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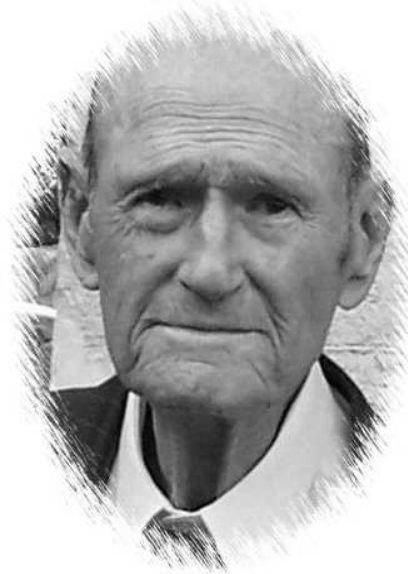


Fremantle Hockey Club Newsletter

Thurs 31 May 2007

by Ian Sills

Robert Harold Andrew Kernaghan



1919 – 2007

When I joined the Fremantle Hockey Club in the mid-nineteen fifties as a 13 year old, Bob Kernaghan was already somewhat of a goal-scoring legend. Over the years I got to know more of Bob as an important and dedicated member of the Club.

Seven years ago when he would come to Stevens on a Saturday afternoon looking thin and frail with stories of near death experiences in hospital over the previous year, I wondered whether he could get any thinner and whether we would see him at the Club in a year's time. Well, he did and thankfully we did with more stories of close shaves with death. While his frailty was there for all to see, his thoughts were less for himself and more of his concern for the health of his wife, Betty. This continued until last hockey season with Bob looking frailer still.

Even though I knew very little of Bob's life outside hockey I subsequently found out at the funeral that he was displaying two attributes that characterised his life: determination and love for family. He was a dedicated and loving family man with strong values and a keen sense of humour and a person with a love of life

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The Early Years

Bob was born on May 17, 1919 in Boulder the only son of Harold and Vina Kernaghan and the oldest of four but moved to Fremantle at the age of five with his Dad and two sisters, Annie and Lillian. He attended Alma Street "bubs" School, South Terrace Primary and then Fremantle Boys School. One of his best school friends was Bruce Rocke, who was later to become a Life Member of the Hockey Club and one of Bob's team mates.

Leaving school at about thirteen and a half, Bob started work with Thompson's Wood-carting, earning his first wage of 5 shillings (equivalent to 50 cents) per week. The day started at 4.00am with a trip to Hope Valley for wood chopping followed by the deliveries. Young Bob would arrive home around 8.00pm.

Moving on from wood cutting, Bob found work at Caesar's Dairy on Mulberry Farm, now known as Beaconsfield. The pay was 3/9d (37 cents) but this was supplemented with extra milk to take home each day. It was a seven day a week job with the extra bonus of being able to knock off at 3.00 pm every fourth Sunday; reminiscent of the Four Yorkshiremen from Monty Python "tell that to the youngsters today and they'll never believe you".

When he was sixteen, Bob moved back to Kalgoorlie to live with his sister Annie and was apprenticed for five years to his Uncle Bert as a painter and decorator.

In the early 1940s Bob joined the Goldfields Militia and later enlisted in Australian Infantry Forces as proud part of the 28th Battalion. Qualified as an Instructor in un-armed combat, Bob served overseas in New Guinea and in the Islands as well as some time in Darwin. By the time he was discharged in 1945 Bob had reached the rank of Sergeant.

Bob the Family Man

There were other life changing events taking place in Bob's life at this same time, most significantly of course, his marriage to the love of his life. On the 13th February 1943, Bob Kernaghan and Mabel Elizabeth Griffiths were married in St John's Anglican Church in Fremantle.

Their first two daughters, Shirley and Lynne were born while they were still living with Vina Kernaghan in Parry Street Fremantle.

