendance at the 4th Oceania Championships in Noumea. The Oceania Championships had originally been scheduled for early 1988 but political unrest in New Caledonia caused them to be postponed until October. Within a year Stan Perkins, the newly elected AAVAC secretary, had convinced state and territory delegates the decision to withdraw from the Oceania movement was a retrograde step and it was overturned.

Because Perth suffers from a 'tyranny of distance', at least as far as members in eastern states are concerned, participation in the nationals tend to be less when held there than at other cities. Entries for the 1989 championships may also have been affected by the large number of Aussies planning to attend the World Championships in Eugene, USA a few months later. But the standards at Perry Lakes Stadium were impressive with 42 Australian and five World Records being set. Three of the World Records were set by Western Australian W40s: Lynn Carter in the hammer, Eileen Hindle 80m hurdles and Antoinette Shaw for the steeplechase; while W35 Heather McDonald and M65 Theo Orr, both from Victoria set World Records for the 10km road-walk and steeplechase respectively. The AAVAC Council agreed that in future Perth should only be allocated the national championships in years when there were no World Championships. Queenslanders Stan Perkins and Tom Hishon took over the executive positions of secretary and treasurer that had been jointly performed by Peg Smith for the last four terms. Pat Clohessy MA (former champion middle distance runner, coach of Robert de Castella, national distance running coach and currently a popular and active patron of the ACTVAC) was elected patron of our national body. Pat continued as patron until resigning from the AIS and moving to Brisbane in 1994.

The highlight of 1989 was the VIII World Veterans' Championships (note the change in name from Games to Championships) in Eugene, Oregon 27 July – 6 August. Undoubtedly due to the enjoyable experience of Melbourne two years earlier and the growth of our sport at home, more than 300 Australians, easily

our largest overseas contingent to date, participated in Eugene. Many travelled to the US and resided at the University of Oregon as part of a special package put together by 'Traveland', our travel sponsors at the time. Because of Eugene's rich athletics heritage, the opening and closing ceremonies and some feature events such as the 100m and 1500m finals, and the M50 discus final featuring legendary USA Olympic gold medallist Al Oerter, drew large and appreciative crowds. The Opening Ceremony was especially memorable for the athletes as they marched into the stadium in age-groups (the youngest, W35 entered first while the M90s had the honour of coming in at the rear) to enthusiastic applause. Kip Keino, the Kenyan Olympic champion, ran through the assembled athletes carrying the 'friendship torch' signifying the start of the championships.

Ninety-eight World Records, 13 by Australians, were set at Eugene. Four Australians broke two such records apiece: W60 Shirley Brasher (Tas) 5000 and 10000m; W60 Ann Cooper (SA) 400 and 800m; M70 John Gilmour (WA) 1500 and 5000m, and W50 Helen Searle (NSW) hammer and triple jump. Helen's mother Ruth Frith set a record for the W75 hammer throw and so began her illustrious career as an amazing breaker of multiple World Records. Other Australians to set World Records were: M50 Alan Bradford (Qld) and M55 Tom Roberts (Vic) in the 800m, M65 Tom Hishon (Qld) for the 400m and our W60 4x100m relay team of Joyce Green, Ann Cooper, Gwen Davidson and Aileen Hogan.

During the WAVA General Assembly Peg Smith and Ray Callaghan (both from Victoria and two of the leaders of the 1987 Melbourne LOC) stood for President and Vice President Stadia respectively. Unfortunately both were involved in unsuccessful three way contests for the positions that were won by Cesare Beccalli (Italy) and Bill Taylor (GB).

Shortly after returning from Eugene the ACTVAC may have had the honour of conducting Australia's first indoor athletics meet when they organised such an event in the National Tally Room on Thursday evening September 21, 1989. Bryan Thomas was meet director of a five-event track program that included a 50m dash, 360m (two laps of the 180m track painted on the bitumen floor),

900m, 3600m and a relay (where each team of ten runners had to include at least two over 50s and three women with a minimum total age of 425 years). The first evening was so successful another meet was conducted and four more the following year when high jump, standing triple jump, medicine ball throw, 40m hurdles and an attrition race were included. Unfortunately, poor attendances during 1991 caused the event's demise.

Easter 1990 and Melbourne's Olympic Park was again the venue for a successful national championships. As was the practice at the time the AAVAC AGM was held during the meet. Unfortunately, several contentious issues caused the meeting to go from 6pm to after mid-night. Two major items: accepting a new constitution and that Victoria had not paid its affiliation fees on time - were mainly responsible for the long and tiring meeting. However, a positive outcome was an agreement that in future such meetings should be separate from the competition.

Because of the new constitution the meeting held during Easter would in future be a Board Meeting and the AGM (or Council) would be held later in the year. The Board would meet twice a year and consist of three executive members and six directors while the Council or AGM would be made up of the executive plus two delegates from each state/territory and would meet annually. The first such AAVAC AGM was in Brisbane in October 1990. Until now the president of AAVAC was automatically given to the president of the state organizing the next national championships but the new constitution required an elected executive and a Board of Directors. Bryan Thomas (ACT) was the inaugural elected national president, while Stan Perkins and Tom Hishon continued in their roles of secretary and treasurer. Each of the six members of the Board was to take on one of the portfolio responsibilities: Competition, Public Relations, Sponsorship and Financial Affairs, Promotion and Development, Technical and Merchandise. Two major agenda items: a new and distinctive national competition uniform was modelled and accepted, and the Traveland company promised to assist with funding a doctor and two managers to attend the next World Championships in Turku, Finland (July 1991). After discussing a number of candidates it was decided that

Chapter 6: 1991 – 1995

NEW STRUCTURE FOR AAVAC

AAVAC's new constitution was the beginning of doing things differently

In March 1991 Bryan Thomas and Stan Perkins, AAVAC president and secretary respectively, attended a meeting in Adelaide of all national athletics associations called by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) in an attempt to establish an Australian Athletics Federation. The ASC, the Federal Government's agency supporting sport, favoured a model where they dealt with only the peak body of each sport - in our case Athletics Australia (AA). However, AAVAC had evolved outside of AA and had successfully operated independently since 1973 because it felt mainstream athletics did not adequately cater for older participants. The initial outcome of this meeting appeared positive and several more meetings were held over the next few years, but with limited success.

A by-product of the rapid growth of sport for mature-aged persons across Australia during the 1990s was the crowding of the masters sports' calendar creating a number of unfortunate clashes. One of the concerns facing the LOC of the 1991 AAVAC Championships in Canberra was that a multi-sports festival known as the Australian Veterans' Games was scheduled to be held in Wagga Wagga, NSW just weeks before Easter. Not only was the date and location perceived as a problem but there was also concern about the title of the event.

An early and generous sponsorship by the Westpac Banking Corporation for the 19th Australian Veterans' Track and Field Championships in Canberra during Easter 1991 enabled the LOC the luxury of having their costs being covered as well as the club receiving a healthy contribution to its bank balance. Since the ACTVAC's first experience at hosting the annual championships in 1984 the Bruce Stadium athletics track had been removed, meaning most visitors would be competing on what used to be the AIS warm-up track for the first time. Two World and 19

Australian Records were set during the championships. M55 Bob Gardiner (Vic) set both World Records with outstanding efforts in the 5000m and 20km race-walks. Due to the undesirable nature of last year's AAVAC AGM in Melbourne the Council met on Thursday, allowing delegates ample time to conclude their meeting prior to competition. The only major decision made was to increase capitation from \$2 to \$3. During his president's report, Bryan Thomas (ACT) described the recent death of Chris Higgins (then Secretary of Treasury) following a local 3000m race. The death of such a prominent federal public servant caused some negative publicity concerning the advisability of competitive athletics for 'older people'. Bryan called for all involved in our sport to be more conscious of the health and well-being of fellow athletes.

AN OUTSIDER COMMENTS ON OUR SPORT

In July 1992 the then Federal Minister of Sport, Ms Ros Kelly, received the report *Play On!* written by the Masters Sports Project's Director, Mr Ron Burns of Canberra. AAVAC, as a full member of the Australian Confederation of Sport (CAS), was part of the decision made at the 1990 CAS AGM to instigate a Masters Sport Project. The Project, a joint exercise of CAS and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) commenced in late January 1991 and was completed by July the following year. AAVAC was involved in many aspects of the research connected to the project, and along with AUSSI Masters Swimming, featured prominently throughout the report. Both AAVAC and AUSSI already had well established masters/veterans organisations compared to many other sports. In his report Mr Burns commented: 'AUSSI and Veteran Athletics are in a unique position. Their overall organisational and competition structure and their international links parallel that of most National Sports Organisations (NSOs)'. (p67 *Play On!*). Of the 28 recommendations made in the report several were of specific interest to veteran athletics: for example –

'Masters sport should be supported by the Australian Government

Funding should be made available to NSOs to assist with the administration and development of Masters sport

AAVAC should approach WAVA to change the name of the World Veterans Games to World Veteran Athletics Championship

NSOs should create a structure which keeps Masters sport within the framework of that sport's organisation but allows Masters participants the major role in developing rules, competition structures and procedures for the conduct of their sport'.

Two years later AAVAC would commence work on its first development plan with the assistance of Ron Burns and the ASC.

One hundred and fifty-five Aussies, accompanied by team doctor Terry Farquharson (SA) and Harold Stevens (Vic) as manager, made the long journey to Turku, Finland in July 1991 to participate in the IX World Veterans' Championships. Unfortunately, because the promised support from Traveland was not fulfilled our other manager Bronwyn Muller (ACT) was unable to attend. As the championships were conducted just before the break-up of the USSR; international politics, particularly in Finland were fragile. Unfortunately, this political mood caused the late cancellation of the parade of athletes, always a popular component of the opening ceremony. However, many Australians, and a number of others from various countries, held their own unofficial parade by walking and jogging around the track carrying national flags (unashamedly the green and gold boxing kangaroo banner was prominent) and waving to the crowd. Politics of a different kind meant the General Assembly was an interesting and animated affair that lasted more than 12 hours. The vote for the WAVA presidency was controversial because the two major candidates had different philosophies as to the future direction for our international body. Incumbent Beccalli (Italy) favoured that WAVA should be autonomous but closely linked to IAAF, while his opponent Lynn (Canada) believed WAVA should remain totally independent. Beccalli won narrowly 55 to 49. Apart from voting for its new executive, the assembly dealt with many other issues: for example, Australia unsuccessfully moved that WAVA accept M35s in future championships; Miyazaki was granted the next championships, and Singapore won the right to host them in 1995

(later rescinded). In the stadium three Australian women continued their magnificent form they had demonstrated two years earlier in Eugene by again being among the World Record breakers: Helen Searle in both the W50 triple jump and hammer throw, W60 Ann Cooper in the 400m, and Ruth Frith W80 in the triple jump.

In November 1992 450 Aussies and Kiwis flew to the isolated, scenic and historic Norfolk Island for the 6th Oceania Championships. This was a major undertaking for the small island community. But locals and visitors alike were confident a successful championship could be achieved, because less than a year before (February 1991) they held an invitational meet in order to test the new grass track at the school and practise conducting athletic events.

Hobart was the venue for an efficiently run and friendly 20th national championship. The Tasmanian LOC were thrilled with more than 450 entries and by the seven World Records (six by women) set at their picturesque athletics stadium. It was fitting that local lass, W65 Shirley Brasher, set four of the World Records (800, 1500, 5000 and 10,000m). Tom Daintry (Vic) race-walked to a new M80 world best. Helen Searle (NSW) once again improved her own world mark for the W50 hammer, and the following day the strong winds eased just long enough for her mother Ruth Frith to get in a legal W80 triple jump record. However, the winds were not so kind to Gwen Davidson (Vic) when she triple jumped further than any other W65 ever had, but due to the tail wind her magnificent leap could not be ratified as a record.

Stan Perkins (Qld) was elected president and Dot Browne (Vic) secretary at the 1992 AAVAC AGM in Melbourne. The meeting gave approval to investigate the possibility of employing an executive officer and to publish a national newsletter as well as agreeing to include the weight pentathlon in future national championships. Only two months before this meeting the final edition of the once successful *The Veteran Athlete* was produced. (Refer to Chapter 5).

CRISIS IN ADELAIDE

A crisis confronted the 21st championships in Adelaide at Easter 1993 when two South Australian athletes, not members of our association, threatened legal action if not permitted to compete. They were eventually granted leave to do so, but since then entry form wording has been more carefully constructed to overcome this problem. One month later the AAVAC Board decided that in future non-members could participate at the nationals by paying an extra \$50 on top of the normal entry fees. These championships were also significant as they were the first to conduct official competition for M30s. Thirty-one Australian and two World Records (by M85 Harry Gathercole (Qld) in the 200m and W35 Pam Matthews (Vic) in the hammer) were set. A special meeting was held at the track during the meet to hear a report from AAVAC president Stan Perkins who had recently visited Miyazaki. Stan informed the meeting of the superb quality of the Miyazaki facilities and the status of the preparations for the upcoming World Championships. He explained that although the championships were initially to be held in July they had been postponed to October and that the costs of food and accommodation were not as expensive as many believed. Stan's presentation encouraged more Australians to consider travelling to Japan.

The 1993 AAVAC AGM was held in August where it was announced that our membership had reached an all-time peak of 4280. The meeting agreed a competitor's age-group shall be that as on the first day of the championships, lap scoring sheets would be required for all records in events of 3km or longer, and the inaugural Australian Weight Pentathlon Championships would be held in Canberra early 1995. It was also agreed to establish a strategic plan for the future development of AAVAC and work on this should begin the following year.

The X World Veterans' Athletic Championships were initially to be held in Miyazaki, Japan in July 1993 but were moved to October in order to miss the worst of the typhoon season. Even so, 'Typhoon Ed' caused torrential rains during the first days of competition. These championships were the largest ever held, attracting 12,000

entrants (whom 6000 ran the marathon) from 78 countries. The Miyazaki LOC had a huge budget and magnificent facilities to help them conduct a superb carnival. Many of the 152 Australians (102 men and 50 women) stayed together in comfortable dormitory-style accommodation within 'Sportspark', less than a five minutes stroll to any of the three competition venues.

It will be difficult to stage an opening ceremony as spectacular as the one at Miyazaki. The attendance of His Imperial Highness Prince Akishino and his new princess guaranteed a huge enthusiastic local audience and a high quality event. This was the first time athletes marched into the stadium behind national flags rather than by age-groups as in previous championships. A special honour was bestowed upon W65 Tasmanian Shirley Brasher when she was asked by WAVA to carry their flag in the Opening Ceremony. The cross-country was held in the distant countryside and ran through rolling hills of cosmos flowers in full bloom. The marathon was treated like a major city marathon with large crowds cheering and waving flags while helicopters with television crews hovered overhead. Four World Records were set by Australians: Judy Bandiera (NSW) in the W45 800m; Ruth Frith (NSW) in both the W80 triple and long jumps, and Harry Gathercole (Qld) for the M85 200m. By participating in Miyazaki M55 sprinter Reg Austin, M70 long distance supremo John Gilmour and middle distance runner M75 Jack Stevens were three of only 20 competitors who had then competed at all ten World Championships. Reg had the additional honour of being a gold medallist in every one of the championships.

A highlight of the General Assembly was the acceptance of Royce Foley's proposal to include the weight pentathlon in future championships, although the Miyazaki LOC had correctly anticipated its endorsement by conducting this popular new multi-event within the championships. Australian throwers performed well in the pentathlon winning three gold and two silver medals and a bronze. Appropriately, Royce was the silver medallist in the M75 category. An exciting three-cornered contest occurred between Buffalo (USA), Malmo (Sweden) and Durban (RSA) for the privilege of staging the next championships. Buffalo was successful with 58 votes from Malmo 39 and Durban received

15 votes. The Assembly then decided that Durban would host the championships in 1997.

With the Sydney Olympics being only six years away it was a thrill for veteran athletes to have a close look at some of the major venues as the 22nd Australian Championships, Easter 1994, were held at the new Olympic Games warm-up track in Olympic Park, Homebush. Unfortunately, many throwing events, especially the hammer, could not be accommodated so were conducted in an open field, lacking shade, seats or water for either athletes or officials. A meeting of the AAVAC Board agreed to pay the fare of one delegate from each club to attend our AGMs; it also decided that the opening ceremony at future national championships would be a Welcoming Ceremony, and that a safety officer would be appointed and water would be available for races over 3km.

