



LIFE MEMBER

Leslie George ("Mick") Smith

28 September 1929—



Les Smith grew up in West Geelong. He was married aged 23. He and his wife Joan lived with Les's parents for 18 months, then moved to Norlane when their daughter was six months old. Les was a shoe repairer by trade.

Les started following football after the war. He recalls 1953 when Geelong lost the Grand Final against Collingwood. The next year he was asked if he would like to help out the second-18 social club, so he joined the social club committee. The following year Les took on the job of timekeeping for the seconds. About three years later, he gave up timekeeping and became the team's boot-studder. Les says:

Joan and I used to run a dance for the second eighteen on Saturday nights after home games. The dances were held in the old training room that smelt of liniment. I learned to pull a beer there from Jim McKenzie—Alistair Lord's father-in-law. We

used to take our baby daughter to the dances and leave her in a basket near the big cement bath. All the players knew her. Russ Renfrey, Fred Flanagan, Bernie Smith, Matthew Goggin and other players used to come to the dances with their wives. Fred saw me at the Past Players rooms one day. He said, 'You've been around a while. How's your daughter?' Fred remembered seeing her as a baby at the dances all those years ago!¹

Les helped out at the Carlton Hotel one Australia Day weekend. At the end of the weekend the licensee, Mr Edgar, offered him a full-time job. He worked there for five and a half years. Les says: 'I was a bit of a larrikin but I was always well-dressed.'

He then worked at the Lord of the Isles Hotel, Grovedale Hotel, Waurin Ponds Hotel, then went back to the Carlton Hotel, which by then was owned by Vern Johnstone, president of GFC. Les later worked at a hotel in Aberdeen Street and as head steward at East Geelong Golf Club. After that, Les and Joan ran the TAB outlets at Torquay, Laverton and at Bell Post Hill.

Les Smith was a runner. He says:

I used to go for a five-mile run around the streets every morning before work—it took one hour and five minutes. When we were at Torquay I would run along the beach and back. My son played football for North Shore. He and his mates would say, 'Take us for a run, Mr Smith.' I'd take them for a run through the streets, and then up the hill. Every year they'd say, 'We'll beat you to the top this year' but every year I was at the top and they were only half-way up. I stopped running when I was 70.

When Les retired he went back to watch the football at Kardinia Park. Ron Hovey sponsored him to join the social club. One day he wandered down to see what was going on at the Past Players' rooms at half time. Roy Foster, who was boot-studder for the firsts when Les was boot-studder for the seconds, invited him to join.

Les went to the annual meeting. There was a

vacancy on the committee. Les and Wally Matthews were the only new people at the meeting. Wally got the position. Russ Renfrey said to Les, 'The next one you'll be right.' Then in 1998 Russ got ill and Les took his place on the committee.

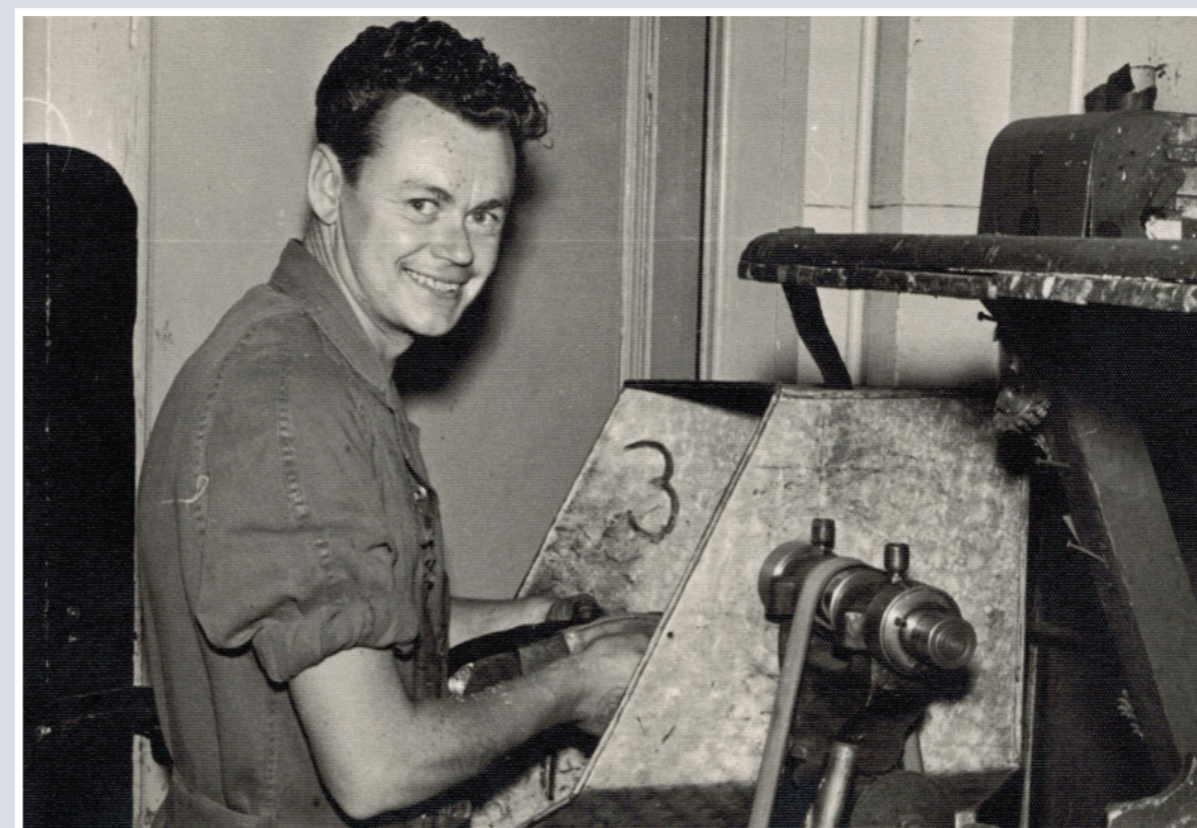
Peter Menzies says Les was already identified as someone who had the skills needed to take on the position of Secretary / Treasurer after Jack Morgan. Peter Menzies was Assistant Secretary and did most of the secretarial work. Les was Secretary / Treasurer 1999–2000, then in 2001 the positions were separated. Peter Menzies became Secretary and Les remained Treasurer.

Les enjoyed organising and keeping things in proper order. He says, 'That's what I put into wherever I went.' During Les's time in office, Russ Renfrey's daughter Jonda created mailing lists and later Les's son-in-law put these onto computer. Les also organised the Club's term deposits with the help of bank staff, combining them so that they

earned more interest.

Les was able to draw on his hotel background to improve the way the bar was run. The first year the profit from eleven home games was less than \$200 per game. Les says too many free drinks were given away and a lot of beer was wasted. He returned the unused beer to the social club and got a credit. The following year the profit from the first three games was \$1800.

Les enjoyed working with people and organising things properly but says 'looking back I spent a lot of time at the footy club and not at home.' Les was training a new treasurer (Darryl Stephens) when he had a heart attack in 2007. He was away for the rest of the year. He went back in 2008 but didn't rejoin the committee. At the end of 2009 he realised his wife, Joan, was suffering from dementia. She was diagnosed in February 2010. Les now looks after his wife full-time.



Sources

1 Les Smith, interviewed by Susan Kruss, 1 March 2013