

APPLICATION FOR INDUCTION INTO THE AUSTRALIAN MASTERS ATHLETICS
-HALL OF FAME.

ADMINISTRATIVE CATEGORY.

WALLY SHEPPARD.

5TH. JUNE, 1922 - 12TH. APRIL, 1986.

Living memories of work performed by Wally Sheppard in the formation of the Australian Masters Athletics movement are disappearing along with the people who remember him.

Being inducted into a Hall of Fame is the ultimate recognition of the contribution a person makes to an organisation and that is why I am making this Application.

In seeking information and support for this application I wrote to the State Associations in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. In each State Wally had an association with dedicated Veterans (at that time) such as W.A. - Cliff Bould, S.A. - Al Digance, Victoria. - Mike and Jeannie O'Neill. I received replies from W.A., S.A. and N.S.W. but no real information was available. From his home State Victoria and his own athletic club Richmond Harriers I have received nothing. The lack of information is no reflection on these Associations and the Club but rather underlines my opening paragraph.

I had more success writing to individuals, such as -

Norm Windred, who has offered his help and support with this application.

John Gilmour, a copy of whose letter will be attached.

Reg Austin, who wrote "Wally Sheppard, I could not think of a better person to receive an award. I traveled on some of his Tours and really enjoyed myself. Wal was a good bloke, who gave a lot more than he received".

Wilma Perkins, whom I contacted regarding an Application form for this application, Emailed me, commenting "Wal made an incredible impact on establishing our sport, both administratively and as an athlete".

Graham Burke of the ACTVAC. Emailed me and stated that Wally Sheppard was mentioned on more than 20 occasions in Bryan Thomas's book "Age is No Barrier- "A History of Masters/Veterans athletics in Australia".

George White (S.A.) Mentions Wally in his book on the history of the S.A. Masters as competing in events for 40s. and over against Al Digance, Ron O'Neil, Bob Clarke and Reg White, all well known Veteran athletes in those early days.

I did receive an Email from David Carr in Western Australia one of the very good Veteran athletes to come from that State which stated "Wal made a fine contribution to the sport in the early days. At a time when we were changing presidents each year, he was able to monitor the leaders and to develop the Masters movement. He was also travel agent, tour leader and patient listener. A champion athlete too."

My letter to Jack Pennington in the ACT. was most rewarding, with his reply he forwarded me a copy of his excellent book "The Evolution of Veteran Athletics 1966-1981". With his permission much of the information in this application will come from that source. I was part of the era on which Jack writes and can vouch for the accuracy of his account of those early days.

Before proceeding I feel I must give a thumb nail sketch on Jack Pennington, Jack is firstly an athletic buff, having connections with coaching, competing, the formation of the ACTVAC and was a very active and effective propagator of the Veterans athletics movement in Australia. The

full scope of his involvement in athletics cannot be covered in this short summary.

Jack was born 11.12.1922 the same year as Wally and like Wally received a Queen's Birthday Honour as recognition of his contribution to athletics in the ACT and in general. Jack the OAM and Wally the MBE..

Jack was a World class veteran athlete and deserving of recognition on that basis but to me his real value to the Veterans movement was the assistance he gave to Wally Sheppard in those early days and the publishing of a magazine called The Veteran Athlete, this magazine was written and published by Jack from 1971 to 1979 and had a circulation of over 600. The magazine kept the competitors and supporters up to date with results, training articles (Jack is an accredited coach), pen pictures of various athletes, coming events and other information on what was happening in the world of veteran athletics. The cover of the magazine, which was dedicated to Percy Cerutti, featured a photo of the great Percy Cerutti running up a sand hill at Portsea (Vic) followed by the World's best miler, Herb Elliott.

Jack Pennington's contribution to the success of Veterans athletics is inestimable.

That Jack Pennington personally supports this application is evident from the fact that his book "The Evolution of Veteran Athletics 1966 - 1981" is dedicated to Wally Sheppard M.B.E..

"Wally Sheppard was one of those who met together after the first N.S.W Veteran track Championships at Hensley Field Sydney on the first week end in March 1971, later becoming the acting secretary of what was to be our Association in 1973. He was the tour manager of the 1972 official team which competed in the London International at Crystal Palace in the International in Cologne and at the World Best championship in Bensberg near Cologne. He was also the tour manager of that team who attended the Munich Olympics and acted in that capacity on all future tours until he died in 1986. There was never a more dedicated veteran, putting our Association before his own welfare. Wally Sheppard was also our secretary from 1971 - 1986".