In July 1994 more than 300 competitors converged on Suva, Fiji for the 7th Oceania Championships. Suva thus became the first city to host the championships twice, having previously staged the inaugural event in 1982. The week-long carnival of athletics was marred by rain and strong winds while accommodation for most athletes at the University of South Pacific was basic.

AAVAC RECOGNISES NEED FOR A STRATEGIC PLAN

The main agenda item at the AAVAC AGM in Melbourne in August 1994 was to conduct a search conference where delegates and the Board were involved in a SWOT analysis. The aim of the conference was to prepare the framework for a strategic plan to be tabled at the next AGM. These initial steps were made possible by financial assistance from the Australian Sports Commission and with the help of its consultant for mature aged sport, Mr Ron Burns. It was felt a plan was essential 'in order to accommodate future growth and meet the demands of its members, AAVAC recognises the need to restructure its administrative base and adopt a professional management approach in the conduct of its affairs.' (*Introduction, Strategic Plan*). The meeting also agreed to compile Australian Records for non championship track and field, and road events and records up to 400m must be timed electronically.

The first two World Masters Games held in Toronto, Canada 1985 and Denmark 1989 run by private enterprise were financial disasters. However, the World Masters Games in Brisbane during September 1994 attracted 23,000 participants across all sports and were a great success. Many of the LOC were members of the Queensland Veteran Athletic Club so it could be assumed they played a significant role in assuring the athletics component were in keeping with the standards veteran athletes were accustomed. While most events were won by good to outstanding performances, the overall depths of competition fields were often not of the high quality experienced at WAVA World championships. The weight pentathlon, incorporating the inaugural Australian championships, was held in the evening under lights. As this was the first opportunity for many athletes and spectators to watch the event, especially to see the throwers toss the heavy weight, it attracted a large and enthusiastic gallery.

WEIGHT PENTATHLON RECOGNISED AS A LEGITIMATE EVENT

Prominent Victorian thrower, coach and administrator, Royce Foley had for many years advocated that the weight pentathlon deserved to be recognised as a legitimate event for veteran athletes. Apart from trialling the multi discipline throwing event (incorporating hammer, shot, discus, javelin and heavy weight throws) in his home state he was also communicating his ideas with throwers throughout Australia and abroad. Royce was a key executive of a relatively new international lobby group known as the 'World Veterans' Weight Pentathlon and Throwers Club'. In 1992 the Throwers Club, consisting of six member countries (Australia, Austria, England, Germany, New Zealand and South Africa) and four participating countries (Denmark, Hungary, Italy and



Royce Foley

Poland) published a handbook *Weight Pentathlon*. The purpose of the handbook was to define the rules of the event and specifications for implements to be thrown by each age-group. It also included rules for several other special pentathlons that required athletes to throw five differently weighted implements. The hammerfest, discorama, shotorama, javelin and heavy weight pentathlons were at the time popular throwing competitions in some parts of Europe. However, by far the greatest portion of the publication was made up of the age factors and scoring tables to be used in future WAVA competitions. The handbook was a valuable resource for the throwing community and was revised and updated in 1994.

Royce Foley had seen his pet project successfully take-off at the Miyazaki World Championships in 1993 and again the following year at the World Masters Games in Brisbane. In the years following, the weight pentathlon, now often referred to as the throws pentathlon, has become increasingly popular with veteran/masters athletes. So popular has it become that event organisers are often faced with the difficulties of programming and coping with the demand for implements and throwing circles.

Always looking for a means to encourage throwing, Trish Thomas (ACT) organised the first stand-alone AAVAC Weight Throwing Championships in Canberra on Sunday 16 April 1995. This was still in the relatively early days of the weight pentathlon being recognised as an event worthy of inclusion in veterans' competitions. Sixty throwers, slightly more than half being women, from the ACT, NSW, Victoria and even one from Finland participated, signalling just how popular this event would soon become. Royce Foley expressed his appreciation to Trish for staging the event and went on to win the M75 category. The best performances at these championships were by Miyazaki gold medallist Helen Searle (NSW) with 4527 points and Graeme Rose (Vic) 4299 points.

TOWNSVILLE HOSTS NATIONALS

The change from the traditional venue and date for the 1995 nationals came about because it was expected that the Northern

Territory would conduct the 23rd Championships. However, they were unable to do so and the states and ACT were reluctant to take on the task at short notice. Fortunately, organisers of the Queensland Masters Games in Townsville (29 April – 1 May 1995) were willing to incorporate our championships within their inaugural event. Veteran members could enter both our championships and the Games (provided they paid two entry fees) and were therefore eligible for two different medals.

Exceptionally high temperatures (36 C +) for much of the duration of the XI World Championships in Buffalo, USA in July 1995 made conditions difficult and even dangerous for participants, especially those in endurance events. Some cross-country races were postponed because so many runners suffered heat stress that the first aid services were unable to cope. Competitors and spectators at the stadiums also suffered because of lack of shade. Buffalo attracted a record number of foreign entries (3699 including 216 Australians) of a total of 5529 from 74 countries. The pros and cons of drug testing veteran-aged athletes had been debated for many years and testing was implemented at a World Championships for the first time (albeit on a relatively small scale) in Buffalo. One of those tested was Marge Allison (NSW) who had just set a World Record and was reported to have said she 'was honoured to undergo a drug test'. Another of the standout Aussies was M55 Reg Austin who maintained his incredible string of gold medal performances. World Records were set by a trio of NSW women athletes – W50 Marge Allison in the 400m, W55 Helen Searle in the hammer and Mary Thomas for the W50 javelin.

The September 1995 AAVAC AGM in Melbourne was significant in that it heralded a new direction for our national association. Len Childs (ACT) was elected president, taking over from Stan Perkins. Although Len had never served on his club's committee he had the full backing of the ACTVAC to seek the presidency. Len had been involved in athletics most of his life, both in England and Australia and was an enthusiastic veteran athlete having participated in many national championships and five World Championships. He had also been a prominent administrator

during his working life, and for the past three years was the Board member responsible for Development and Promotions. Following a review of the frameworks for our Strategic Plan, which had begun twelve months earlier and was discussed further by the Board last March, a working party was formed to refine the document, discuss the administrative implications and determine the plan's timelines. The working party, chaired by the president and made up of Ron Challis (Tas), Irene Davey (Qld), Doug Orr (Vic) and Alan Williams (ACT) acknowledged that many issues confronting the national body were already being addressed by the clubs, particularly those that had or were well on the way to producing their own development plans. Three other important decisions were made during the meeting: to approve and support a bid from Queensland to stage the 2001 World Championships; to rescind the by-law introduced two years earlier allowing non-members entry to the national championships by payment of an additional fee, and to increase capitation to \$5 from next year.



***Helen Searle
making her
World Record
hammer throw
of 46.42m at
the 1989 World
Championships
in Oregon,
USA.***



From top: Heather Doherty, at age 37 wins the Javelin throw at Queensland OPEN Championships. Bernie Hogan M55 at third WAVA championships in Hanover, 1979 where he won both 100m & 200m. Reg Austin training in 1977/78: he still holds six Australian Records over 100m, 200m, 400m. (Pictures: Sydney Morning Herald) Blazer badge of the 1972 team.



WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS
8000m Swedish men-42,60m
Gilmour 1746, Junner 535
Box Hill, 27 March 1975

JOHN GILMOUR SPANS DECADES
Born 1919; first Open competition
1938; final competition appearance
2005.

Above from left: 1975 – 5,000m at
Box Hill with Colin Junner (L) and
Cliff Bould (R); and 1977 – 800m
Gotenburg, Sweden. Left, 1977 Perth
Nationals with Jack Pennington; and
1981, WAVA 10,000m.

Colour pictures, from left: 1985
WAVA Rome 10,000m; 1989 Perth
Nationals with Theo Orr; and 1993,
WAVA Japan 10,000m





Above, Ann Cooper at WAVA Championships, San Diego in 1989 – Hall of Fame member for her achievements as a national and international sprinter with many current W60-75 Australian records. Bryan Thomas, age 39, in 1981 Canberra marathon, where he ran his best time - 2.36:37. Bryan was on ACTVAC' committee for 17 years.

Right, W50-70 5,000m at the combined 1984 Canberra Nationals and Oceania championships. Paula Ryan leads Norma Ducker, Jean Albury and Shirley Brasher W55.



Below, Anne Callaghan, one of several Victorian women athletes who also became successful administrators.



*Top, Reg Austin wins his 100m heat at the 1986 Nationals.
Above, Gus Theobald at 90. A champion race walker and founding member of the Veteran movement in early seventies, when aged 75 Gus was in the the 1972 team for Europe, wining Gold in the 10km race-walk.*

Al Digance was instrumental in the formation of veterans athletics in South Australia (SAVAAC) in 1971 and an office bearer when the national body AAAC was formed in 1974.



Above, Bryan Thomas (M45) chasing Geoff Moore (M40) in 5000m at 1988 Nationals in Brisbane; Geoff was Secretary of ACTVAC for 10 years.

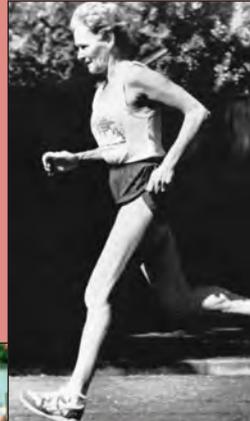
Below left, Ray Callaghan – athlete and competition director of the 1987 WAVA championships in Melbourne. Below right, Peg Smith, secretary/treasurer of AAVAC, and executive director 1987 WAVA event.





Above, Cliff Bould (far right) age 75 in the 1991 WA championships 5,000m. Formidable line-up includes State marathon record-holders Frank Smith and Steve Barrie, and Bob Schickert – all M50s.

Right, inaugural HoF entrant Ann Cooper; and again below, at Gateshead, UK, 1999 World championships. In the 1950 Auckland Empire Games her team won 4x100 yards gold and as a veteran/Master she holds many Australian sprint records.





Above, 1995 Buffalo USA, WAVA Championships: the silver-winning M75 4x400m relay team are, from left, George McGrath, Jack Stevens, Andy Smith, and Len Foulser.



Below Heather Doherty, and right, in 1992.





Above, David Carr and Alan Bradford at the 2009 Adelaide Nationals.

Right, David Carr, M75, at Riccione. The 800m world record-holder, and dual gold-medallist at these championships, David is leading former world record-holder Earl Fee, of Canada to the finish.



Left, world indoor championships, Kamloops 2008, features Steve McGugan over 60m hurdles.

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- A New-Look Magazine for a New Age
- The Masters Games in Detail

Plus . . . We start our own Calendar of Veteran Events, And lots more . . .

The Veteran Athlete newspaper was edited from 1971-1979 by Jack Pennington and from June 1986 - June 1992 by Mike and Penny Hall. For one edition it became the magazine – pictured here (January 1992) featuring Wilma Perkins on the cover. It reverted to newspaper format before finally folding.

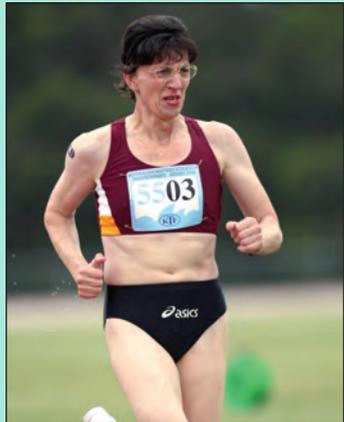


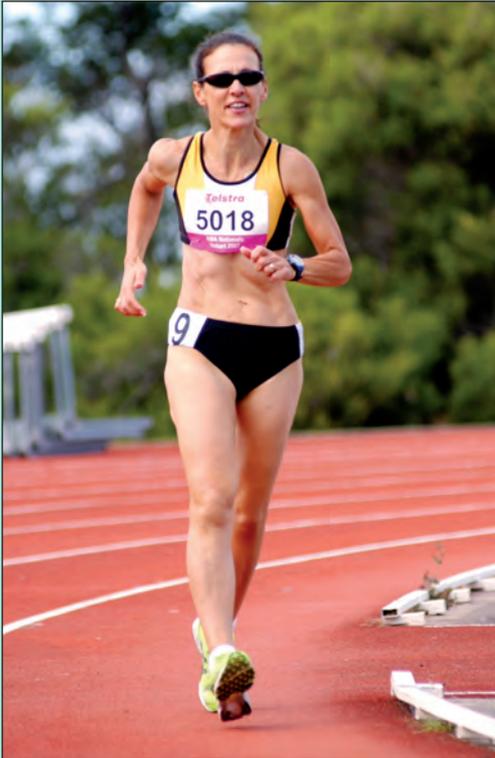
Above left - AMA Awards 2003. Presented at Melbourne in 2004, to (from left) David Carr – Most Outstanding Male Athlete; Jack Stevens, Most Outstanding Individual Performance (attendance at all WMA stadia champs) and Bob Schickert, Administrator of the Year. Above Mike Johnson with AMA Patron John Landy. Left, Lynne Schickert and Margaret Taylor. Below, left Stan Perkins, and right, Steve Lance.





Above Peggy Macliver and Marg Allison, Hobart Nationals 2007. Below, left, Karyne Di Marco, Adelaide Nationals 2009; and right, Jeanette Flynn at the Sydney Nationals of 2008.





Above, Peter Crombie at Riccione, 2007; below left, Lyn Ventris at Hobart Nationals 2007; and below, Andrew Jamieson in Riccione.





Above, Kevin Solomon (third from left) in the Lahti, Finland 800m M60 final. Right, at the Sydney 2008 Nationals the 100m Champions of Champions were W45 Gianna Mogentale and M65 Neville McIntyre, repeating their victory of 2007. Below, champion thrower for many years, Mary Thomas.





Pictured at the Perth 2010 Nationals in the brand-new stadium that replaced 1960s Commonwealth Games venue Perry Lakes are, above, Gianna Mogentale, left Marie Kay, and below Peggy Macliver.





Above, centenarian thrower and world record-setter Ruth Frith; right, Cliff Bould in the 1990s. Right, Gus Theobald. Below, left, Peter Lyden and Brian Bennett, part of silver-winning M45 5x4km cross-country team at World Non-Stadia Championships, 2004, Auckland, NZ; and right, Gwen Davidson, W75 h/j world record-holder at Adelaide, 1999.





*The Hall of Fame
Clockwise from top, Alan
Bradford, Shirley Brasher,
John Gilmour, Ann Cooper
and Reg Austin.*



Chapter 7: 1996 – 2000

TOWARDS THE OLYMPICS

AAVAC develops a Strategic Plan and most Aussies enthusiastically look forward to the Sydney Olympics

The Sydney Olympics were now only five years away and if it were possible, Australians were becoming even more interested in sport, especially those (including athletics) that would feature at the 2000 Olympic Games.

The 24th Australian Veterans' Athletics Championships were staged at Perth's Perry Lakes Stadium and its adjacent parklands at Easter 1996. The AAVAC Board met during the championships and Brian Foley (WA) took over the role of secretary that had been performed by Dot Browne (Vic) since 1992. The working party submitted a draft Strategic Plan to the Board for adoption. Alan Williams (ACT), because of his experience in writing the final version of his club's plan twelve months earlier, was invited to put together the finished document which would be presented at the AAVAC AGM the next August.

Communicating to veteran athletes across Australia had always been a problem facing our national organisation. AAVAC had long recognised the need for a national magazine and there had been two genuine attempts in the past; by Jack Pennington from 1971 to 1979 and Mike Hall 1986 – 1992 (*refer to Chapter 5*) but there had been many difficulties in maintaining their publications. In 1996 the Board agreed to produce a relatively small bulletin to be known as the *Courier* explaining its decisions and keeping the membership informed of national and international events. The *Courier* was produced at least four times a year, in various formats ranging from a one page supplement added to each club's magazine or newsletter to a small magazine, but after several years it was found there were too many obstacles (including finance) and it was discontinued at the end of 2001.

The 8th Oceania Championships was held in Papeete (Tahiti) in July 1996. One hundred and thirty athletes (30 Aussies, 60 Kiwis, 30 Tahitians and 10 other Pacific Islanders) were drawn to this

French speaking tropical island. Stan Perkins was elected Oceania Association of Veteran Athletes (OAVA) delegate to WAVA. Following the week long athletics competition, most visiting athletes and their partners and friends extended their stay to incorporate a holiday in the sun.

