



# LIFE MEMBER

## Gordon William Baker

14 May 1917–22 August 2003



Gordon Baker's family say he lived for and loved the Geelong Football Club. One of Gordon's proudest moments was in 1996, when he was made a life member of Geelong Football Club, but his love of the Cats was evident long before.

In 1943, while GFC was in recess, he helped Jack Ross and Gary Drew to sell tickets for rides at Hi-Lite Park to help raise money to pay the VFL registration fees.<sup>1</sup>

In 1944, he was invited to train with the Geelong reserves under coach John ("Bob") Walker. He played in a reserves practise match where the players were divided into two teams, one wearing Geelong guernseys and the other wearing black with a red stripe. He was pleased that he got to wear the Cats guernsey, not the Essendon colours. He later played for Anakie and the Amateurs football clubs.

Gordon was badly burnt in 1955 when a drum of petrol caught fire as he was burning off at the front of his property. His children, Pam and

Kalven, were aged 9 and 5 at the time. His wife Ivy wrapped him in a blanket and drove him to hospital. Gordon's son Kalven explains:

Several doctors wanted to amputate his legs, but Dr Fargie found a way to save them using skin grafts. After that his legs couldn't sweat and his football playing days were over. Dad was working for Chisholm Caltex petrol distributors. He was in hospital for ten or eleven months but they kept paying him. He said he would never work for anyone else or miss a day's work once he recovered, and he didn't. It wasn't until 32 years later that he had gout in both feet and Les Chisholm sent him home.<sup>2</sup>

In 1959 Gordon Baker was appointed Secretary / Manager of the reserves. He was in this position until 1970 (twelve years and four premierships). Kalven recalls that the players used to say they didn't need a runner—they could hear Gordon calling out instructions from the far wing. Gordon approached local businesses and got donations of televisions and refrigerators as prizes for the reserves best and fairest players. For many years he made sure every one of the 22 reserve grade players received something at the end of the season, even if it was a Pelaco shirt.

Brian Brushfield recalls that Gordon was team manager when the reserves won back-to-back premierships in 1963 and 1964. Brian says:

He was a likeable, pleasant person and meticulous in his work. He was a good team manager—the players always knew how things were being organised. Gordon also had good liaison with local football clubs and could organise to get a player for the reserves if needed ... he was a semi-recruiting agent for the reserves.<sup>3</sup>

The Bakers became friends with the Trezises when Gordon was Manager of the seconds and Neil ("Nipper") Trezise was captain/coach (1960–61) and coach (1962–64). Kalven Baker recalls that if Nipper wanted a player from one of the local clubs, Gordon would be knocking on their door in



Photo shows Gordon Baker (right), Jack Jennings (centre) and Leo O'Brien (left)

the evening to ask them. Neil's son Ian still visits Gordon Baker's widow Ivy when he is in Sydney.

Gordon was an advocate to the Tribunal. He was also Geelong's delegate to the VFL Reserves and was made a life member of the VFL Reserve Grade in 1968. He was President of Geelong and District Football League. He was also a foundation member and life member of the GFC Social Club.<sup>4</sup>

Gordon was elected to the committee of the Past Players and Officials Association in March 1971, a position he held until his death in 2003. He was Assistant Secretary 1974–98, Vice-President 1982–98 and press correspondent 1974–76 and 1984–98. He helped with the maintenance of the Past Players' Stand and clubrooms and for eight years ran the \$100 Friday night pub raffle. For many years he drove the past players' bus to away games.<sup>5</sup>

Gordon Baker was elected a life member of the Past Players and Officials Association at the Annual Meeting on 1 March 1984. The presentation was made at the end-of-year barbecue for committee members and their families.<sup>6</sup>

Gordon was the third person to be awarded life membership of the GDFL and was a life member of the Geelong Cricket Umpires Association. He was also 48 years in the Masonic lodge. He joined on 18 January 1955 and was made a Worshipful Master on 15 May 1979. The rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer was conferred on 1 January 1998.

Gordon Baker died on 22 August 2003. He went to the footy on Saturday, to Lodge on Sunday, had a stroke on Monday and died a few days later. Blue and white streamers and a cat placed on his grave by his family are still there ten years later.<sup>7</sup>

### Sources

- 1 GFC Annual Report 1996
- 2 Kalven Baker, talking to Susan Kruss, June 2013
- 3 Brian Brushfield, talking to Susan Kruss, May 2013
- 4 GFC Annual Report 1996
- 5 Minutes, 19 Feb. 1990, 23 March 1992; 22 Feb. 1993
- 6 Minutes 27 Aug. & 1 Oct. 1984
- 7 Minutes 2 Feb. 2004