The Nomination Criteria calls for the personal qualities of the Nominee.

I was privileged to know Wally from March 1971 to his passing in 1986.

He flew up from Melbourne to attend an Extraordinary General Meeting of N.S.W veteran athletes on the 20th October, 1971, called to adopt the Constitution and elect the first Committee and was named as a Foundation Member of the Club, then known as Wirinun Veterans Amateur Athletic Club. As per the dedication in Jack Pennington's book he had already attended our First N.S.W. Veteran's Championships in March 1971.

I do not know much about his personal life, however I did meet with Wally and his wife Bonnie (who died some years after Wally) socially, they had no children. Jack Pennington has put me in touch with a nephew, Phil Sheppard, who sent me copies of some of the tributes accorded to Wally at the time of his death, copies of these tributes are attached to this application. That he was a proud Victorian was obvious, a follower of the Richmond "Tigers" AFL Club and a member of the Richmond Harriers (12 years President from the 50's to the 70's.)

Having associated with athletes from 1950 I know the meaning of dedication to a sport, through my association with some of the best officials and administrators the sport has known. Luckily this same dedication was also evident in the transition to veterans sport.

I was fortunate to tour with Wally to World Veterans Championships in Toronto, Canada, Gothenberg, Sweden, Hannover, Germany, Christchurch N.Z. and Rome, Italy..As the manager of the tourist parties he made sure that what the tour promised the tour delivered and personally I never felt let down or disappointed.

On these tours which to the athlete were athletics first, tourism next he had also to think of the wives or husbands who were not competing and he made sure that they were also catered for. A testimony to his concern for his fellow veterans is well summed up in the following letter.

I quote from a letter I received from John Gilmour, one of the best Veteran athletes to compete for Australia, a World Champion and already included in the Hall of Fame, "I would like to include what a terrific job he did as manager of our Australian team in Puerto Rico when I broke down and suffered my first defeat on the track in the 5000 mts. When leading, I ruptured my achilles tendon. I was in so much pain I had to fly home next day.

Wally was so concerned he straight away got me onto a flight next morning to London and straight away, London to Perth, which was terrific. I always had information on anything of interest regarding the Association, Wally rang me or wrote. Being far away never meant anything to Wally. I was never left wondering."

After my first trip to U.S.A. and Toronto I was never surprised at his knowledge of the areas we were in and his excitement in passing on various items of interest and historical facts. He was a very knowledgeable person.

He was decisive in what he did and I believe that he always put the interest of the athlete before his own personal ambition. Having toured with him I knew that he had a health problem, he was always careful with what he ate, how serious I didn't learn until the mid 1979. After by-pass surgery he came back to run in the 1981 World Veterans Championships in

Christchurch, running the marathon.

He was the epitome of what makes athletics satisfying and great and veterans athletics in particular.

Again I will quote from an section in Jack Pennington's book, written by the late Case Muskens the principal of MB Travel, sadly Case passed away a few weeks after Wally. Wally used to work from Case's Office.

"He had a rare sense of humour which surfaced regularly"

"He was man of habit. World War 3 would have to be raging around him to stop him from going on his training runs".

"He was a modest man, who despite his many achievements, did not particularly enjoy the limelight. He had an incredible sense of fair play, which he rigorously applied in all his dealings with others, often to his own detriment".

"Yet, Wally 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".

He was relaxed in his dealings with all people and was a good listener. His private feelings did not compromise his dedication to furthering and protecting the veterans movement. This was most evident, during the mid 1970s debate on the approval or otherwise of professionals competing in veteran events.

It is sad that Wally passed away before having the chance to compete in his home "town" of Melbourne in 1987.

The criteria calls for his involvement in Masters athletics Administration and I will furnish a background to the formation of the Veterans /Masters movement and his involvement.

In 1966 the Germans had formed a group "The Association of Veteran Long Distance Runners" who competed in road races from 10km. to the marathon in 10 year age groups, from 40 years of age onward. In 1968 a World Best Marathon was held for over 40s. in Baarn, Holland. About the same time there were veteran events being held in U.S., in San Diego and later a number of Australians competed, very successfully, in the U.S. Veterans Championships including, John

Farquharson of Canada, Jack Fitzgerald of the U.K. and Clem Green of N.Z. who visited our country on a number of occasions. Through his personal contact with many overseas Officials and as the Oceania representative on the World Body of the Veterans/Masters from 1975 to his death he kept us in touch with what was happening overseas by way of competition, records, venues and any changes that may be being considered by other countries. His influence on the Pacific region was in many ways associated with the holding of separate Oceania Games. I was fortunate to compete in the Oceania Games in Fiji in the early 1980s and again Wally was there to assist in organising the Games but also to seek information on what the region thought necessary to further their aspirations.