FIRST NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

All AAVAC AGMs are important but the one held in Sydney in August 1996 may have been more significant than most. Len Childs (ACT) and Peter Crombie (NSW) continued as president and vice president while new blood was added to the executive when Brian Foley (WA) and Peter Dunham (SA) were elected secretary and treasurer respectively. Tom Hishon, a champion Queensland sprinter, stood down after serving seven years as our national money man. AAVAC had now also changed its legal identity from being a company to an incorporated body but the biggest agenda item was the acceptance of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan 1996 – 1998, sub-titled *Coming of Age*, was well received. Although almost everyone involved in our sport had some idea of AAVAC's role it was important it be clearly defined as the basis for all the objectives and strategies outlined within the plan. Thus our Mission Statement, (*The Australian Association of Veterans Athletic Clubs Ltd., is the national controlling body for veterans' athletics, and aims to ensure the provision of opportunities for men and women over 30 years of age of all abilities to participate in athletics. It represents the interests of its members to government, other sporting organisations and the World Association of Veterans Athletics. AAVAC is committed to the promotion of athletics as the number one veterans/masters sport in Australia*'), was prominently positioned at the top of the plan. The plan encompassed seven key areas – Management, Finance, Participation, Communications and Marketing, Coaching, Major Events and Facilities as well as identifying a Critical Component the authors felt essential for the plan's ultimate success. The Critical Component stated – 'The appointment of an executive officer and establishment of a national headquarters are seen as critical components in the professional management of the association in charting a course for its future growth and direction.'

The Board was to monitor the outcomes of each of the plan's strategies every six months and report on its progress to the next AGM.

The inaugural National Winter Throwing Championship was held at the AIS Throwing Field in Canberra October 1996. Board member, and champion thrower, Ray Green (ACT) had previously approached AAVAC with a proposal to conduct a special annual three day carnival of throwing that would incorporate all throwing disciplines (shot put, discus, javelin, hammer and heavy weight), a weight pentathlon and a social event. Because the first event was deemed a success, with competitors coming from NSW, Queensland, Victoria and of course the ACT, the next Board Meeting (March 1997) granted permission for the ACTVAC to permanently conduct the Winter Throwing Championships. At the same meeting the board also requested that Australian athletes must wear the current national competition uniform when participating in international events.

The VVAC decided the 25th AAVAC Championships to be held in Melbourne at Easter 1997 would be a lean and efficient affair without the extra 'trimmings', such as an opening ceremony and a special social evening. However, as many visiting athletes were disappointed these had not been included in the program a later board decision mandated that a welcoming ceremony and a social evening should be important components of all future championships. Melbourne was the appropriate venue for presenting the inaugural Royce Foley Award to the man and women scoring the highest points in the weight pentathlon. Royce had died just a few months before these championships, but will long be remembered for his many years of service to Victorian athletics as a champion thrower, respected coach and administrator but especially for developing and promoting the concept of the weight pentathlon. The first recipients of this new award were M65 Wim van Weenan from Victoria and W60 Queenslander Heather Doherty.

WAVA AWARDS CHAMPIONSHIPS TO BRISBANE

Durban was a popular choice as venue for the 12th World Veterans' Athletics Championships (July 1997) as the Republic of South Africa had only recently thrown off the shackles of apartheid and also because many athletes and friends saw it as an opportunity to experience an African holiday. A total of 5788 competitors, including 147 Australians (the fourth largest visiting contingent) from 76 countries participated. Approximately a third of the Australian team were women; again reinforcing the healthy state of female participation in veteran athletics in our country. The LOC had some difficulties in efficiently conducting the first few days of competition. However, most problems were eventually solved and the championships continued relatively successfully. Sixty new World Records were set or established in Durban. Two of the stars were our eldest competitors W85 Ruth Frith winning four gold medals in the throws and M90 Harry Gathercole who set a WR in the 200m. M55 Reg Austin and M75 Jack Stevens were two of thirteen athletes (eleven men and two women) who had now participated in all 12 World Championships. After Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Victoria (Canada) withdrew their bids, the General Assembly awarded the 2001 WAVA Championships to Brisbane as it was the remaining bidder. The Assembly also elected Stan Perkins, the current Oceania delegate to WAVA, chair of its Doping and Medical Committee.

A month after returning home the mood at AAVAC's AGM was positive – we could look forward to Brisbane hosting the second World Championships held in Australia, the national body had a new constitution and a strategic plan that anticipated a rosy future for our sport.

In order to implement the critical component outlined in the plan to employ an executive officer in the near future and to distribute the *Courier*, AAVAC required a more reliable income stream. It was decided the capitation fee should increase by \$1 per year till 2002 and a \$20 levy be charged to all participants in our national athletics championships and \$5 for other sanctioned events. Although most state and territory delegates appreciated the desirability for a more professionally managed association they

often found it difficult to explain to many of their 'grass-root' members, who never take the opportunity to participate outside club events, of the need to increase capitation fees. Unfortunately many of these people have little understanding and less appreciation of the role of AAVAC, their head body.

The first competition of the new year for many Aussie athletes was being among the 495 participants at the 9th Oceania Championships in Hawkes Bay, NZ January 1998. Three months later very hot and humid conditions and violent thunderstorms stole the show at the 26th Australian Championships at ANZ Stadium in Brisbane. One storm was so fierce some afternoon events were held over until the following morning, upsetting the schedule. NSW athlete Marja-Leena Parvianen produced the most outstanding performance of the meet when she hurled the hammer 51.73m for a new W50 World Record. An Athletes' Forum was conducted for the first time. The gathering, of interested competitors that met in the grandstand to hear reports from AAVAC board members and had an opportunity to ask question or raise issues of concern, was so successful that the Forum has since become an important feature of our annual championships. The major decisions made at the board meeting held during the championships were that AAVAC be an incorporated body within the ACT and to go ahead and appoint an Executive Officer.

After three years as president Len Childs stood down and was replaced by Stan Perkins at the AAVAC AGM in Sydney, September 1998. A Victorian delegate summed up Len's time as national president when he reported in the October 1998 *Vic Vets News and Results*: 'Len retires from AAVAC



Brian Foley, left, and Len Childs in 1998

after having done a great job on our behalf. His lobbying of semi-governmental and governing bodies such as the Confederation of Australian Sport, Athletics Australia, WAVA, Oceania and others has been invaluable. His political experience made him a great representative for us. He was driven by a vision of what veteran

athletics could become, and pursued it with vigour and determination.'

This was the beginning of Stan's second term as national leader having previously served in the position from 1992 to 1994 as well as being secretary between 1989 and 1991. The most important decisions made by the meeting were to publish its budget in *Courier*, produce an *Operations Manual* as a guide for the LOC of future national championships and that special AAVAC Awards recognising outstanding athletic performances would be presented at next year's nationals.

In 1998 the Queensland Veteran Athletics Club (established September 1973) changed its name to Queensland Masters Athletics Association Inc and so became the first veterans' athletics organisations within Australia to use the term Masters in its title.

OPERATIONS MANUAL FOR NATIONALS

The 27th Australian Veterans' Athletics Championships held in Canberra over Easter 1999 were the first to be planned using the recently produced *Operations Manual*. Apart from outstanding competition that produced 26 Australian and two World Records (Margaret Taylor (ACT) W50 triple jump and Randall Hughes (Vic) M75 5000m) three innovations were a feature of these championships. The Welcoming Ceremony was certainly different; for apart from the traditional speeches and thanks to sponsors, it included an original poetic rendition on the virtues of veterans' athletics and a choir singing the national anthem. A special 'champion of champions' handicapped throwing contest, to parallel the 'champion of champions' sprint that had been a popular feature of the nationals since its introduction in Sydney in 1987, was conducted. This year the designated throwing implement was the javelin and winners of each men and women's age-group were invited to participate in the handicap competition. The following year the discus was the chosen implement, then in turn it was the hammer, shot and heavy weight before starting the rotation again with the javelin; thus over five years all throwing disciplines were involved. Another highlight

was the inaugural presentation of AAVAC trophies to our most outstanding athletes of the previous year. The first awards were made in ten categories; (*the inaugural recipients are shown in brackets and italics*) – Sprints/hurdles (M75 *Mike Johnston Vic*), Middle distance/steeplechase (W50 *Antoinette Shaw WA*), Distance (M80 *Bob Horman Qld*), Walks (W50 *Celia Johnson Vic*), Jumps (W50 *Margaret Taylor ACT*), Throws (M50 *Hans Lotz Vic*), Multi Events/relays (M45 *Clay Tompkins NSW*), Most Outstanding male athlete (M85 *Vic Younger Qld*), Most Outstanding female athlete (W65 *Heather Doherty Qld*) and Most Outstanding individual performance (W40 *Dawn Hartigan Vic* for her World Record in the pole vault).

Almost 6000 competitors from 74 countries were drawn to the northern English city of Gateshead with its long and proud history of track and field, to participate in the very successful 13th World Veterans Athletics Championships (July 29 – August 8 1999). Australia had the fourth largest team (234) only surpassed by the host nation with 1799, Germany 689 and USA with 547 competitors. However it was not the many high quality performances by athletes resulting in more than 70 World Records being set or established that attracted media headlines but rather a doping and/or question of gender concerning a W55 competitor from the USA. Unfortunately a couple of Aussie women athletes were unfairly reported to have been implicated in the controversy. W85 *Ruth Frith* with her five gold medals was once again one of our most outstanding performers while M60 *Alan Bradford (Qld)* with three gold medals and World Records in the 800m and steeplechase and W70 *Shirley Brasher (Tas)* a World Record in the steeple also stood out. A motion in the General Assembly to change the name of our international association from Veterans to Masters narrowly failed to achieve the required 2/3 majority when 73 voted in favour of a change and 46 against. After three unsuccessful bids Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was rewarded at last by being allocated the rights to conduct the 2003 World Championships. David Lloyd of the Brisbane LOC presented an attractive update of their planning towards the next World Championships in 2001. Wilma Perkins, also a member of the LOC with responsibility for programming, was invited to join the WAVA Stadia Committee – a position she continues to hold.

Financial matters were the main theme at the 1999 AAVAC AGM held in Melbourne. It was agreed to maintain capitation at \$7, give a grant of \$4000 to the club holding the nationals and donate \$500 to the Oceania Association rather than an amount based on capitation.

OLYMPIC YEAR

Approximately 300 Australian and New Zealand veteran athletes celebrated the commencement of the Olympic Year by participating in the 10th Oceania Championships on Norfolk Island. This was the second occasion that this tiny island had hosted the championships, having previously held them eight years earlier. Ian Anderson, the driving force behind athletics on the island and then the vice president of OAVA, was meet director for both. Proudly wearing his green and white Norfolk Island uniform Ian was a prominent and popular personality at many Australian, Oceania and World Championships throughout the 1980s and 90s. Ian was faced with two major difficulties in the days leading up to the championships: the new grass track at the school had not been completed and local weather conditions prevented some flights from Australia being unable to land. However, after deciding to make do with the unfinished track and delaying the start of the championships by a day most visitors agreed it was a memorable experience.

Shortly after returning from the warmth of Norfolk Island many faced the prospect of competing in bitterly cold, windy and damp conditions during the 28th Australian Veterans' Athletics Championships in Hobart. Despite the poor weather and Mt Wellington being covered in snow the annual championships were conducted in an efficient and friendly manner and as usual there were many fine performances. Competing in the final event, Margaret Taylor (ACT) attracted an interested gallery as each of her triple jump attempts were agonizingly close to the W50 World Record. The inhospitable weather prompted the AAVAC Board to consider the possibility of only allocating the nationals to Hobart in the years when Easter is relatively early. The board also decided that this year's marathon championships would be incorporated into the Sydney Marathon that was being used as a test run for the

Olympic Games Marathon, and also to establish a sub-committee to investigate compiling a history of Australian veterans'/masters athletics.

Over the previous couple of years the NSWVAC was having difficulty getting members to accept positions of responsibility. In 2000 the club underwent a drastic administrative change and merged with Athletics NSW which took over managing the affairs of veterans' athletics in that state. Prior to the merger the NSWVAC produced its own club newsletter '*Waratah*' but now only had a section within the head body's official magazine.

Most members of other state and territory veterans/masters clubs were disappointed on learning of the NSW arrangement as they believed that although we should have a meaningful relationship with mainstream athletics bodies such as Athletics Australia (AA), it is in the best interest of our sport to maintain our independence as we best appreciate the needs and desires of our mature-aged clientele. In the months prior to the Sydney 2000 Olympics, with the encouragement of the Australian Sports Commission, an attempt was made to establish a forum to include all national bodies involved in athletics. The aim was that an Australian Athletics Federation incorporating Athletics Australia, AAVAC, Little A's, Professional Athletics, Track and Field Coaches and School Sport etc would work cooperatively towards improving the image and organisation of the sport.

Delegates at the AAVAC AGM (September 2000, Melbourne) agreed to support the newly created National Athletics Federation. They also agreed to update our development plan, publish a list of Australian Records every six months, design a new and distinctive logo for the national body by 2003 and create a position of Chaplain of the Association. The decision to appoint a chaplain was controversial as some felt it inappropriate for religion to play such a role in a secular organisation. However the appointment of champion NSW thrower Stuart Gyngell to the position came to be accepted by most as being one of a counsellor rather than a chaplain.

The 2000 Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games were a magnificent way to wind up the century. Sydney was at its best.

Sydneysiders and visitors alike were cheerful and friendly and the weather was glorious. Throughout Australia there was a genuine enthusiasm for athletics. Veteran/masters members were involved in the athletics component in so many ways – many were spectators, many were officials down on the track or out on the marathon or walk courses, some were high ranking organisers such as Dave Cundy with the marathon, many performed a variety of volunteer tasks, some even participated, eg Susan Hobson in the marathon, and hopefully some other competitors will join our ranks in the future. Sydney benefited with several new athletics tracks built as training venues for visiting athletes of which three have been used to conduct our national championships; in 1994 the warm-up track in Olympic Park at Homebush; in 2001 at Bass Hill, and in 2008 at Blacktown. Because the AIS Track in Canberra was re-laid in the lead up to the Games with the same material as used in the Olympic Stadium, ACT veteran athletes also enjoyed running, jumping and throwing on better quality surfaces.



Left, Graeme Rose, AMA Board member and six-times winner of Best Male Performer trophy. Below, one of the 'World's Strongest Men,' WTC winner M45 Grant Edwards holds numerous titles, and all-time world marks recognised by the Guinness Book of Records; bottom, the entire field at the 2007 Winter Throws Championships.



Chapter 8: 2001 – 2005

MASTERS versus VETERANS

World Championships return 'Down Under' and the debate over whether we should be Masters or Veterans had almost run its race

Debate over the most appropriate name for our level of sport had been going on for many years. Until near the turn of the century 'Veterans' was the most commonly used term in Australia to define men and women athletes over the age of 30 although some countries (especially USA, Japan and Canada) preferred 'Masters'. It used to be easy within Australia to distinguish the type of competition and organisers by whatever term they used; for example Veterans' Championships usually referred to events conducted by our association where as Masters' Games most often indicated a multi-sports carnival. Nowadays it is more blurred. Queensland Veteran Athletics Club changed their name to Queensland Masters Athletics in 1998 and most national delegates to the WAVA General Assembly in Brisbane 2001 voted in favour of a name change for our international body, now to be known as World Masters Athletics (WMA). Subsequently our national body changed its name from Australian Association of Veterans' Athletics Clubs (AAVAC) to Australian Masters Athletics Inc (AMA). By 2003 every Australian club, except the ACT, and the New Zealand and Oceania Associations had changed their name from Veterans to Masters.

The NSWVAC, established in 1971 under its original name Wirrinum Veteran Athletic Club, changed its name to NSW Veterans' Athletics Club in 1974 and changed again in 2001 to NSW Masters Athletics Inc. (NSWMA). The following year South Australia and Tasmania became Masters, then in 2003 Victoria and Western Australia followed. The South Australia Veteran Amateur Athletics Club, now South Australian Masters Athletics Inc (SAMA), was the first officially established club for mature-aged athletes (April 1971). The Veterans Athletics Association of Tasmania (established 1979) became Tasmanian Masters Athletics Inc. (TMA). TMA is the head body for masters' athletics

in Tasmania. Although most competitive activity occurs in and around Hobart the island's geography has created a need to regionalise some administration and events, therefore a Northern and a Southern Branch have been established. Both wear the state uniform of green, red and gold and contribute to the association's monthly magazine 'Footnotes'. The Victorian Veteran Athletics Club, established 1972, now Victorian Masters Athletics Inc. (VMA) is by far the largest club in Australia consisting of 16 venues, four of which are in the country. Western Australia Veterans Athletics Club was established in April 1974 as a 'men only' club but women were granted membership three years later. In 2003 it became Masters Athletics WA Inc. (MAWA).

