



LIFE MEMBER

Alfred John ("Alf") Featherston

24 March 1933—



Alf Featherston went to school at St Mary's and later Christian Brothers School in Yarra Street. He played for St Mary's Under-18 football team when he was just 12 years old. He was only 5' 10 ½" but he could jump. He usually played as a ruckman. At Christian Brothers he won the Athletics Championship most years, which included running, high jump and triple jump.

At the age of 15 Alf was invited to Geelong where he played with the thirds (Under-19s) for three years. Alf remembers one match when they were invited into the Collingwood rooms to hear coach Phonse Kyne talk to the senior players before the game:

We were being very quiet, feeling as if we were treading on eggs, keeping our mouths shut. The Collingwood blokes were sitting around on the rubbing down tables. They were like statues. They didn't move or blink while Phonse was talking. He had everyone mesmerised. As soon as he finished, Lou [Richards] jumped off the table and said 'Come on boys. Let's get out there and kill them bastards.' I didn't hate Collingwood until that day.¹

Arthur Edgerton was training sprint runners. The top runners would give Alf a 25-yard head start, then they would chase him. Alf says there were five Stawell Gift trainers interested in him, but at that time they wouldn't take you until you were 17. By the time Alf was 17, it had been decided

that running and football didn't mix so he gave up running.

Alf played his first game with the reserves aged 17. Then he was invited to Wodonga in the Ovens Murray League so he went and played there for a year. He returned to Geelong and continued playing with the reserves until 1954. One night at training just before the season started, coach Reg Hickey told Alf to run and try to beat Bob Davis coming out of the race onto the ground, so he took off and ran and tore his hamstring. Alf only played three half games in the reserves for the rest of the year and was told the leg wouldn't stand up to the rigours of League football.

Alf was invited to play with Darlington in the western district, along with four or five other Geelong players including Syd Tate and Barry Bretland. They won the premiership.

The President of Darlington Football Club, Hector Cumming, owned a sheep station called Old Jellalabad. He then became President of Mortlake Football Club and asked Alf to come and work for him and play for Mortlake. Alf worked as a boundary rider on the sheep station and loved it.



As a boy he had spent all his money learning to ride at £3/6 an hour. He says 'It was a beautiful life ... I had no trouble riding a horse all day, I just had to learn about sheep.' At Mortlake, Alf played with Ken Beardsley (former Geelong player) and John Northey (who later played for Richmond). The coach was former Geelong player Bill McMaster.

Alf was married in 1955. He has a son and two daughters. He was a dry cleaner by trade, and after six years on the property he was given a job managing a dry cleaning business in Mortlake. He worked there for a year before returning to Geelong to manage Spotless Dry Cleaning.

Alf was playing coach of North Geelong for two years and of Belmont for a year before retiring from football aged 40—twenty-eight years after his first game for St Mary's.

Alf was walking along the street one day when

he met Bernie Smith, who asked him to come to the Past Players and Officials Club. Alf was elected to the committee in 1985, was Vice-President in 1985 and 1987 and was a committee member until 2010. He sold tickets for the bar for many years. It was not an easy job. Everyone wanted their tickets in a hurry. He explains:

People would order 'five heavy, four light, a pony and three cans of soft drink' and they'd hand you a \$50 note. You had to give them the right tickets and work out the change, so you had to be good at adding up quickly. There was no calculator.²

Later Alf took on the responsibility of having non-members sign the guest book—another difficult task. There would be a line of people waiting to sign in and some of them were not pleased to have to do it, but it was the regulation for a licensed club.

Alf was made a life member of the Past Players and Officials Club in 2000.



Alf and his partner Dorothy with 2007 Premiership cup



Alf's 80th birthday

Sources

- 1 Alf Featherston, talking to Susan Kruss, March 2013
- 2 Alf Featherston, talking to Susan Kruss, March 2013