In 1973 the first official Australian Veterans Championships were held at the Box Hill athletic track in Melbourne, again Wally and his Victorian compatriots organised a very successful championships. This was the first time some of our athletes had ever competed interstate and with the formation of the State Clubs Championships these Championships were held every year at Easter. Each State taking their turn.

In August 1975 the first World Masters Championships were held in Toronto, Canada, Australia was very well represented and we were established as one of the leading nations in veterans sport. Over 2000 veterans competed from 30 countries. There were 25 former Olympians and World record holders competing. The standard was established and has been maintained.

The Australian Team was organised through Wally and included a stopover in White Plains New York to compete in a U.S. Championship Meet. The trip was, to many, their first overseas trip and in my opinion could not be faulted. It whet the appetite for further trips and was a huge stimulus for the sport in general.

It was in Toronto that the World Body was set up and Wally Sheppard became the Australian delegate (Oceania, which took in New Zealand, Fiji and the South Pacific Islands) and remained in that position until his death.

The World body met at each World Championships from thereon. One of the matters which had to be decided at these Conferences was the next venue. It was and is important that each venue is friendly to all peoples and that no one is discriminated against on any grounds whatsoever.

Apart from the need to have all events and implements standardised throughout the World there have been matters raised like amateurism, apartheid (the status of athletes from South Africa), individual protests, all of which had to be handled on our behalf by Wally at these Meetings. The matter of amateurism was a real problem as we in Australia in the 1970s, were subject to the rules of the Amateur Athletic Association of Australia, whereas other countries had no real restrictions on who could compete. No Australian athlete who competed in open competition would want to jeopardise that right. From 1979 it was no longer an issue.

As stated individual protests and problems related to day to day competition came to the Manager and were dealt with on the spot. One very memorable protest involved Australian George McGrath who was told to run an extra lap of a figure eight cross country course because the official did not understand how he could be so much better than the others in his age group. Unfortunately the protest was not successful and he was awarded only the bronze medal, later the same day the winner was disqualified for not having run the full course, so George received the silver medal. A few years later the Canadian Veterans awarded George a gold medal for the event, being the only man I ever knew to receive gold, silver and bronze in the one race.

What other problems arose over the years from 1979 to 1986 which required solving are not known but I believe that those early pioneers of the sport worked hard to evolve the smooth running sport we have to-day.

Wally was the Team Manager and the tour guide for the subsequent World championships, 1977-

Farquharson of Canada, Jack Fitzgerald of the U.K. and Clem Green of N.Z. who visited our country on a number of occasions. Through his personal contact with many overseas Officials and as the Oceania representative on the World Body of the Veterans/Masters from 1975 to his death he kept us in touch with what was happening overseas by way of competition, records, venues and any changes that may be being considered by other countries. His influence on the Pacific region was in many ways associated with the holding of separate Oceania Games. I was fortunate to compete in the Oceania Games in Fiji in the early 1980s and again Wally was there to assist in organising the Games but also to seek information on what the region thought necessary to further their aspirations.

In 1973 the first official Australian Veterans Championships were held at the Box Hill athletic track in Melbourne, again Wally and his Victorian compatriots organised a very successful championships. This was the first time some of our athletes had ever competed interstate and with the formation of the State Clubs Championships these Championships were held every year at Easter. Each State taking their turn.

In August 1975 the first World Masters Championships were held in Toronto, Canada, Australia was very well represented and we were established as one of the leading nations in veterans sport. Over 2000 veterans competed from 30 countries. There were 25 former Olympians and World record holders competing. The standard was established and has been maintained.

The Australian Team was organised through Wally and included a stopover in White Plains New York to compete in a U.S. Championship Meet. The trip was, to many, their first overseas trip and in my opinion could not be faulted. It whet the appetite for further trips and was a huge stimulus for the sport in general.

It was in Toronto that the World Body was set up and Wally Sheppard became the Australian delegate (Oceania, which took in New Zealand, Fiji and the South Pacific Islands) and remained in that position until his death.