It wasn't until October 1956 that the family was finally able to move into their current home at 287 High Street, Fremantle. Bob had built the house himself with the help of sub-contractors and after many weekends of blasting away at the limestone, building retaining walls and setting up a garden. Much of the finishing was done at night after a days work at painting. The height of the limestone foundations that can be seen when driving past the High St address give an idea of the magnitude of the task Bob undertook.

Then, in August 1961 the Kernaghan family was made complete with the happy arrival of a third daughter, Susan.

When Bob was discharged from the Army he continued his work as a painter, working for Hankin and Sons in North Fremantle as a Foreman.

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When that company was taken over by the Modern Sign Company, Bob was appointed as Supervisor. However, in 1960 there came the important move of establishing his own company, R Kernaghan and Co. The move proved to be a great success as the Company became involved in many major jobs in Perth as well as winning a contract at Nor West Cape in Exmouth where he employed up to 55 men.

As a Member of the Master Painters Association, Bob continued to run his company until his retirement in 1981.

Bob had a rich family life, leaving behind his dear wife Betty, 3 daughters, 5 granddaughters, 4 great granddaughters and 2 great grandsons whom he loved deeply. His family returned the love in spades. His granddaughters fondly remember his strong values and love of life and family meals punctuated by Bob's sense of fun and frequent jokes.

Bob had many other interests apart from hockey having memberships of the Fremantle Trotting Club: the Fremantle Navy Club, the 28th Battalion, the Commercial Club and the old Esplanade Hotel Dart Club of which he was a life member.

His hockey career

Bob started playing hockey with the Club in 1940, scoring 10 goals in Reserve grade and progressed to playing his one and only game in A1 grade in 1941 possibly due to the player shortage due to war service. World War II prevented any official competition between 1942 and 1945. Bob resumed playing for the Club as soon as war service allowed and he amassed a total of at least 610 games up till 1986. The total may be greater as for a short time the records appear deficient.

As I mentioned earlier, Bob was a legendary goal scorer having scored 47, 51 and 56 in seasons 1946, 1947 and 1948 and in three other seasons he scored more than 30 goals. He was fearsome in the scoring circle; a tenacious ball-getter, and a strong hitter of the ball driving fear into the hearts of opposition defenders. These attributes enabled him to accumulate 603 goals in his career. If the Golden Stick Award had existed then there is no doubt he would have won it several times. From 1956 to 1966 he was a member of the legendary B1 "gentlemen". It was probably during these years that he earned the reputation of being "the umpire's friend" on account of his readiness to correct the umpire when decisions were plainly wrong (at least in Bob's view). Mind you, there is no evidence that he had ever read a rule book.

His playing career lasted till 1986 when he played 5 games in Vets D. This was phenomenal at that time as the only Veterans grades were for 40 years old and above and there was Bob still playing in his 60s.

Bob's service to the Club went far beyond playing the game. He was a tireless worker acting as booking manager, cleaner and maintenance person for the club hall at Gibson Park. He later acted as bar manager after the move to Stevens Reserve; ordering stock, serving and reconciling the take. Some people might think that putting Bob in that position was akin to putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank. However, Treasurer Jack Rickie would have been the stumbling block there. Perhaps one of the saddest days was when Swan Brewery ceased to produce his beloved Swan Gold and he was forced to change his beverage.

