

JACK AND VON STROUD

The recently completed Stroud Trophy won by Rob Koppe and Rob Piner is one of the more important events on the calendar. It is named in memory of Jack and Von Stroud. This is their story.

A Life membership to one member of a family is a source of pride for all; two simply doubles the pleasure. This is what happened to Von Stroud in 1971 when her services to the Club were recognised. She joined husband, Jack, who had received his award in 1965. Life Memberships are awarded to "any member who has given outstanding service to the Club and/or service in the interest of golf." In both cases it was in recognition of the sustained hard work both had put in to establish the Club.

In 1956/7 when they were elected to the Social Committee, the Club was still finding its feet. Amongst the members there was considerable confidence that the Club could prosper but there were still doubting Thomases who pointed to previous failures and questioned why this should be any different now. Well it was different and we play golf at Drouin today because of this confidence and hard work.

In 1956 the Club had a credit balance of 47 pounds (\$94) but was faced with an estimate of 500 pounds (\$1000) to clear the rest of the Park. This was important because it would allow the creation of a full 18 hole course rather than the nine hole course enclosed by the race course they had begun with. By 1963 the dream of an 18 hole course complete with grass greens had come to fruition. Voluntary labour accounted for much of this but it was also helped by people like professional contractors such as Jack Cuthbertson and Mick DeVries who provided the heavy machinery and then, "forgot to send in the bill."

By 1967, a Club House costing more than \$12000 dollars had been constructed. By this time fees had risen to \$20 for Members and \$11 for Associates. Certainly green fees (\$1.25 per round) contributed but the bulk of the money came from shares issued by a Cooperative Society and the fund raising activities of the social committee. The Club House symbolised what had been apparent for a number of years: the Club was alive and well and was only going to get bigger and better.

In different ways Jack and Von were important contributors to this legacy.

After 1956, Jack quickly got involved in administration. He was appointed to the Works Committee in 1956 and then elected to the General Committee in 1958 rising to Vice President in 1959 and 1960. In 1961 he really hit his straps becoming President and serving for four years. During his stewardship the Club entered South Gippsland Golf Association Pennant, made the switch to grass greens and extended the course to 14 holes in 1962 and then 18 holes in 1963 and started planning for a Club House.

As an indication of how different things were then, the new greens were constructed over one roasting hot weekend by Member labour and the sowing was completed the following weekend. A fine crop of thistles and cape weed resulted. Eventually they came good to the extent that Members with the aid of car lights were able to mow the greens at night in time for the tournament in April. A relief.

It was during this time that the Club became serious about having its own Club House. The uneasy relationship with the Race Club in which the rental of their Club House was increased to 50 pounds (\$100) became the last straw. What really struck in the craw of the Golf Club was their belief that they had been responsible for all of the renovations to the building and their reward was a price hike. Of course it was also part of the on-going war with the Race Club. The Club then negotiated the sale of half an acre of private land with the Council and this became the site of our Club House.

Jack saw the advantage of promoting the Club on a wider stage. He wanted Drouin to be noticed. In 1961 he was appointed a delegate to the West Gippsland Golf District Golf Association becoming an executive member and Vice President and then was elected President in 1962. Today Clubs have less of a sense of regional identity so that often there is no competition for such positions. In 1962 it meant Drouin had arrived.

After his time as President came to an end Jack became our first full time green keeper. Given his day time job had been manager of the Ampol Petroleum Depot it is not sure what his qualifications were – apart from a love of the Club and a preparedness to work hard. In 1969 he became starter and steward during the weekends so that the many green fee players did not have to rely upon the “honesty box” to pay their fees. This lasted until 1979 when he resigned due to ill health.

What was Von doing all of this time? The March newsletter 1985 best sums it up with an article entitled, *A tribute to Yvonne Stroud Golf years 1954-85*

“Von Stroud was the first Associate President 1954/5 when the first spadework for the golf club was commenced. At this time two guineas was the joining fee and two shillings competition was the agreement. Vonnie’s heart lay elsewhere and this was the Infant Social Committee - even though she spent a year as Secretary of our club in 1961.

She realised the club needed money to progress so in the middle of all social efforts was Von. The Social Committee ran sixteen successive balls which became the highlight of the ball season in this area.

Late night meetings and formulating plans were usually held at Members’ houses and even sometimes at the back of Gleeson’s hotel. Von would work for the local newsagent during the day and at night for the golf club. Outside of this husband Jack was doing his bit also. As can be imagined, Jack as President of this club for 4 years and President of the West Gippsland Golf Association for 2 years, kept Von on her toes. Or was it the other way round?

Her successes in golf were many and varied and always tempered with determination which showed in her later years.

Due to Von’s efforts this club progressed at a much faster rate than otherwise and members would always remember after working bees little Von would have tea and sandwiches ready. We had many outstanding serving Associates in those early days and YVONNE STROUD was indeed one of them.”

The Strouds were part of a band of Drouin people for whom the Golf Club was a central part of their lives. By the time their association with us had finished they could look with pride at their accomplishments. A firmly established Club confident enough of the future in the eighties to make two major land purchases - the first off Princes Way and the second off Fairway Drive. They began when the Club was not much more than a collection of determined individuals; they finished when it was a multi-million dollar enterprise.

Written by George Shand