On the five occasions the 'nationals' have been in Sydney they have been held at four different venues; in 1974 and 1979 they were at the Hensley Athletics Field in Botany, then in 1987 at the E.S. Marks Field, Moore Park and now during Easter 2001 the 29th championships were at the new Bass Hill Track. Beautiful Indian-summer weather delighted everyone involved, especially the team of volunteer computer operators from Queensland who performed their tasks while sitting outside in the open stands. Song and dance presentations by each state proved an enjoyable feature of the dinner/dance. Perhaps the most popular and outrageous comical rock 'n roll dance routine was performed by ten ACTVAC members. The 'Swinging Hammeroids' were invited to repeat their performance at an official social evening during the Brisbane World Championships later in the year.

In the lead-up to the 2001 World Championships the WAVA Council, that administers affairs of the World association subject to decisions made by the General Assembly, had the unenviable task of withdrawing permission for Kuala Lumpur to hold the 2003 Championships. Internal Malaysian politics had interfered with the LOC causing failure to meet a number of contractual obligations so the Council subsequently granted the championships to the second bidder Puerto Rico.

BRISBANE HOSTS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 14th World Championships in Brisbane July 4 -14, 2001 were a great success. This was the fourth occasion they had been held

in the Southern Hemisphere; the first in Christchurch in 1981, then Melbourne in 1987, Durban ten years later and now Brisbane. More than 6000 competitors, including 1300 Australians, from 79 countries participated. A fun run through the parklands of South Bank was an enjoyable introduction to the championships while the serious competition took place at three track and field venues (ANZ Stadium, the adjacent State Athletics Centre and University of Queensland), the picturesque 8km cross-country course was on the St Lucia Golf Links, the road walk course was along Riverside Drive and the marathon started and finished at South Bank but incorporated both sides of the Brisbane River.

The host nation is always expected to do well and that was certainly the case in Brisbane when Australians won 75 individual gold medals (46 by women and 29 by men) from the 487 competitions. Australia also won another 36 from 81 team events in the relays, cross-country, road walks and marathon. Although an impressive 16.1 per cent of individual gold medals were bestowed upon Australian athletes it was not quite as good as the remarkable 22.5 per cent gold rush that occurred in Melbourne during the 1987 championships. However the global reach of veterans/masters athletics has grown considerably in the intervening years and it may well be impossible to achieve such dominance again. Six of the 35 World Records set during the championships were by Australians including an inspirational double by 101-year-old Queenslander Leslie Amey in the 100m and 1500m; others to set WRs were – Marie Kay (NSW) W40 heptathlon, Christine Schultz (Vic) W50 weight pentathlon, M85 Eddie Gamble (Vic) steeplechase and the W50 4x400m relay team of Barbara Blurton (WA), Judy Casey (NSW), Katheryn Heagney (Vic) and Wilma Perkins (Qld).

Several important decisions were made by the WAVA General Assembly; the most significant being when 93 voted in favour and 16 against to change their name from World Association of Veteran Athletes (WAVA) to World Masters Athletics (WMA). This result had been anticipated as the same motion narrowly missed securing the two-thirds majority required at the last Assembly (Gateshead 1999). Other decisions were to accept IAAF anti-

doping procedures and permit record claims by both men and women participating in mixed gender competitions. Sharon Gibbins (ACT) was one of three nominations for the vacant Women's Representative position won by Marina Hoernecke-Gil from Spain. The Assembly presented Fred O'Connor (NSW), along with 15 others, with a commemorative pin in recognition of his long and dedicated service to WAVA.

The Australian Association of Veterans Athletics Clubs (AAVAC) officially became Australian Masters Athletics Inc. (AMA) at the AGM held in Sydney September 2001 and 18 months later (in Perth April 2003) the association purchased the name. Delegates agreed to accept an offer by Queensland to conduct annual national decathlon and heptathlon championships in Brisbane, but on the other hand decided against entering into a contract to use SHERPA (a computer System for Handicapping, Event Recording and Processing of Athletics) as a national data base. Its developer, Colin Bridge from the ACT, had for many years promoted the increasing use of computer technology for conducting club activities, presented SHERPA to a meeting of the AMA Board in April for their consideration.

In January 2002, less than six months after the World Championships, Australians and New Zealanders could again enjoy international competition at the 11th Oceania Championships in Geelong, Victoria. One of the driving forces in bringing the championships to Geelong was local champion multi-event athlete M75 Rudi Hochreiter. Throughout the championships Rudi was kept busy in his role on the LOC and also as a medal winning participant.

The following month such all-round athletes had another opportunity to demonstrate their skills at the inaugural AMA Decathlon and Heptathlon Championships conducted in Brisbane by Queensland Masters Athletics.

'TELSTRA' SPONSORSHIP

The 30th national championships were the first to be known as Australian Masters' Athletics Championships and were also first to enjoy generous sponsorship from 'Telstra'. Track and field

competitions were conducted in Adelaide's new Santos Stadium with its excellent adjacent warm-up area consisting of a three lane 100m track, a grassed slope for hill running, high jump/pole vault fans, javelin runways, throwing cages and circles all within an extensive grass area. Perhaps the most outstanding athlete of the meet was M80 Victorian Mike Johnston who won all his races in fine style including Australian Records in both the 200 and 400m. The annual AMA Awards, presented during the dinner/dance, added an eleventh category for Administrative /Official of the Year. Long time Victorian Masters Athletics official Colin Browne was the inaugural recipient.

The AMA Board met three times during 2002; the first at Adelaide at Easter, then in Melbourne in June and again in October. At the Adelaide meeting Stan Perkins, AMA president, announced: "Through the Australian Athletics Federation we have gained some significant benefits; for example \$10,000 sponsorship from 'Telstra' to run the National Track and Field Championships in Adelaide in 2002, and again in Perth in 2003. Other benefits for member clubs and athletes include insurance cover." The meeting launched a new logo, prominently featuring a kangaroo and the Southern Cross in green and gold, to represent the newly titled Australian Masters Athletics. The meeting also agreed that AMA would only accept records of members. The major decision made at the other two meetings was to discontinue producing *Courier*, a national newsletter edited by Russ Haines (Vic) that had been published three or four times a year since 1996. As it cost approximately \$2 to produce each copy of *Courier* from a capitation fee of \$7 it was considered too expensive. The Board also accepted 'Jalpac' as the official AMA travel agent.

Melbourne was also the venue for the AMA AGM held in August. As the national association was incorporated in the ACT its constitution had to be revised to suit Australian Capital Territory regulations. A manual on the principles and procedures for conducting national championships was prepared to aid future LOCs. Some changes were made to a couple of events traditionally held at the championships; they were that in future M70s and older men must contest the 10km road walk while relays

would be designated as being M160 and M220 and W150 and W200 years.

WORLD MASTERS GAMES IN MELBOURNE

The multi-sports World Masters Games returned to Australia in October 2002. This time to Melbourne, and as in Brisbane were considered a success with more than 25,000 participants involved in all sports. The athletics component of the Games, that in the past had not always been organised and controlled by recognised veterans' athletics bodies, were at times a cause of conflict. However athletics (track and field, road and cross-country races) at the 2002 World Masters Games was organised according to World Masters' Athletics (formerly WAVA) requirements. As entry to the Games was open to all who satisfied the age requirements many participants in the various athletics events were not members of our association and there is little evidence to suggest many of them later joined a local masters/veterans' athletics club. In 2002, prior to the Games there were 3127 persons registered with AMA but the following year it had fallen to 3048, the lowest number since 1986.

Sports Industry Australia (formerly the Confederation of Australian Sport) included a Masters Sport category along with the Open and Junior National Awards for 2001-2002 in a nationally telecast ceremony at Melbourne's Crown Casino. The Australian W50 4x100m relay team of Barbara Blurton (WA), Kathy Heagney (Vic), Judy Casey (NSW) and Wilma Perkins (Qld) that set a World Record at the 2001 WAVA Championships in Brisbane won the national award from some outstanding competition from other masters sports.

FIRST AMA HANDBOOK

The first annual AMA *Handbook*, edited by board members Bob Banens and Alice Scott (both ACT), was produced and distributed to all registered members just in time for the beginning of the 2002-03 athletics season. Its purpose was quoted as being: '... to provide a useful reference for information and contacts for all mature aged athletes...'. The *Handbook* was a much needed

resource and was well received by both club members who regularly participate in AMA events and those of a much larger group who do not, and probably have less understanding of the role of the national association.

Everyone living in Canberra at the time has vivid memories of January 18 2003. For that was the extremely hot and windy Saturday afternoon an uncontrollable firestorm raged into the city's south-western suburbs burning more than 500 homes, causing four deaths, injuring many and destroying large tracts of parkland, pasture and forest. As more than 12,000 hectares of pine forest was burned, many of the most renowned local forest running trails were lost for ever. Stromlo Forest had long been a favourite training and competition venue for local distance runners, many of whom were members of the ACTVAC. These trails were made even more popular during the 1980s and 90s when Robert de Castella and other world class athletes did many of their long runs through the pine covered hills.

Weather during the 31st national championships in Perth (April 2003) was glorious. Both the road walks and cross-country were conducted on excellent courses adjacent to Perry Lakes Stadium. As usual whenever the championships are held in Perth many Western Australians have an opportunity to experience participating at this level for the first time. In fact four of the stand-out performers of the championships were from the home state: M70 David Carr was again impressive winning the 400, 800 and 1500m, Lynne Choate won both the W50 sprints, W55 Peggy Macliver was the gold medallist in the 200 and 400m while W45 Lyn Ventris was the quickest of all women race-walkers easily winning both the 5000m on the track and the 10km road walk. NSW sprinter Peter Crombie may have been the male athlete of the meet with his excellent wins in the M55 100, 200 and 400m as well as victory in the men's champion of champions handicapped sprint. A World Record in the W55 triple jump by Margaret Taylor (ACT) and nine Australian Records (eight by women) were set during the championships. The evening dinner cruise on the Swan River, during which the annual AMA Awards now sponsored by sportswear company Asics were presented, was a memorable highlight.

The XV World Masters' (formerly Veterans') Athletics Championships were originally granted to Malaysia but because of on-going internal political difficulties within the Malaysian sports and athletics community they were transferred to Carolina, Puerto Rico. Only 2700 competitors (the lowest in 20 years) from 78 countries participated in Carolina while the Australian contingent was a relatively small 37. It is uncertain as to the cause of the less than normal interest by Australians in attending these championships in July 2003 but it may have been a combination of concern about an impending war with Iraq, fear of international terrorism, an outbreak of the deadly SARS virus, a relatively low \$A, cost of flights and accommodation, hot and sultry weather conditions or even the reputation of a poorly conducted championships 20 years earlier. Despite the low numbers, high temperatures, energy sapping humidity and traffic jams between accommodation and competition venues, those who attended remember the championships as being well run, friendly and a great deal of fun. The General Assembly's decision to lower the age of men able to participate in future WMA competitions from 40 to 35 years was popular.

FIRST WOMAN ELECTED NATIONAL PRESIDENT

New ground was broken at the AMA AGM, held in Sydney, August 2003 when Lynne Schickert from Western Australia became the first woman to be elected leader of our national association. Lynne replaced Stan Perkins who had served 15 years on the Board including two periods as president (from 1992 to 1994 and again from 1998 to 2002) as well as being secretary between 1989 and 1992. Wilma Perkins was elected vice president. As if to mark a new era for the association a new flag to represent AMA was unfurled, a rudimentary website established by Ian Richardson (Old) and the Strategic Plan, originally accepted in 1996, was revised. Three months later the second edition of the *Handbook*, edited by Bob Banens (ACT) greatly assisted by wife Janice, was produced and distributed.

Although athletics at the Australian Masters Games (AMG), a multi-sports festival owned by the Australian Confederation of Sport and open to anybody over 30 years-of-age, may not be of

quite the same standard as at AMA Championships it has generally been considered successful. The original AMG were held in Hobart in 1987, since then they have been conducted every second year – in Adelaide 1989, Brisbane 1991, Perth 1993, Melbourne 1995, Canberra 1997, Adelaide 1999, Newcastle 2001, Canberra 2003, Adelaide 2005 and again two years later when they incorporated the inaugural Australasian Masters Games and in Geelong in 2009. On occasions there has been some conflict between the overall Games' management and the local state or territory veterans/masters club as to how the athletics should be conducted. Easily the most serious split between the two bodies occurred in July 2001 when a Special General Meeting of the ACTVAC was called to debate whether the club should take on the responsibility for the athletics component of the 9th AMG to be held in Canberra in 2003. Proponents of 'for' and 'against' arguments spoke at the meeting. Although the vote was close, the meeting decided not to be involved. The announcement was controversial and over the next fortnight John Hunt, as club president, featured in radio interviews and several newspaper articles. ACT Athletics was offered the opportunity to organise athletics for the Games but declined. Several weeks later an independent group, comprising individuals from various athletic organisations was formed to conduct the athletics component of the AMG. The ACTVAC committee agreed announcements concerning the Games could be made at events and in their magazine on the understanding the club had no formal role, or responsibility for the activities of this group. Despite such difficulties the 9th AMG held in Canberra during October 2003 were a success and approximately 850 of the 10,000 participants took part in athletics.

A positive end to 2003 was that the Confederation of Australian Sport (now using its original title instead of Sports Industry Australia as it had been known for several years) recognised the Australian W35 4x100m relay team that won gold in Puerto Rico as the Masters Team of the Year (for all sports). The successful relay team members were – Queenslander Olivia Stewart and her three NSW team-mates Marie Kay, Janet Naylor and Chris Penn.

INAUGURAL WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

The inaugural WMA Indoor Championships was held in March 2004 at Sindelfingen, a suburb of Stuttgart, Germany. As the decision to stage a biennial indoor championships was only made at the General Assembly in Carolina the LOC had just seven months to prepare. However as there had already been three successful European Championships there were many experienced administrators and officials available and the Sindelfingen facilities were very good. Eight of the 2405 competitors from 54 countries were Australians. Despite the Aussies not having much or any experience at participating on an indoor track they performed well. Most successful of the Aussies were a pair of Victorian middle distance runners; M60 Neil Macdonald was a gold medallist in both the 800 and 1500m, and M55 Kevin Solomon won gold in the 1500 and silver in the 3000m. Peter Crombie from NSW was runner-up in the M55 400m and a bronze medallist in the 200m.

Only a month later there was another WMA championship event but this time designed to attract a different type of masters athlete competing in a totally different environment. The WMA Non-Stadia Championships, incorporating long distance runs and walks, were held on the roads of Manukau, Auckland NZ. Despite the efforts of the LOC the championships only attracted 735 participants from 22 countries. More than half the entries were locals and surprisingly there was only a relatively small contingent from Australia. Because the championships lost money and were not considered a success, and as the marathon and 10 and 20km race walks are currently held at the WMA Track and Field Championships there was considerable doubt that a separate non-stadia championships would be viable in the future. Eighteen months later the General Assembly decided to discontinue a stand-alone Non Stadia Championships for the time being but left the possibility open for them to be staged again in the future.

Back home more than 600 competitors made the 32nd national championships in Melbourne the largest for many years. Lyn Ventris (WA) having just returned from participating in Auckland

was one of three women to set a World Records at the championships. Lyn's time of 23.56.62 was a new W45 WR for the 5000m track walk, Brenda Riley (Vic) set new standards for the W60 10km road walk while Heather Doherty earned her WR in the W70 weight pentathlon by scoring 4571 points.

In September 2004 the IAAF added a Masters Male and Female Athlete of the Year along with the traditional Open and Junior categories at their annual gala awards ceremony held in Monaco. Regional masters' athletics associations around the world were invited to submit nominations of outstanding performances achieved during the year. Jeanette Flynn (Qld), nominated by Oceania, was the first recipient of the female award for her two W50 World Records – 800m (2.16.78) and the mile (5.13.0).