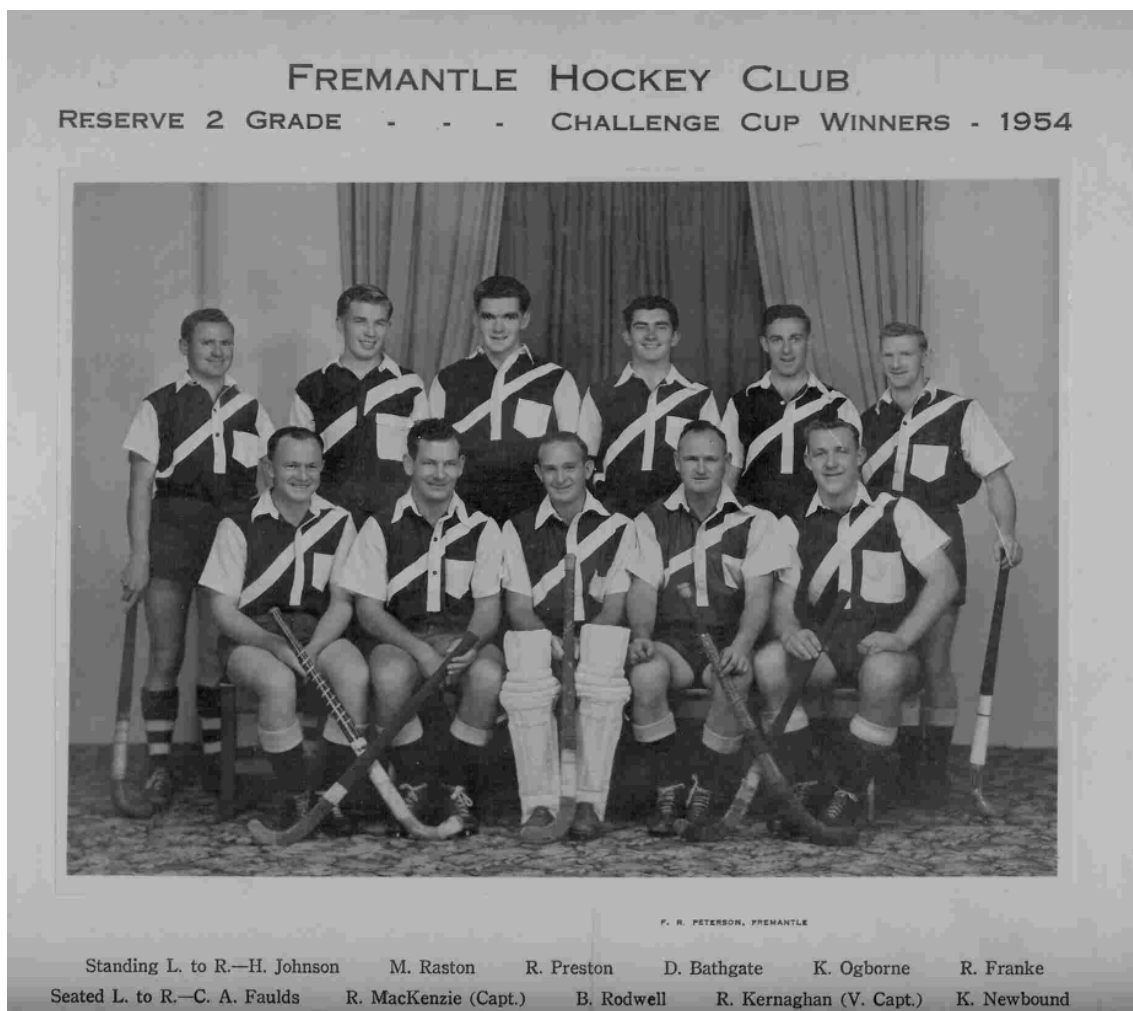
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Whenever there was a practical job around the Club to do, Bob was often the one to do it. He donated the Life Membership boards and kept all the boards up to date.

In 1960, Bob was presented with C.A. Hudson award for service both on and off the field. The 50th Anniversary history records that he “took some finding before it could be presented”. Life membership quickly followed in 1963 and in 1970 he played his 400th game and consequently was presented with the C.A. Faulds award, the Club’s highest award.

In 1987 his service to the club was recognized when the Bob Kernaghan Perpetual Trophy was instigated. This trophy was presented for service to the club by a non-playing member and was traditionally presented by Bob at the club windup function.

While Bob Kernaghan’s passing is a loss to all who knew him we should celebrate the fact that we have known a true club legend.



My thanks goes to Glenn Strother and Keith Smith who provided and presented the information on Bob’s hockey career from club records respectively and to Don Sonsee who presented much of the remaining information at the funeral used here.

Ian Sills

All contributions for the Fremantle Hockey Club newsletter are to be forwarded to
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