



# LIFE MEMBER

## Ronald John ("Pud") Richards

11 May 1932–5 May 2011



Ron Richards and Barry Finn

Ron Richards attended Manifold Heights State School and Geelong Junior Technical School before beginning his carpentry apprenticeship with Faggs and building a career in Geelong as a carpenter and builder. In 1966 Ron married Julianne Woods and they had one son, Blair.

Together with his mates who played football, Ron went to the Geelong West Cricket and Football Club where he became a goal umpire but, his wife Julie says, Ron 'soon found he was better with a towel.' When the club disbanded due to not enough players, the boys went on to Geelong West Football Club. Ron was a trainer for twelve years until Tom McKay, a trainer at Geelong West, went to Geelong Football Club and suggested that Ron should go there. Ron was a trainer under Arthur Edgerton, then Assistant to Head Trainer Barry Finn, then became GFC's Head Trainer from 1970 to 1978.

Trainers are perhaps the unsung heroes of football. While they may not be known to the wider public, the players regard them as a vital part of the team. They are there at every training session and match, helping players prepare for matches

and recover from injuries, sharing their losses and celebrating their victories. In those days the trainers treated all but the most serious injuries and the Head Trainer decided whether injured players could go back on to play. Julie explains that players were young and many of them away from home and family. They often talked to the trainers, especially when they were trying recover from injury. When Ron was told things in confidence, he kept them that way.

It was usual for Ron and his team to treat four or five injuries on training nights but there could be as many as twelve injured players on a single night. Every evening, Ron spent a few hours cleaning and rolling bandages and tapes.<sup>1</sup> He also had to learn how to take haemoglobin tests under direction by medical staff—practising on Julie's ears—after doctors discovered that a player's haemoglobin level showed his level of fitness.

The trainers and their wives or girlfriends would go with the players to the Saturday night dances after matches. They looked forward Geelong playing at Melbourne as Melbourne always put on a magnificent smorgasbord. One night, Julie recalls, Ron was manager of the bus:

Every time we went to leave, the Melbourne people would say, 'Don't leave yet. We'll tell you Geelong people when you can leave.' When [we] finally left, the carpark was empty and the bus had gone ... The turnstiles were closed and we couldn't get back in. Luckily, we eventually found a few Geelong players with cars who were able to take [us] home.

The players and trainers went once a year to visit Pentridge Gaol and talk to the inmates. The wives and girlfriends would go with them on the bus and visit the Children's Hospital.

Ron was made a life member of Geelong Football Club in 1975 and a life member of the VFL Trainers' Association in 1979. After leaving GFC, Ron helped out at Geelong Football League.

Ron was a member of the Past Players and Officials Association committee from 1981 to 2010, Vice-President in 1985, 1990–91, and 1999–2009, and was made a life member in 1986. As well as running the bar, Ron helped to maintain the Past Players' Stand through the 1980s and 1990s, and provided exceptional service in 1987 putting in foundations and converting the site huts into functioning clubrooms.

Julie Richards recalls being introduced to Father Brosnan as 'Ron Richards' wife' in the Past Players' clubrooms in the 1980s. She had met him before but he hadn't remembered:

He looked at me a bit strangely and asked 'Who is your husband?' I said, 'Ron Richards.' Then he came back and asked again. The third time, Joy Foster was there. She explained to him, 'Ron Richards, the Geelong trainer, not the Collingwood footballer.' 'Ah' Father Brosnan replied, looking relieved. 'I married Ron Richards the Collingwood footballer, but I didn't marry you.'<sup>2</sup>

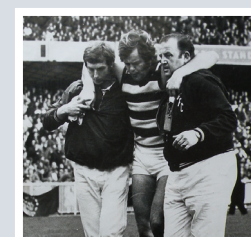
Ron had bowel cancer which was treated and he recovered, but was later diagnosed with melanoma. Ron had an operation at St Vincent's Hospital early in 2011 and Julie stayed at Vizard House. Julie says Russ Renfrey would ring each day. Later, when Ron returned to Geelong, Russ Renfrey, John Hyde and other past players came to visit.

Ron Richards died on 5 May 2011. President Brian Brushfield asked that the minutes record that Ron's thirty years of service to the Past Players and Officials Club 'as a Vice-President, builder and bar manager has gone a long way to making the club what it is today.'<sup>3</sup> The newsletter reported his passing, saying 'Very few if any board members have had greater input to the Past Players than this man. In 30 years of dedicated service, he helped construct the clubrooms, visited the ill, managed the bar and was a willing helper in all other areas when required.'<sup>4</sup>

Ron Richards and Doug Wade



Doug Wade helped off by Greg Stafford and Ron Richards



"Polly" Farmer carried by Ron Richards and Barry Finn



### Sources

- 1 Cats Year Book 1972
- 2 Julie Richards, interviewed by Susan Kruss, 26 Feb. 2013
- 3 Minutes, 16 May 2011
- 4 Past Players and Officials Club newsletter Christmas 2011