COMPETITION AND TROPICAL HOLIDAY IN RAROTONGA

Rarotonga, the largest of 15 islands that make up the Cook Islands was the site of the 12th Oceania Championships, October 2004. Of the 266 competitors, 116 came from Australia and 115 from New Zealand. This was the first occasion since the 1984 Oceania/Australian Championships in Canberra there were more Aussies than Kiwis participating in an Oceania Championships. It was impressive that such a small and isolated community could organize a weeklong international athletics carnival so successfully. The picturesque sports stadium, nestled beneath steep forest covered hills with its excellent grass track was the main competition venue. The meet was conducted in an efficient and friendly manner and despite appearing to be low key there were many memorable performances, such as W95 Ruth Frith setting three World Records in the throws. The AGM of OAVA, held during the championships, made three important decisions – to change their name to Oceania Masters Athletics, allow M30s to participate in future and ratify the venues for the next two championships (Christchurch in 2006 and Townsville in 2008). Trish Thomas, from the ACT, learned of a need for a breast screening facility in Rarotonga so sought permission to help by asking athletes for donations. She handed over more than \$700 to the local Breast Cancer Society. Highlights of the enjoyable Closing Ceremony were the presentation of traditional island

dance and music and everyone receiving an engraved pearl shell to wear like a winner's medal.

For the third consecutive year an AMA team won the Masters Team category of the 2004 Confederation of Australian Sport Awards. This time it was the gold medal winning W60 Road Walk Team of Nola McKinnon (Qld), Joan Purcell (NSW) and Lynne Schickert (WA) that won the team 20km road walk gold medal at the WMA Non-Stadia Championships in Auckland.

TWENTY YEARS INVOLVEMENT WITH CANBERRA MARATHON

For the twentieth occasion the AAVAC/AMA Marathon Championships were held in conjunction with the 2005 Canberra Marathon. AAVAC and more recently AMA have enjoyed a long and successful arrangement with the Canberra Marathon. For 16 consecutive years from 1984 to 1999 association medals were presented to the first three veterans' athletics club members in each age group. Prior to the Canberra Marathon being designated as the AAVAC championships national veterans' titles had been part of other marathons such as within the Australian Open Championships in Adelaide 1980, Werribee, Victoria in 1981 and 1983 in Richmond, Tasmania. In 2000 and 2001 the championships were combined with the Sydney Marathon that was run on the Olympic course but returned to Canberra the following year. Dave Cundy, long time member of the ACTVAC and race director of the Sydney Olympic Marathon, has organised this popular marathon for all these years. Some of the many remarkable performances by veterans'/masters marathon runners in this event have been - Garry Hand (ACT) setting an M40 Australian Record 2.19.00 in 1987, W35 Susan Hobson (ACT) 2.32.57 in 1994, M55 John Gilmour (WA) 2.40.56 (1978) and the most senior record holders W75 Norma Walleth (NSW) and M85 Ken Matchett (Vic) running 5.29.40 in 2006 and 5.25.19 in 2007 respectively. Apart from Norma and Ken, who hold two race records apiece, other multi-record holders are South Australian Bev Lucas in the W45 and W50 categories and Colin Macleod from Queensland for M60, M65 and M70.

The 33rd AMA Championships attracted more than 500 competitors to Brisbane during Easter 2005. The LOC appreciated that most states had designated team managers and were pleased with the operation of its call-room for all track and field events. However, many athletes remain unconvinced of the need for such formal procedures for any field event or races where heats and/or lane draws are not required. W70 Heather Doherty, who has in the past set several World and numerous Australian Records, was one of the most outstanding athletes of the meet setting a World Record in the weight pentathlon and three of the 21 Australian Records.

Because the 6th World Masters Games were held in Edmonton, Canada only weeks before the WMA Championships in San Sebastian only a small group of Australians participated and even fewer were involved in both.

In late August and early September 2005 an Aussie contingent of 138 well served by managers Judy Cooper (Qld) and Bob Schickert (WA) attended the 16th World Masters Athletics Championships in San Sebastian (Spain) or Donastia, as the local Basque people prefer to call their beautiful city. 6033 competitors from 91 nations participated; the biggest team were hosts Spain with 1390 competitors, while the Australian team was eighth largest and of the top ten countries had the best female to male ratio of 37.6%. These championships saw the successful introduction of the M35 category at world level. The Opening Ceremony was especially memorable. Because national teams enter alphabetically Australia was one of the first to be surprised and thrilled to experience the warm and noisy welcome from the packed stands within the velodrome. It is customary the host nation enters last and when the large contingent of red and yellow clad Spaniards entered the cheering was louder and more demonstrative - but marching at the rear of the Spanish team, came a smaller group of athletes wearing bright green uniforms and proudly waving flags of the Basque nation (Euskal Herria). Although it seemed impossible, the applause increased in volume and enthusiasm and spectators and athletes alike rose to welcome the popular local team. Stan Perkins, Oceania representative and chair of the

WMA Drug Committee and former AMA and Queensland Masters Athletics president stood for the WMA presidency at the General Assembly but was beaten in a tight election (66 to 55) by the Italian candidate and former president Cesara Beccalli.

Much of the agenda of both the 2004 and 2005 AMA AGMs involved technical issues, especially concerning race walks. Two years earlier it had been decided that women and men over 70 years-of-age participate in the 10km and not the 20km road walk but now we should follow the lead set by WMA and open the 5000m and both the 10 and 20km to all race-walkers. It was also determined that road walk courses be between 2 and 2.5km in length and at least four judges, one being an AA 'A grade', be on duty. Other local rule changes were that the weight of implements will be reduced for women over 75 and records for the 60m sprint and 56 and 100lb weights be recognised.

The amazing record of AMA teams winning the masters team category of the annual Confederation of Australian Sports Awards continued in 2005. This year it was the gold medal winning M55 4x100m and 4x400m relay teams at the WMA Championships in San Sebastian. The successful team members were Alan Coleman (Tas), Peter Crombie and Neville McIntyre (both NSW), Peter Lamb (Vic) and Hans Van Bavel (SA).



Winning team at their CAS presentation, with Lyn Ventris runner-up for the CAS Master of the Year Award.

Chapter 9: 2006 – 2010

STAN'S OUR MAN AND RUTH IS 100 NOT OUT

Stan Perkins is elected WMA president and Ruth Frith sets high standards for W100 throwers

The new year commenced with the XIII Oceania Masters Athletics Championships at Christchurch, NZ in January 2006. Most of the 424 entries were from the host nation and Australia. However, as there were also 13 Cook Islanders, a representative from Norfolk Island, and several from as far away as England, Czech Republic, Germany, India, Mexico and USA, the championships had a real international flavour. Christchurch's large QEII Stadium was the focus for track and field while the cross country was run in the adjacent parklands and both the road walk and half marathon were conducted at excellent venues near the city centre. The many exciting competitions resulted in numerous championship and national records, four World Records and even a Commonwealth Games qualifying performance. W55 Heather Carr and the ageless W95 Ruth Frith each produced a brace of World Records: Heather setting new standards for the 3000m walk (15.31.84) and 10km road walk (54.01), while Ruth threw the heavy weight 5.11m and amassed 6750 points in the throws pentathlon. Local athlete, Angela McKee cleared the high jump bar at 1.89m, guaranteeing her participation in the up-coming Commonwealth Games.

As it was during the Sydney Olympics, many Masters athletes were involved as officials or volunteers during the Commonwealth Games held in Melbourne, March 2006. One who officiated at both the Olympics and Commonwealth Games was Brian Foley, AMA Secretary since 1996, so it came as a shock when less than a month later he died unexpectedly.

At about the same time as the Games the 2nd WMA Indoor Championships were being held in Linz, Austria. These championships were a great success attracting 3300 athletes from 62 countries. Although the Australian contingent of six was two fewer than those who participated in the inaugural championships in Germany two years earlier, the medal tally was

better (five gold, two silver and a bronze). Gold medals were won by; M55 Kevin Solomon (Vic) 1500m, M60 Peter Crombie (NSW) 400m and by Marie Kay (NSW) in the W45 long jump (5.41m), 400m (59.16) and the indoor pentathlon (4358 points). Her long jump was a new Australian Record while her performances in the 400m and pentathlon were World Records. In November the Confederation of Australian Sport (formerly Sports Industry Australia) recognised Marie's outstanding performances by presenting her with the 2006 Masters Individual Award.

GOLDEN OLDIE

Almost 500 athletes, approximately a third being women, participated in the 34th AMA Championships in Canberra over Easter 2006. A feature of the opening ceremony was an interview with two of the most prominent participants; the most senior competitor, 96 year-old Ruth Frith and one of the youngest, Stuart Rendell (ACT). Ruth, a champion mature-aged athlete, both nationally and internationally for many years; once again delivered world-class performances in all the throwing events. She broke her own W95 World Record for the weight pentathlon with a score of 7383 points (an average of more than 1475 points for each of the five throws) and featured in a photograph on the front page of *The Canberra Times* under the banner: 'As kids get fatter, 96 year-old golden oldie shows way to staying alive'.

On the other hand, Stuart, an Olympian and Commonwealth Games gold medal winning hammer thrower, was making his debut in an AMA competition. Apart from Ruth there were two other nonagenarians, Victorians Eddie Gamble and Andy Smith. Andy had the unique record of having participated in all 34 national track and field championships since they commenced in 1973.

The 2006 Queen's Birthday Honours List announced that both Jack Pennington, patron of the ACTVAC, and Des Paul long-serving South Australian administrator were each awarded an OAM for their many years of involvement in, and contribution to the veterans/masters athletics movement. Jack and Paul join several others who had previously also received such high honours for

services to our sport such as Dot Browne, Ray Callaghan, Peter Colthup, Wendy Ey, John Gilmour, Alistair Gordon, Pat Peters and Daphne Pirie.

The death of Brian Foley in April meant the first agenda item at this year's AMA AGM in Melbourne, August 2006 was to elect a new secretary. Experienced Queensland athlete and administrator Hazel McDonald was elected. Several decisions were made regarding events at future national championships: the 60m sprint would be added; the total ages of relay teams would now be 120, 160 and 200 years for women, and 120, 170 and 220 years for men; and the 10 and 20km road walks shall be open to both men and women of all ages. It also decided that an 'Athlete of the Meet' would be officially recognised and an AMA Hall of Fame be established. It also agreed there was a need for the history of AMA to be recorded.

ANDY'S HISTORIC STRING ENDS

The Tasmanian LOC was thrilled when 431 athletes entered the AMA Championships during Easter 2007 which was almost 100 more than when the nationals were last held in Hobart. This year's championships were the last to enjoy the generous sponsorship of Telstra that commenced in Adelaide in 2002. The Telstra sponsorship was one of the benefits the AMA enjoyed for being part of the Australian Athletics Federation. The Hobart championships introduced three new events; the 60m dash, three additional age bands for the relays and the 20km road walk being open to all. Once again 97 year-old Ruth Frith was the most senior competitor, while Victorian M85 Ken Matchett was the oldest male. Ken celebrated his status by setting a World Record in the steeplechase.

Unfortunately, M90 Andy Smith from Victoria was unable to make it to Hobart and sadly broke his historic string of having participated in every national championship. Race walker Lyn Ventris (WA), who had recently moved up to the W50 age group, set two new World Records with her efforts on the track in the 5000mW (23.37.78) and 10km on the road (48.27). Former Commonwealth Games medallist W75 South Australian Anne

Cooper won her fifth 'champion of champions' sprint trophy, having previously won this special invitational 100m handicap in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2006.

W30 Kylie Risk, a 10000m runner at both the Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, was a high profile Tasmanian entrant. However, spectators were disappointed she only participated in the 8km cross-country. There have been several other examples of Australian Olympians only making a brief, albeit impressive, appearance on the national masters/veterans' stage. Two such examples are Glynis Cearnis (formerly Glynis Nunn) Olympic heptathlon gold medallist in Los Angeles 1984 and Stuart Rendell Australian hammer thrower at the Sydney Olympics. Glynis set Australian Records when she won the W40 long jump (5.77m) and was second in the triple jump at the 2001 WAVA Championships in Brisbane. In his one and only Masters' competition, the 2006 AMA Championships in Canberra, Stuart tossed the hammer 77.53m for a sensational new M40 Australian Record. On the other hand, Karyne Di Marco, also a Sydney 2000 Olympian, discovered a new and exciting athletics scene after becoming a W30 and is now a regular participant at all local, state and national masters' competitions.

A pair of dual Olympic Games representatives (Rome 1960 and Tokyo 1964) have had a long, continuous and successful involvement in masters/veterans' athletics. Throwers Helen Searle and Warwick Selvey, both now based in Queensland, have over the years won numerous national titles and set many Australian Records. Helen has also enjoyed considerable success at World Championship level as well as holding World Records for the hammer, heavy weight and throws pentathlon.

Riccione, a summer resort area on the NW coast of Italy, was the venue for the XVII WMA Championships. An Australian contingent of 182 athletes was amongst the record 8940 competitors from 96 nations. The 38 per cent female to male ratio of the Australian team was much better than the approximate 25 per cent ratio for all participants. The record numbers tested the capacity of the organisers and facilities to successfully cope with an international event of such size. Many participants complained of poor

transportation between venues that were far apart and inadequate provision for athletes to practice or warm-up. Despite such difficulties, standards were high and 37 World Records were set or broken. Australian teams rarely wind up a World Championships without a World Record or two as they did on this occasion, but they did return with a total of 86 medals.

MASTER STRONGMAN

It was no surprise big Grant Edwards (1.93m and 110kg), once recognized as one of the world's strongest men but now a federal police agent and M45 thrower based in Canberra, was one of the outstanding performers at the 2007 World Law Enforcement Games, the inaugural Australasian Masters Games in Adelaide and the AMA Winter Throwing Championships. At each he was an easy winner of almost all throwing events in his age group. At the Winter Championships he was also awarded the trophy for being the Outstanding Male Competitor and particularly impressed onlookers by easily breaking Australian Records for both the 56lb (10.82) and 100lb (4.93) ultra heavy weight tosses.

Prior to becoming a participant in veterans/masters athletics Grant enjoyed a background in a variety of sports. He played both rugby league and rugby union, competed overseas as a thrower in the Australian Junior Athletics Team, then had success as a power-lifter, won a scholarship to the University of Hawaii as a gridiron footballer and even spent a Northern Hemisphere winter as a member of the national bobsled team. In the mid 1990s Grant was encouraged to participate in the Bundanoon, NSW Highland Games strongman events. His success in these events led to being invited to perform regular strongman shows at large shopping centres and in 1996 an opportunity to feature in a British television production of 'World Series Strongman Competition'. Grant's involvement in this competition required he produce even more spectacular exhibitions of strength such as; hauling the 386 tonne tall ship 'Bounty' in Sydney Harbour and a 201 tonne steam train along a rail-line near Picton, NSW. Both efforts were recognised as World Records by Guinness.

Apart from Grant many other notable strong men have participated in local veterans/masters athletics competitions. Some who have enjoyed considerable success in throwing events over a number of years include: Commonwealth Games representatives Stuart Gyngell (NSW) and Hans Lotz (Vic), dual Olympian Warwick Selvey (Qld) and Wim Van Weenan from Victoria, who became an M75 in 2007 and could still toss the heavy weight further than most younger throwers. There have also been many prominent Australian female veteran/masters athletes, especially amongst the throwers, who were capable of performing impressive feats of strength. A few who would certainly qualify being referred to as strong women include: Heather Doherty (Qld), World Record holder for both the W50 and W55 hammer throw Marja-Leena Parviainen (NSW), Rome and Tokyo Olympian Helen Searle (Qld), Chris Schultz (Vic) and Commonwealth and Olympic representative Karyne Di Marco (NSW).

The increasing significance of the internet for communicating information was realised by the AMA Board and Ernie Leseberg (NSW) responded to their call for someone to upgrade and improve the national website. Another important means of communication has been via the annual publication *Australian Masters Athletics Handbook*. The 2007-08 *Handbook*, the sixth edition of this popular source of information, was the first to be edited by Vic Waters and Bob Schickert (WA) who took over from Bob and Janice Banens (ACT).

IAAF RECOGNITION

Victorian race walker Andrew Jamieson (M60) topped off an outstanding year in which he won gold medals at Riccione and setting four World Records by being awarded the prestigious IAAF Best Male Masters Athlete of the Year 2007 at a gala function in Monaco. This was the fourth year the IAAF had recognised masters athletics in their annual awards and it was the second occasion an Australian had received such high acclaim. Queensland middle distance runner W50 Jeanette Flynn was the 2004 World Female Masters Athlete of the Year.