The World body met at each World Championships from thereon. One of the matters which had to be decided at these Conferences was the next venue. It was and is important that each venue is friendly to all peoples and that no one is discriminated against on any grounds whatsoever.

Apart from the need to have all events and implements standardised throughout the World there have been matters raised like amateurism, apartheid (the status of athletes from South Africa), individual protests, all of which had to be handled on our behalf by Wally at these Meetings. The matter of amateurism was a real problem as we in Australia in the 1970s, were subject to the rules of the Amateur Athletic Association of Australia, whereas other countries had no real restrictions on who could compete. No Australian athlete who competed in open competition would want to jeopardise that right. From 1979 it was no longer an issue.

As stated individual protests and problems related to day to day competition came to the Manager and were dealt with on the spot. One very memorable protest involved Australian George McGrath who was told to run an extra lap of a figure eight cross country course because the official did not understand how he could be so much better than the others in his age group. Unfortunately the protest was not successful and he was awarded only the bronze medal, later the same day the winner was disqualified for not having run the full course, so George received the silver medal. A few years later the Canadian Veterans awarded George a gold medal for the event, being the only man I ever knew to receive gold, silver and bronze in the one race.

What other problems arose over the years from 1979 to 1986 which required solving are not known but I believe that those early pioneers of the sport worked hard to evolve the smooth running sport we have to-day.

Wally was the Team Manager and the tour guide for the subsequent World championships, 1977-

Gothenburg, Sweden, 1979- Hannover, Germany, 1981-Christchurch, New Zealand, 1983- Puerto Rica, (I did not attend), 1985 Rome, Italy. They were all memorable trips, with Australia well represented.

Summary:-

Prior to 1971 Wally was competing in special events for athletes over 40 years of age.

March 1971- Member of a Steering Committee formed to co-ordinate the formation of Veterans/Masters athletics clubs in each State and a National body.

Elected first Secretary, a position he held until his death in 1986.

1972 - With others he brought together a team of Australian Veterans for a trip to London and Cologne at the time of the Munich Olympics.

Wally was team and tour leader and during the trip met with David Pain of the U.S. Masters.

He was the team and tour leader to the First World Veterans Games in Toronto 1975 and every subsequent World Games up to Rome 1985.

While this Application seeks to honour the contribution to the Veterans/Masters as an Administrator it would be remiss of me to omit Wally's contribution to the movement as an athlete.

I knew him mainly as a middle distance runner, but note that he did compete in at least one Veterans marathon. Unfortunately my records are not such that I can do full justice to his ability as a middle distance runner. Also you must take into account the fact that at all World Championships he was required to devote time to his duties as Tour Leader and the Oceania representative to the World Body Conference. However I can advise the following :-
45-49, 1970. San Diego. Ran a World best 800m.- 2.03 and 1500 m.- 4.24.2 at that same meet he also ran 4.39 for a mile.

50-54. 25/8/72. London. Ran a World record 800m.- 2.05.1

1974. Sydney. 800m.- 2.11.6 and 400m.- 59.3

1975. New York. 800m.- 2.07.1

Toronto. 800m. 2.07

In 1974 Wally Sheppard was ranked No.1 with an 800m.- 2.07.4

55-59. 1977. Gottenburg. Ran 3rd. in the World Championships. 2.15.6 The winner being our own John Gilmour in 2.14.5

It is impossible to put into this application all that Wally contributed to athletics and veteran athletics in particular, but his impact on the people who knew him was extraordinary.

The attachments are:-

A. Letter from Norm Windred, Veteran (Masters) athlete, former President of the N.S.W. Veterans Athletic Club. Member Western Suburbs (N.S.W) \A.C.. seconding this application.

B. Copy of John Gilmour's letter, dated 9/5/201.

C. Further letter from John Gilmour supporting application.

D. Tribute, by Fred Lester, President of Victorian Marathon Club.

E. & F. Two further tributes published I believe by the Victorian Veterans A.C..

G. Wal Sheppard's Story.

Photographs.

I have not been able to obtain an "original" photograph of Wally Sheppard and the attached are copies of photographs taken from magazines and books-

1. Wally Sheppard and Jack Pennington, from "The Evolution of Veteran Athletics 1960-1981".
2. Wally Sheppard, Veteris Magazine May, 1973.
3. Australian Veterans Team, Cologne 1972. Veteris Magazine May, 1973.