The first AMA National Postal Relay Competition was conducted during February 2008. In the competition's first year, state and territory clubs were invited to form teams in ten year age brackets (40-49, 50-59 etc) to participate in any or all of the following – 4 x 100m, 4 x 400m, 4 x 800 and 4 x 800m walk and 3 x long jump, 3 x shot put, 3 x hammer and 3 x discus throw. The first postal relays resulted in a number of new state and Australian Records.

AUSSIERS STAR AT WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

In March 2008 the 3rd WMA Indoor Championships were conducted at Clermont–Ferrand in France. The 'Indoors' had previously been held at Sindelfingen, Germany 2004 and at Linz in Austria in 2006. An Australian contingent of 15, our biggest team to date, surprised onlookers by performing so well. However, all but three of the Australians had only ever seen pictures of an indoor athletics track, and as there is no such facility in Australia, they had to improvise their training routines.

M80 Rad Leovic (ACT) was one of the busiest athletes at Clermont participating in eight events; winning gold in the triple jump, four silver medals (pentathlon, 400m, 800m and 1500m) and a bronze in the long jump. Marie Kay (Qld), our most experienced indoors competitor, having participated at both Sindelfingen and Linz, was the most outstanding Australian competitor. She broke three World Indoor Records on the way to winning the W45 200m, 400m and long jump, as well as being a member of the national W40 4 x 200m relay team that won the silver medal. Marie's remarkable performances earned her the Oceania nomination for the 2008 IAAF Masters Athlete of the Year.

The 36th AMA Championships, conducted at Blacktown Olympic Park in western Sydney (Easter 2008), were the first since 2002 not to be sponsored by Telstra. Periods of heavy rain during the first days of competition affected some events, especially the throws and jumps, and unfortunately also caused the abandonment of the traditional medal presentations. Despite such difficulties the carnival generally ran to time thanks to the officials and volunteers who stood out in the inclement weather many hours each day.

As always there were many outstanding performances; most notably the World Records set by M75 West Australian David Carr and a composite W35 relay team. David's WR was in the 2000m steeplechase (8.56.59) while Julie Brims (Qld) and Renall Hobson, Kylie Strong and Gianna Mogentale (all NSW) ran 47.74 in the 4 x 100m relay. Ruth Frith at 98 years-of-age was again an inspiration, performing well in all throwing events. At the conclusion of the carnival it was announced that David Carr was the inaugural recipient of the Brian Foley Trophy for the best age-graded performance in either 800m or 1500m. Lyn Ventris, also of WA, created another little bit of history by winning her fifth AMA Award for race walking having also won in 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

In 2006 the AMA Board announced its intention of establishing a Hall of Fame. Now two years on it had defined and published the criteria: 'To recognise those outstanding individuals who are role models for the sport of Masters Athletics in Australia. They are athletes who have made sustained performances at the highest level in Masters athletics, and administrators who have made an extraordinary , inspirational and dedicated personal contribution to Masters Athletics in Australia and internationally'. It was hoped the first inductees to the 'Hall' would be announced during next year's national championships.

The XIV Oceania Championships at Townsville in July 2008 were a great success; superb weather, first class venues, efficient organisation, friendly officials and exciting competition. Of the 470 competitors; 293 were Australians and 138 were from New Zealand, there were also 11 Cook Islanders, seven New Caledonians, five from India, four Tahitians, two from Wallis and Futuna and a representative from each of Norfolk Island, Thailand and USA. Some of the little things that made the week so enjoyable were the limited use of a call room and the provision of low cost evening meals and drinks at the end of each day's program. Perhaps the most outstanding individual performance was by Ron Robertson of NZ who broke the World Record for the M65 steeplechase with his run of 7.18.10.

JOHN LANDY APPOINTED PATRON

At the 2008 AMA AGM John Landy AC MBE, recently retired Governor of Victoria (2001 – 2006), former holder of World Records for both the mile and 1500m and Olympian was appointed patron. John Landy is considered to be one of the greatest milers of all time. A month and a half after Roger Bannister created history in May 1954 by being the first person to break four minutes for the mile John Landy became the second to achieve the feat when he ran 3.57.9 in Turku, Finland. His time of 3.41.8 at the 1500m mark was also a WR. At the 1954 British Empire Games in Vancouver he finished just behind Roger Bannister in the final of the mile that was billed at the time as ‘The Race of the Century’. John Landy won the bronze medal for the 1500m at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

But the most lasting memory of John Landy as an athlete may well be when he stopped to assist the fallen Ron Clarke then racing brilliantly to make up the many metres he had lost to go on and win the 1956 Australian Mile Championship. This moment of good sportsmanship has been permanently captured in a bronze statue in front of the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

John Landy replaced Pat Clohessy as our patron. Pat had also been a champion athlete, coach and supporter of veterans/masters athletics. In fact Pat had participated as a veteran athlete in several of our earliest national championships.

Delegates at the meeting also decided that the women’s outdoor pentathlon should be changed to bring it into line with Oceania, therefore the new format would be – 100m, shot put, long jump, javelin and 800m. Prior to this the most common Australian version of the women’s pentathlon was the same as the men’s except for the last event – long jump, javelin, 200m, discus and 800m for women and 1500m for men.

HAS SUCH A FEAT OCCURRED BEFORE?

Adelaide turned on magnificent weather for the 2009 Australian Masters Athletics Championships although it may have been a little too warm for the longer races. However, the locals may not

have wished for such conditions because like most of south eastern Australia, Adelaide and environs sadly displayed all the signs of a prolonged drought. But they would have been pleased with the almost 500 entries.

World champion sprinter Gianna Mogentale from NSW entered the championships as favourite for all W45 sprints and horizontal jumps. But who would have thought she would also seriously tackle the middle distances? However, that is exactly what she did! Gianna was the star of the four day carnival - winning the W45 60, 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1500m as well as the long and triple jumps. She also won the women's 'champion of champions', a special handicapped sprint in which the best ten performers (determined by age graded percentages) in the 100m are invited to participate. She also featured prominently in the relays.

There were of course many other outstanding individual performances that produced numerous Championship and Australian Records and even a World Record. M75 David Carr (WA) improved his own WR for the 2000m steeplechase and also convincingly won the 200, 400 and 800m in his category. Thus, for the second time he was the logical winner of the Brian Foley Award as the best performing middle distance runner of the meet. W75 Queenslander Heather Doherty demonstrated her remarkable skill and strength, despite being restricted by chronic knee problems, with outstanding performances in all five throwing disciplines and the throws pentathlon. Former Commonwealth Games competitor, M45 Stuart Gyngell (NSW) was best of the male throwers; putting the shot 17.29m, hurling the discus 45.95 and tossing the heavy weight 15.08m.

FIRST INDUCTEES TO 'AMA HALL OF FAME'

The Championship Dinner and Awards Evening was held at the Adelaide Riviera on Saturday rather than Sunday night. The highlight of this evening is the presentation of the annual AMA Awards for the most outstanding performances achieved during the previous calendar year. This year it was also the ideal opportunity to announce the inaugural inductees into the AMA

Hall of Fame; Alan Bradford (Qld), Ann Cooper (SA) and John Gilmour (WA).

Alan Bradford was and continues to be a champion middle distance runner and over the years has set a number of World and many Australian Records in the 800m, 1500m and steeplechase as well as winning numerous Australian and World titles. He currently holds Australian Records for the M45, M50 and M60 800m; M50, M55, M60, M65 and M70 steeplechase, and the World Record for M60 800m (2.10.42).

Ann Cooper was a member of the gold medal winning 4x100 yards relay team at the 1950 Empire Games in Auckland. Since becoming a veteran/masters athlete she has enjoyed considerable national and international success as a sprinter. Ann currently holds Australian Records for the W75 60m, W60, W65, W70 and W75 for both the 100 and 200m and the W70 400m. She also has a share in the W65 4x100 and 4x400m relays. Ann is also a five times winner of the annual 'champions of champions' race held during the annual Australian Track and Field Championships.

John Gilmour OAM was a champion runner in his youth but returned home a physical wreck after suffering three years as a WWII POW in Japan. In 1969, at 50 years-of-age, he began competing as a veteran athlete and went on to set numerous World Records and win more than 60 international races. He currently holds Australian Records for the M60 1500m, M60, M65 and M70 for both the 5000 and 10000m. John was a foundation member of the WAVAC (now MAWA) and in 2008 was appointed its patron. He is also patron of the 'WA Lest We Forget Run' conducted annually by Athletics WA on behalf of Athletics Australia. In 1975 John was WA Sportsman of the Year, and the following year was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM). In 1987 he was WA Visually Impaired and Community Newspapers Sportsman of the Year and in 2000 he was a Sydney Olympic Games Torch Bearer. The annual Athletics WA State 10000m Championships is named in his honour.

Despite the global recession, affecting much of the world at the time, the XVIII WMA Championships in Lahti, Finland during July

and August 2009 still attracted 5250 participants from 80 countries.

Just before their departure to Finland, the 104 strong (61 men and 43 women) Australian contingent were saddened to learn of the passing of a team member and one of Australia's most prominent woman athletes, 83 year-old Tasmanian Shirley Brasher. However, the Australians managed by Queenslanders Judy Cooper and Harry Giles, for the third and second time respectively, were again very successful. Australia finished fifth in the medal tally with 91 medals (41 gold, 23 silver and 27 bronze) and two World Records. Marie Kay set our first WR on the second day of competition when she accumulated 6185 points to convincingly win the W45 heptathlon. This was the third occasion Marie had won the heptathlon for her age group. The other WR was by our W40 4x100m relay team of Jacqueline Bezuidenhout, Giana Mogentale and Kylie Strong (all NSW) and Julie Brims (Qld) who took only 48.01 seconds to carry the baton around the track. Australians also enjoyed themselves off the track, especially at the Oceania Party at which 80 Aussies and Kiwis, and a sprinkling of South Pacific Islanders celebrated the final evening.

Marie's brilliant performances in Lahti, where she won four gold medals (W45 heptathlon, long jump, 400m and 400m hurdles), earned her a second consecutive nomination by the Oceania Region for the IAAF Masters Athlete of the Year. Race walker Andrew Jamieson from Victoria was Oceania's candidate for the male category of this prestigious international award. Andrew also enjoyed a wonderful 2009, winning three gold medals at the World Championships (5000m track walk and both the 10 and 20km road walks) as well as setting World Records for the M60 30km and 50km walks while preparing for Finland.

NEW WMA PRESIDENT IS AN AUSSIE

The WMA General Assembly, held in conjunction with the championships, was an historic occasion for after having made several unsuccessful attempts, an Australian had been elected president of our international association. Stan Perkins was again involved in a very close election for the presidency, but unlike his

narrow loss in San Sebastian four years earlier, this time he was the victor. In a tight two-way contest between Stan and Rex Harvey (USA), the outgoing track and field vice president, Stan was elected 62 to 61.

Stan brought many years of experience as a participating masters athlete and athletics official and administrator to his new role as leader of World Masters Athletics. His resumé of involvement in veterans/masters athletics since 1981 would be an impressive document, listing such achievements as being:

a life member of the Queensland Masters Athletics Association (QMA)

a member of the QMA executive for several years, including as president from 2007 to 2009

a member of the Australian delegation at all WAVA/WMA General Assemblies since 1987

AAVAC/AMA secretary 1988 – 1991, and president 1992 – 1994 and 1998 – 2002

Oceania (OAMA) president for three years

employed with the Queensland Events Corporation from 1993 to 2003

OAMA delegate to WAVA/WMA 1995 – 2009

chair of the WMA Doping and Medical Committee 1997 – 2009

Along the way Stan has always enjoyed the support of his wife Wilma. Because of her own impressive history of participating at the highest level and contributing to the development of masters athletics within Australia and the region, Wilma will be a valuable assistant to Stan. Wilma Perkins has served on both Queensland and AMA executive committees for many years and in 2008 was elected president of the Oceania Association.

Lynne Schickert (WA), incumbent national president, was unsuccessful in her bid to be elected Women's Representative on the WMA Board. Some delegates may have thought Lynne would not be a satisfactory appointment as the world body now had an Australian as its leader. And more than one Aussie might be too

many! There had been several previous attempts by Australian women seeking this position but the only success was when Jean O'Neill from Victoria was elected in Hanover in 1979.

Apart from the excitement caused by the elections of a new executive team, the General Assembly also heard a report from the Sacramento LOC on their preparations for the next World Championships. The Assembly then voted in favour of granting the 2012 WMA Indoor Championships to Javaskalya, located 150km north of Lahti, and the XX World Athletics Championships to the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in 2013.

After serving six years (from 2003 to 2009) as AMA president, Lynne Schickert stood down from the position at the 2009 AGM held in the Adelaide beachside suburb of Glenelg. Lynne was the first woman elected leader of the national association, although Heather Doherty (Qld) was president in 1987 in the era when the president of the state club conducting the next Australian Championships automatically took on the role. Tasmanian Steve Lance was elected the new AMA president. The meeting agreed to add the 1500m walk to the national athletics program thus giving race walkers three events in their specialty at the annual championships. It hoped this shorter track walk might attract more to attempt this technically difficult discipline. The meeting also amended the constitution to require AMA member club endorsement for persons seeking election to the AMA Board or Executive. Prior to the change any individual member of a state or territory masters or veterans' athletics club could nominate for any AMA position with or without their club's official approval.

A COUPLE OF WA MASTERS RUN A LONG, LONG WAY

During the year a young MAWA athlete, 31 year-old Grahak Cunningham, participated in a special Sri Chinmoy ultra event running around and around a concrete path in New York City. Grahak ran the mile circuit for more than 44 days, completing 3100 miles (4960km). During the race he ran more than 100km per day while getting just five hours sleep a night. His reply to the question; "Why?" he replied: "To stay positive, peaceful and happy and to overcome the physical and mental hurdles of such a race".

In September 2009 David Baird, the 'Wheelbarrow Man', completed another of his now famous long distance runs pushing a wheelbarrow from Lewana to Perth. Exactly a year earlier, David then 65, set out on a five month journey running with his wheelbarrow from Perth to Sydney. In May 2009 he took his wheelbarrow for another long run, this time from Alice Springs to Uluru and back. This run was a distance of 940km – equivalent to running 23 marathons and averaging 55km for 18 days. Apart from the challenge and satisfaction of completing these unusual endurance runs, David's other purpose was to raise money to help fight breast and prostate cancer.

In 1989 Trevor Harris, a serving officer in the Australian Army and a member of the ACTVAC, set a World Record by running 2600km in 1000 hours. Every hour day and night between ANZAC Day and WWII D Day (from 25 April to 6 June) Trevor ran back and forth along a section of cycle path between the Carillon and Commonwealth Gardens on the shoreline of Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin.

For 42 days in October and November 2007 65 year-old Val Moran (ACT) completed a 1000 mile walk for the charity 'SIDS and Kids'. In so doing she raised more than \$80,000, and more importantly increased public awareness of SIDS. Val's incentive was that she had lost a child to Sudden Death Syndrome in 1966 when there was little understanding of the problem or support for heartbroken families. Val began a daily ritual of commencing at 6am and completing 18 laps of 2.5km (more than a marathon per day). For almost two weeks all went to plan but then walking became so painful she was forced to seek medical assistance. A double stress hip fracture was diagnosed and it was apparent Val had walked many of the first 280miles (450km) in considerable pain. But Val was determined to complete her project even if it meant seated in a wheelchair and being pushed. On Saturday November 17 she crossed the finish line on two feet assisted by her three adult children and accompanied by friends and supporters.

But of course there are many other examples of older athletes accomplishing impressive feats of endurance; such as the many

masters who have qualified as Centurions (race walking 100 miles in less than 24 hours), or completed 24 and 48 hour walking or running events, or even those that have survived Six Day Races. For example, the incredible performances of Victorian Stan Miskin who in 2005 and 2006 set M80 Australian Records for race walking 100km, 24 hours, 100miles and 200km. Stan also walked more than 431km during the 2005 Colac Six Day Race. Or at the 2005 Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour Championship in Adelaide when M70 Deryck Skinner (SA) became the oldest debutant Centurion and during the journey set Australian Records for both walking and running for 100km, 100 miles and 24 hours and World Track Records for 100 mile and 24 hour walks.

In July 2009, a decade after becoming a Centurion for the first time, W60 Carol Baird from the ACT completed her tenth at the British Championships in England. Carol's ten Centurions are the most by an Australian and she also has the additional honour of being a Centurion in four countries – Australia, England, Malaysia and New Zealand. Always willing to take on other challenges Carol has also achieved Australian Records for 24 and 48 hour runs. Queensland walker Peter Bennett is another who has achieved several international Centurion performances in Australia, France and Malaysia since his first in Melbourne in 1994.

These remarkable performances are just some of the many extraordinary feats of endurance by Australian veteran/masters athletes over the years. Two of the most memorable, and definitely the most publicised, were by Ron Grant from Queensland and Victorian dairy farmer Cliff Young in 1983. (*Refer to Chapter 4*).

RUTH BECOMES A CELEBRITY

Ruth Frith deservedly received a lot of media attention during the World Masters Games (WMG) in Sydney, 10-18 October 2009. Having celebrated becoming a centenarian in August, Ruth was the most photographed and interviewed of the more than 28,000 participants from around the world. In the months leading to, and during actual competition, she was one of the Games' most

recognised promotional symbols. She was also introduced to Crown Prince Frederick of Denmark, who was another high profile personality participating in the Games. Ruth was the 'face' of the WMG. Organisers could not have had a better example of a mature-aged sportsperson who so obviously demonstrated the benefits expressed in the Games' motto of being '*fit, fun and forever young*'. Whenever Ruth entered the competition area a media scrum, in which every journalist sought a unique interpretation of her longevity and athleticism, formed around her. An item, one of many in the WMG daily newsletter, *The Games Times* suggested Ruth was not only a talented athlete but also an interesting personality when it reported: 'They came from far and wide to see 100 year-old Ruth Frith put the shot, throw the hammer and chuck the javelin en route to becoming a worldwide celebrity. Reporters hung off her every word as she credited her longevity to an eating plan excluding vegetables and delivered a hefty blow to the women's liberation movement, opining after winning another gold medal that the female of the species should not work.'

Ruth of course won gold medals in all five W100 individual throwing disciplines as well as in the throws pentathlon. Most winning efforts occurred on her sixth and final throw, indicating apart from having the skills and strength to throw the implements, she also had sufficient stamina to continue to perform throughout the competition. Her winning performances were; hammer 10.14m, shot put 4.07m, discus 9.12m, javelin 5.48m, heavy weight 4.88m and an amazing total of 11,422 points for the throws pentathlon. Her discus and heavy weight throws were new W100 World Records, as was her 10.55m hammer throw in the pentathlon. In August, shortly after turning 100, Ruth participated in the Trans Tasman Throws Pentathlon Challenge where she set the inaugural World Records for all throwing events in her new age group.

Most Australian, and many overseas veterans/masters athletes, already knew and appreciated that Ruth Frith was not a 'Johnny come lately'. Ruth had already been a record-breaking and inspirational competitor for more than a quarter-of-a-century. She enjoys training for her events and is technically correct in her actions; when she puts the shot or hurls the hammer or javelin

she does so with strength – they are not merely ‘plops’, but definite throws. Ruth has been a world-class athlete for a long time and less than two decades earlier was also a sprinter, long jumper and triple jumper. Over the years she has participated with distinction at most Australian and Oceania Championships and also at five World Championships (Melbourne, Eugene, Turku, Miyazaki and in Brisbane 2001). An interesting episode involving Ruth occurred during the W80 100m final at the 1991 World Championships in Turku. Moments before the finalists got into their starting positions it began to rain and track-side officials at the finish line moved back into the shelter of the grandstand. During the race it appeared Ruth was in an excellent position to win. However, some of the runners, including Ruth, must have thought the officials working at the long jump pit alongside the track were the race judges and eased up after passing them. Unfortunately, the long jump was located many metres short of the finish-line and by the time Ruth realised her error she had been passed by most of the other runners.

Throughout her veterans/masters athletics career Ruth has always enjoyed the company, assistance and encouragement of daughter Helen Searle (nee Frith), herself a world-class thrower and former Commonwealth and Olympic Games jumps and pentathlon competitor. Like her mother, Helen was also a multiple gold medal winner at the WMG winning all throwing events, except the javelin in the W70 age group.

At the time of the 2009 WMG Ruth held an incredible 18 World Records – the W80 triple jump; W85 triple jump, long jump and heavy weight throw; W90 shot put and hammer; W95 shot put, hammer, discus, javelin, heavy weight and throws pentathlon as well as all six W100 throwing records.

MORE AUSSIES ENJOY INDOOR EXPERIENCE

Forty Australians were among the 1400 participants in the IV WMA Indoor Championships in Kamloops, Canada 1 – 6 March 2010. Kamloops is a relatively small city of 85,000 in British Columbia but it boasted an indoor venue that contained a flat six-lane 200m track, an eight-lane 60m straight for sprinting and hurdling and a

tartan infield for high jump, shot put and heavy weight events. Fortunately there was very little snow during the duration of the championships because the longer throwing events, 8km cross-country, 10km road walk and half marathon were conducted outside. The Australian contingent was easily our largest to attend an Indoor Championships; there were eight in the 2004 inaugural event in Sindelfingen, only six in 2006 at Linz and 15 in 2008 at Clermont in France. However, as is so often the case when Australian masters athletes travel abroad they achieve 'well above their weight' – and in Kamloops they won a total of 63 medals of which 21 were gold.

Because she had participated and enjoyed considerable success at all three previous indoor championships Marie Kay was the popular choice to carry the Australian flag at the opening ceremony. Again Marie was one of our star performers winning five gold medals (W50 200m, 400m, high jump, long jump and indoor pentathlon). Her score of 4616 points in the indoor pentathlon; that consisted of a 60m hurdles, high jump, shot put, long jump and 800m, was a new World Record. Heather Carr from Victoria also set a World Record with a time of 15.54.17 for the W60 3000m race walk. Heather also won gold in the 10km road walk. Marg Allison's (Qld) four gold medals were from the W65 60m hurdles, 400m, high jump and pentathlon. W65 Janice Banens (ACT) performed well in all the throws winning the hammer and heavy weight throw. M65 Peter Crombie (NSW), the only other Australian to have participated at all WMA Indoor Championships won both the M65 60m dash and the 200m. All six Australian 4 x 200m relay teams medalled and our W60 team won gold.

PERTH NATIONALS ATTRACT RECORD PARTICIPATION

This was the sixth occasion our national championships had been held in Perth. However, this was by far the largest with 527 participants, which is better than some recent AMA Championships held in the eastern states. The LOC was amazed as the number of entries was well above expectations and kept getting higher and higher as the closing date drew nearer. Western Australia with 211 participants had the largest contingent

therefore another 316 athletes made the long trek across the Nullarbor.

One of the features of the championships was the magnificent new WA Athletics Stadium. What an improvement on the old Perry Lakes Stadium that had been built for the 1962 Commonwealth Games! The new venue boasted excellent facilities and was equipped with 'state-of-the-art' information technology. Local athletics dignitaries were proud to claim: 'Their track was the fastest in the country'. It was even suggested everything had been thought of to assist sprinters run quick times. Apparently the alignment of the main straight and grandstand made best use of the prevailing winds – a tail wind is always appreciated by sprinters so long as it doesn't exceed 2m/sec. The only criticism spectators had of the stadium was that the grandstand was on the wrong side of the track because as it faced west there was no afternoon shade.

Eleven Australian and four World Records were set at the championships. The meet had only been going for a couple of hours when Marie Kay set a new World Record in the W50 long jump with a leap of 5.41m. Heather Carr set a brace of World Records for the W60 5000mW and 10km road walk with times of 26.29.26 and 54.12 respectively. Both record breakers had only recently returned from being two of the stars at the WMA Indoor Championships. W75 Val Worrell (Vic) tossed the heavy weight 11.57m for a new world best performance.

Ruth Frith from Queensland at 100 years-of-age was again, as she has been at so many national championships, the oldest competitor. Ruth participated in three individual throwing events (shot put, hammer and heavy weight) as well as the throws pentathlon in which she was awarded the Royce Foley Trophy for the woman scoring most points in the event. Her score of 11,169 is an average of 2,284 points for each of the five disciplines. It is obvious that Ruth is a trailblazer and statisticians are yet to come to terms with the capabilities of older female athletes. The most senior male, M90 Western Australian Peter Kennedy was so fit and energetic he participated in 12 events and his performance in the pentathlon was a Championship Record. Like Ruth, Peter was the

sole competitor in his age group and he too took home a sack of gold. Both attracted much media attention while Ruth was even accompanied by a television crew that had come all the way from Queensland.

The traditional Awards Dinner was held in a function room of the Kings Perth Hotel on Sunday evening. Apart from being a joyous social occasion, where athletes from around the country mix and enjoy the company of old and new friends, it is also where the AMA recognises our most outstanding track and field performers. Some recipients have been at the top of their discipline for many years and have received several AMA Awards since their introduction in 1999. Marie Kay has the most remarkable record of having won seven of the prestigious awards; she won the multi-events category in 2002, 2004 and 2006, best individual performance in 2008 and was most outstanding female athlete in 2007, 2009 and 2010. Margaret Taylor (ACT) has won six, being adjudged champion jumper in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2009 and 2010. David Carr (WA) has won an award on five occasions; he was the most outstanding male athlete in 2004 and 2010, best middle distance runner in 2008 and had the most outstanding individual performance in 2002 and 2009.

TWO MORE ADDED TO 'HALL OF FAME'

Another highlight of the evening was presenting framed plaques to the three original and the two newest members of the AMA Hall of Fame. The 2009 inductees Alan Bradford, Ann Cooper and John Gilmour OAM were joined this year by NSW sprinter Reg Austin OAM and Shirley Brasher from Tasmania.

At the time of the WAVA Championships in Brisbane 2001 Reg Austin was one of only a few men who had participated in all 14 World Championships that began in Toronto in 1975. In fact the 2001 championships were the first at which Reg did not win a gold medal in one of the sprints. Being a successful sprinter on the Australian professional circuit Reg was embroiled in the bitter controversy concerning the acceptance of professional runners that raged during the first couple of World Championships. Until a few years ago Reg was also a regular participant at the nationals.

He won the 'champion of champions' sprint handicap in 1999 and 2001 and at the time of his induction still held six Australian Records.

Shirley Brasher, 83 years-of-age, passed away just before she was due to depart for the 2009 World Championships in Lahti, Finland. Shirley had participated with great success as a middle and long distance runner, race walker, and in recent years also as a jumper and thrower in all Australian, Oceania and World Championships for more than a quarter-of-a-century. Throughout her veterans/masters athletics career Shirley set 14 World and 22 Australian Records as well as receiving numerous awards from state and national associations including the Commonwealth of Australia and the Confederation of Sport.

John Gilmour, now 90 years-of-age and patron of Masters Athletics WA, was a special guest at both the dinner and the track. Proudly dressed in his bottle green Australian blazer, part of the team uniform for the historic 1972 tour of Europe, John was on hand to talk to athletes and present medals for several hours every day of competition. Those at the dinner were pleased when John took the opportunity to outline his long and inspirational athletics career and his views about what makes our sport so good.

MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIPS FORCED TO MOVE

As it was unrealistic for the national association to conduct its own marathon, official AAVAC/AMA Marathon Championships had been incorporated within the Canberra Marathon almost every April since 1984, the only exceptions being 2000 and 2001. Following the running of the Canberra Marathon AAVAC/AMA medals were presented to the first three eligible place getters (financial members of a state or territory masters/veterans athletic club) in all age groups from M30 and W30 upwards.

The race director of the Canberra Marathon for all those years was Dave Cundy. In addition to being the event organiser he was a former president and life member of the ACT Cross Country Club (ACTCCC) and a member of the ACTVAC. Apart from his expertise and experience as an administrator Dave was also a capable long

distance runner having completed more than 30 Sydney City to Surfs and numerous marathons (several being in the 2.40s) as well as participating in a couple of AAVAC Championships. As IAAF course measurement expert for the Pacific Region, Dave was kept busy travelling Australia and overseas measuring and certifying the accuracy of distances of major road racing events. He was race director of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Marathon and following its success invitations from abroad to attend other major events as a technical adviser increased. He was even asked to oversee the Great Wall of China Marathon.

A bitter and unresolved argument between Cundy Sports Marketing (CSM), the organisers of the marathon, and the ACTCCC over who owned the popular event caused the late cancellation of the 2010 Canberra Marathon. As a result the AMA Marathon Championships were transferred to become part of the Gold Coast Marathon. The dispute between CSM and the ACTCCC became increasingly hostile and more complex because of the previous good relations that existed between Dave Cundy and the cross country club. Both parties sent antagonistic emails to each other and issued media releases justifying their respective claims. Even a court ordered attempt at mediation failed and eventually a Federal Court ruled in favour of the Cundy group. The outcome meant CSM was free to re-establish the Canberra Marathon but sadly it also led to the demise of the ACTCCC (established 1962). The cross country club, in which many of its members were also members of the ACTVAC, was forced into receivership. A new long distance running club, the YMCA of Canberra Runners Club emerged from the crisis and is confident its autumn Festival of Running, incorporating a marathon, will become an annual sporting highlight.

However, for the near future the AMA Marathon Championships shall remain part of the Gold Coast Marathon run along the foreshores of the popular South East Queensland holiday resort. There were no such difficulties for the inaugural AMA Half Marathon Championships held in conjunction with the Cadbury Marathon and Half Marathon in Hobart 10 January 2010. Like the Canberra and Gold Coast Marathons the 'Cadbury' (conducted annually since 1984) is an open event.

By completing the 2010 Canberra Lake Burley Griffin Classic, an annual 20 mile race walking event around the lake, local race walker Robin Whyte achieved the remarkable record of having participated in all 43 LBG Classics conducted since they began in 1967. Not only has Robin participated, often featuring amongst the leaders, he has also been a member of the LOC from the beginning of this popular Racewalking Australia carnival.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Former AMA President Lynne Schickert attended her first WMA Council meeting in Sacramento, California 16 – 20 June 2010 as the newly elected Oceania Regional Delegate. Lynne's introduction to the political environment of international masters' athletics may have been eased because Stan Perkins, WMA President, presided over the meeting. Lynne and Stan have a long history of working together at the national level. The Council heard reports from the regions (including Oceania) and the recent Indoor Championships; as well as the progress being made by the LOCs for the next year's championships at Sacramento, the 2012 World Indoors at Jyvaskia in Finland and the XX Stadia Championships planned for Porto Alegre in Brazil in August 2013. Stan informed the meeting of some difficulties confronting WMA by the World Masters Games organisation (WMG); the most serious being potential clashes of dates caused by the four year cycle of the WMG and future WMA Stadia, Indoor and Regional Championships.

The XV Oceania Championships were held in Papeete on the tropical island of Tahiti 3 – 10 July. The local inhabitants enthusiastically supported the championships and for the first time a host island nation had more competitors than New Zealand and almost as many as Australia. Of the 280 participants - 98 wore the green and gold of Australia, 82 were from French Polynesia, 68 New Zealanders, 19 had come from the Cook Islands, nine from New Caledonia and one each from Nauru, the Czech Republic and Poland. Visiting athletes enjoyed competing on the brand new state of the art track and using equally new throwing, jumping and hurdles equipment. Participants in the 10km road walk and 8km cross country races appreciated scenic

water front courses. On the other hand the half marathon was a challenge for both competitors and officials as it was run along a busy motor way and started at 5.30 in the morning in order to beat the worst of the traffic, heat and humidity.

Janice Banens (ACT) commented on one of the most memorable features of these championships in her report published in the December 2010 *Vetline* (official magazine of NZ Masters Athletics) when she wrote: 'The medal presentations had a unique and enjoyable island character. Place getters were announced as 'the third winner is ... the second winner is ... and the big winner is ...' This was particularly amusing as some of the winners were petite and much smaller than the 'third' or 'second winners'. Drum music then encouraged the placegetters to do a little dance on the dais wearing their medals – most made an attempt but it was obvious the islanders, particularly the Cook Islanders and the Tahitians, were naturals.'

One champion NSW Masters athlete did not participate in Papeete, because three months later she was to compete on a much larger international stage – representing Australia at the XIX Commonwealth Games in Delhi, India. W30 Karyne Di Marco finished sixth in the women's hammer with her throw of 62.38m. Karyne came to masters athletics in 2008 as an established champion hammer thrower having participated at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and finishing fourth at the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games (CG), winning the bronze medal at the 2002 Manchester CG and fourth again at the 2006 Melbourne CG. Since linking up with masters athletics Karyne has been a regular participant at our annual AMA Track and Field and Winter Throwing Championships in which she has won numerous gold medals as well as being the Best Female Performer at both the 2008 and 2009 Winter Championships. She currently holds the W30 AMA hammer, weight throw and the 56 and 100lb heavy weight throwing records.

15th WINTER THROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS

On the weekend the Commonwealth Games commenced in Delhi the 15th Annual AMA Winter Throwing Championships were held

in Canberra. In 1996 Ray Green sought permission from AAVAC to conduct a special annual festival of throwing and has coordinated the event ever since. The three day carnival includes all throwing disciplines (shot, discus, javelin, hammer and weight), a throws pentathlon plus a social event and since 2003 a heavy weight pentathlon and two ultra heavy weight throws (56lb and 100lb) have been added. Because the latter three events are rarely conducted elsewhere in Australia they are especially popular with visitors and always attract an enthusiastic spectator gallery.

The event has continued to grow and since its inception almost 200 veteran/master athletes from all Australian states (except WA) and even several from abroad (New Zealand, United Kingdom and the USA) have participated in the championships that have been held in Canberra every October since 1996. Some have only participated once or twice but many return year after year; in fact 21 competitors have already earned their commemorative T/shirt for having participated in ten or more championships.

Many Australian and even several World Records have been set during the annual Winter Throwing Championships. In earlier years medals were presented to all place getters in every age group in each event; but in 2005 Ray introduced a distinctive medal and a certificate of achievement, on which all their performances could be recorded, to all participants at the beginning of the weekend. A special feature, that has become a collectors' item, is each year's commemorative T/shirt is the same design (the ancient Greek thrower Discos) but in strikingly different colours. At the conclusion of the carnival two special awards - Best Male and Best Female Performer are presented. The 2010 recipients of these coveted awards were M75 Ron Simcock (NSW), with excellent performances in all disciplines and W100 Ruth Frith (Qld) with her World Record in the hammer throw as well as Championship Records in all events in which she participated. This was the fourth occasion Ruth has won the award, which is one more than her daughter Helen Searle. Victorian Graeme Rose has the impressive record of having won the Best Male Performer trophy six times.

IAAF HONOURS

Every November the IAAF honours the world's most outstanding athletes at a Gala Awards evening in Monaco. WMA invites each of its regions to nominate a male and a female athlete worthy of being a finalist in the Masters category. Strict criteria apply including having performed to an exceptionally high standard such as winning a gold medal and/or setting a World Record at the most recent WMA Championships and/or at their respective regional championships. This year Oceania nominated two Australians – Marie Kay and Peter Crombie and after reading their citations it was no surprise both were adjudged to be 2010 IAAF Masters Athletes of the Year.

Marie performed brilliantly at the WMA Indoor Championships in Kamloops winning five gold medals and breaking the World Record (WR) for the W50 pentathlon by a huge margin of 300 points. Marie won all five disciplines within the pentathlon and her performances in both the shot put and hurdles were better than those of the winners of these individual events. Incidentally, two previous holders of the WR for this event were themselves former IAAF Masters Athletes of the Year. This was the third consecutive occasion Marie has won gold for the pentathlon, long jump, 200 and 400m at the Indoor Championships. A month after Kamloops Marie broke the outdoor long jump WR in Perth where she also won the AMA Award for Most Outstanding Female Athlete. In July Marie was again the star performer at the Oceania Championships by winning seven gold medals and setting three Oceania and two Australian Records.

Peter won gold in the M65 60m and 200m and a silver medal in the 400m at Kamloops. The remarkable aspect of Peter's success in Canada was that he had undergone knee surgery 12 months earlier and was informed by his doctor he had little chance of ever again being able to race – certainly not at a high level! In July Peter participated in the USA Championships in order to challenge a top field of sprinters, including the current 100 and 200m WR holder. Peter ran brilliantly to win both sprints in Australian Record times.

It is indicative of the generally high standards of masters athletics within Australia that in the relatively short time this prestigious international award has been presented two other Australians have been recipients. In 2004, the first year IAAF recognised the Masters category, W50 middle distance runner Jeanette Flynn (Qld) was Female Athlete of the Year and three years later M60 Victorian race walker Andrew Jamieson was Male Athlete of the Year.

END OF THE DECADE

Three new books dealing with aspects of history and some of the personalities who have been part of the evolution of veterans/masters athletics within Australia were published in 2010. In February prominent South Australian race walker and SAMA administrator George White completed his book *Age is an Advantage: A history of Veterans/Masters Athletics in South Australia*. George's well researched book hopefully will encourage other state and territory clubs to document their own history. Later in the year two champion athletes and trailblazers of the veterans movement within Australia and abroad; close friends John Gilmour OAM and Jack Pennington OAM were each responsible for publications that will significantly add to the overall understanding of the growth of our sport. *Lasting the Distance; Memories of John Gilmour – World Champion Runner* written by Paul Collier was published in John's home state of Western Australia. Jack wrote a review of the book in the October edition of *Vetrunner* (ACTVAC monthly magazine) and in his concluding paragraph quoted what John had written in the book's fly leaf: 'To Jack for your terrific support over the years that has been much appreciated by your old running mate'. The following month Jack Pennington launched his own book *The Evolution of Veteran Athletics 1966 – 1981* at an ACTVAC club event. This was Jack's second book for he had published *A Life on the Run* exactly 15 years earlier, in October 1995.

By the end of 2010 all Australian state and territory masters/veterans' athletics clubs had celebrated more than 30 years of existence. Tasmania and the ACT, both established in 1979, were the last two to reach their 30th birthday. The other five

clubs had already enjoyed this important milestone; both South Australia and NSW in 2001, Victoria in 2002, Queensland in 2003 and Western Australia a year later and are now heading towards their 40th anniversary.

A major factor in the success of all the clubs has been the contribution of many dedicated volunteers. However, as in most voluntary organisations, much of their success is due to the enthusiasm and energy of relatively few individuals. Each club have several members who have served ten or more years on their executive committee. Bryan Thomas and Ken Daniels are the longest serving committee members of the ACTVAC with 17 and 16 years respectively; Brian Foley and Bob Schickert have each helped steer the MAWA club for 14 years; Heather Doherty has given 32 years of dedicated service to OMA, but has been assisted for 19 and 14 of those years by Judy Cooper and Stan Perkins, while SAMA has benefited from Glynn Boyce's 15 years input. However, the TMA club has the most remarkable record of long serving administrators. Jim Claxton has served on its committee for 28 years; Peter Lyden and Mike Stevenson have each volunteered for 26 years, Neil Hammersley and Bob Richards 25 years; while Gary Armstrong 21, Steve Lance 19 and David Hancock 14 years all contributed much to the welfare of their club. All these people are well known and appreciated within their clubs and some have been granted life membership or have special events and/or awards named in their honour.

Age is no Barrier provides a wide-ranging view of AMA's history so far. The AMA Board plans to update it from time to time – initially on the website, but possibly in print again at a later date.

APPENDICES

Australian, Oceania and World Track and Field Championships AAVAC/AMA Executive Hall of Fame Inductees

Appendix 1: Australian, Oceania and World Track and Field Championships

YEAR	AAVAC/AMA CHAMPIONSHIPS	OAVA/OAMA CHAMPIONSHIPS	WAVA/WMA CHAMPIONSHIPS
1973	Melbourne		
1974	Sydney		
1975	Adelaide		Toronto, Canada
1976	Brisbane		
1977	Perth		Gothenburg, Sweden
1978	Melbourne		
1979	Sydney		Hanover, Germany
1980	Adelaide		
1981	Brisbane		Christchurch, New Zealand
1982	Perth	Suva, Fiji	
1983	Melbourne		San Juan, Puerto Rico
1984	Canberra	Canberra, Australia	
1985	Hobart		Rome, Italy
1986	Adelaide	Apia, Western Samoa	
1987	Sydney		Melbourne, Australia
1988	Brisbane	Noumea, New Caledonia	
1989	Perth		Eugene, USA
1990	Melbourne	Auckland, New Zealand	
1991	Canberra		Turku, Finland
1992	Hobart	Norfolk Island	
1993	Adelaide		Miyazaki, Japan
1994	Sydney	Suva, Fiji	
1995	Townsville		Buffalo, USA
1996	Perth	Papeete, Tahiti	
1997	Melbourne		Durban, RSA
1998	Brisbane	Hawkes Bay, New Zealand	
1999	Canberra		Gateshead, UK
2000	Hobart	Norfolk Island	
2001	Sydney		Brisbane, Australia
2002	Adelaide	Geelong, Australia	
2003	Perth		Carolina, Puerto Rico
2004	Melbourne	Rarotonga, Cook Islands	
2005	Brisbane		San Sebastian, Spain
2006	Canberra	Christchurch, New Zealand	
2007	Hobart		Riccione, Italy
2008	Sydney	Townsville, Australia	
2009	Adelaide		Lahti, Finland
2010	Perth	Papeete, Tahiti	
2011	Brisbane		Sacramento, USA

Appendix 2: AAVAC/AMA Executive

	President	Secretary	Treasurer
1974	N. (Ron) O'Neill (SA)	Wal Sheppard (Vic)	Wal Sheppard (Vic)
1975	Jack Cook (Qld)		
1976	Cliff Bould (WA)		
1977	N. Anderson (Vic)		
1978	V. Townsend (NSW)		
1979	Lloyd Snelling (SA)		
1980	Jack Cook (Qld)		
1981	Robert Sammells (WA)		
1982	Mike O'Neill (Vic)		
1983	Peter Frylink (ACT)		
1984	Barry Richards (Tas)		
1985	D. Mallett (SA)	Peg Smith (Vic)	Peg Smith (Vic)
1986	Harry Stanley (NSW)		
1987	Heather Doherty (QLD)		
1988	Sandi Hodge (WA)	Stan Perkins (Qld)	Tom Hishon (Qld)
1989	John May (Vic)		
1990	Bryan Thomas (ACT)		
1991			
1992	Stan Perkins (Qld)	Dot Browne (Vic)	
1993			
1994			
1995	Len Childs (ACT)		
1996		Brian Foley (WA)	Peter Dunham (SA)
1997			
1998	Stan Perkins (Qld)		
1999			
2000			
2001			
2002			
2003	Lynne Schickert (WA)		
2004			
2005			
2006		Hazel McDdonald (Qld)	
2007			
2008			
2009	Steve Lance (Tas)		
2010			

Appendix 3: AMA Hall of Fame inductees

Inductees are listed in the year they entered the 'AMA Hall of Fame'. Their achievements are summarised in the chapter dealing with the year of induction.

2009

Alan Bradford M70 (QMA)

Ann Cooper W75 (SAMA)

John Gilmour OAM M85 (MAWA)

2010

Reg Austin OAM M70 (NSWMA)

Shirley Brasher 1926 – 2009 (TMA)

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Vetline, magazine of NZ Masters Athletics 2006 to current.

Vetrunner, ACTVAC monthly magazine 1979 to current.

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White, G: *Age is an Advantage; A History of Veterans/Masters Athletics in South Australia*, published 2010.

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Photograph Sources

Many Masters members have provided photographs for *Age is no Barrier*. We have endeavoured to make the selection as complete

and accurate as possible but some omissions and errors are inevitable in coverage of this wide-ranging time-span. In some instances it has not been possible to acknowledge sources of the photographs taken from the AMA Handbook archives and from *The Veteran Athlete* newspaper. Access to John Gilmour's extensive photo library has enabled us to include many events of interest from his his long running career. The following contributors are acknowledged with grateful thanks:

John Gilmour, Jack Pennington, Kath Holland, Reg Austin/Sydney Morning Herald, Anne Callaghan, Wilma Perkins, David Carr, Russ Dickinson, Russell Oakley, Ken Daniels, Bernie Hogan, Graeme Dahl, Graeme Rose, Frankie Ey, George White, Ron Young, Vic Waters, Helen Searle, Phil Frkovic, Mike Hall *The Veteran Athlete*, AMA Handbooks

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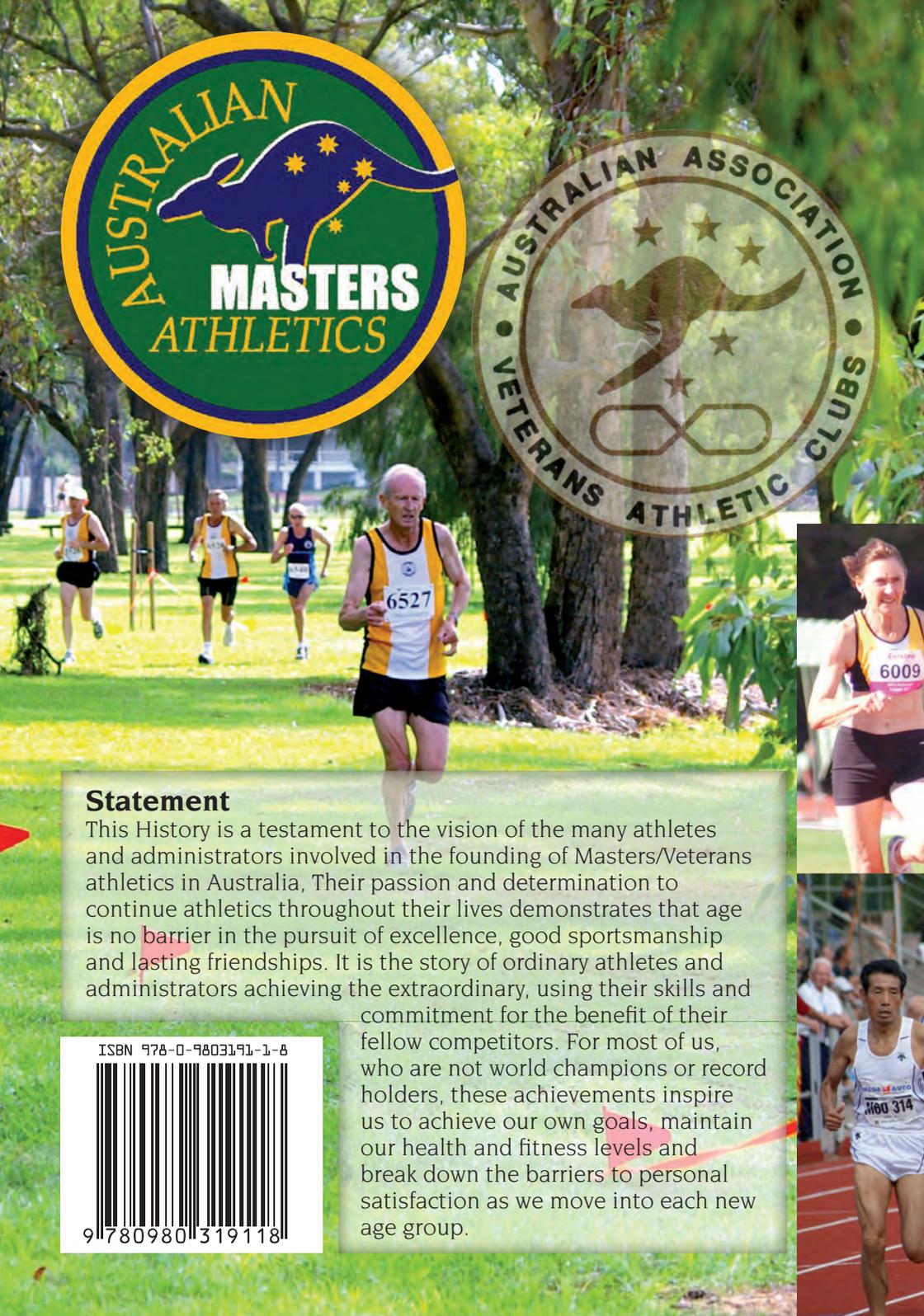
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This page, from top: M60 2km steeplechase, Perth 2010; Ray Green, 2009 Winter Throws champion; AGM delegates in 1999. Back cover: original AAVAC logo, and its successor for AMA. Main picture, M60 cross-country, Perth 2010.





Statement

This History is a testament to the vision of the many athletes and administrators involved in the founding of Masters/Veterans athletics in Australia, Their passion and determination to continue athletics throughout their lives demonstrates that age is no barrier in the pursuit of excellence, good sportsmanship and lasting friendships. It is the story of ordinary athletes and administrators achieving the extraordinary, using their skills and commitment for the benefit of their fellow competitors. For most of us, who are not world champions or record holders, these achievements inspire us to achieve our own goals, maintain our health and fitness levels and break down the barriers to personal satisfaction as we move into each new age group.

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