



UMPIRE PROFILE

Ian Aitken



Ian Aitken served as the President of the VSDCUA from 1979 to 1999. He was awarded Life Membership of the VSDCUA in 1983 and in 2011 was one of a number of inaugural members of the VSDCUA '200 Club'.

Ian was awarded the Australian Sports Medal by the Federal Government in 2000 and Cricket Australia gave him an award for 50 years of service. He was also inducted into the Victorian Sub District Cricket Hall of Fame in 2010.

The award for the Best Player in the Hatch Cup (now the J.G. Craig Cup) final, was named after Ian. His son Ken now attends these games to present the award.

Ian Aitken's milestone of 527 matches in Subbies matches was broken in 2022 by Benny Goodman our umpire coach. Benny was asked to say a few words about Ian.

"Ian was president of the VSDCUA for 16 years, he always ran effective meetings, his knowledge of umpiring was outstanding, he was well respected by all in the competition, his rapport with the players was amazing, and he had an aura about him that was unforgettable, a real powerful presence! He also initiated the umpires association's sponsorship of the Hatch/Craig awards. "

With the assistance of Ian's son Ken, the following is about Ian's life and documents his amazing story! Grab a cup of tea. It is a great read. I'm honoured to help tell this story, because Ian was the one who asked me to join the VSDCA panel.

Ian Alfred Aitken (23.06.1928 – 24.07.2011)

Ian was born into a strong farming community at Mitiamo in Northern Victoria on 23rd June 1928. He had an older brother James who Ian presumes welcomed a little brother.

The Aitken family had a small farm at Mologa where they grew a bit of everything to get by. Ian's father Alf also lumped wheat and was a skilled haystack builder. The Aitken family were keen cricketers, and this was where Ian got his love of cricket. They watched their father Alf and various uncles play whilst, their Aunt kept a meticulous scorebook.

Ian and his brother Jim and little sisters Ruth and Val all went to the one teacher Mologa Central Primary School up until Grade 8 as was the practice in country schools. His cricket prowess was evident early as Jim and Ian played in a school Premiership team together!

Ian moved to Bendigo to attend Bendigo High School, and he and his brother Jim boarded in Lily St and attended McKenzie St Methodist Church. The war was on, so there was little sport and Ian survived. He went home to the farm often and helped out particularly on the rabbit and hare drives to rid the drought-ravaged paddocks of the introduced scourge.

As soon as the war ended in 1945 Ian helped start up a Cricket Club at McKenzie St Meths, well he needed to play didn't he!

Ian obtained a scholarship to attend the Bendigo School of Mines where he studied to become an Industrial Chemist. Whilst he was attending school, he helped form a baseball league, his team's uniforms were flannel underwear which they dyed a suitable color. He won a premiership in 1944 with his team. It is believed the baseball equipment came out with the American servicemen that were in the area. Just north of Bendigo is Lake Boga where there was a huge secret seaplane repair base. The huge Martin Mariners and Catalina's were invisible as they flew over!

When the war was over and peace was declared a bunch of young bucks pinched an air raid siren and ran through the halls of the School of Mines whooping and hollering and making a great racket! They were nearly suspended as exams were on at the time! They also hooned through the streets of Bendigo in the Rev Gus Wilson's 28 Chev hooting and hollering!

Ian obtained his Diploma of Industrial Chemistry in 1947 and came to Melbourne to work and upgrade his Diploma into a Degree at Swinburne Tech and RMIT. Ian caught the train at Spotswood and hated the trip out to Swinburne for the night classes. He attended the local Spotswood Methodist church and helped start up the Cricket Club there in 1948.

Ian started work at the Government Ordinance Factory in Maribyrnong whilst studying and joined the Williamstown Baseball Club. He was a good baseball player as he played in the 1sts and the 2nds. The 1sts usually played on a Sunday so Ian didn't play many games as he was at church. Baseball was often played before the VFA football so he saw some of the great footballers of the era play such as the great Ron Todd. Many years later, Ian loved to umpire cricket at Williamstown Cricket Ground.

He moved employment to BALM Paints at Port Melbourne where he worked in the research lab. Around this time Ian and several of his mates bought a 1930 Morris Minor and drove it around the area. Ian didn't think that any of them had licences!

Ian was heavily involved in church life, being Secretary of the Cricket Club and Club Delegate, Superintendent of Sunday School, and running the Boys Club. Around this time he wrecked his knee playing baseball - sliding for a base.

Ian often went to Church Camps, and on one of these camps, he met Dorothy Pope whom he would later marry in 1955. He said he must have been in love as he used to go by train to halls all over Melbourne and further afield to listen to Dorothy sing at various Eisteddfods and competitions!

BALM Paints were building the largest paint factory in Australia at Clayton, so he bought a house in Clayton at 113 Taylor St later renamed Kanooka Grove.

Ian was part of the team that commissioned this factory. When the factory was finished, he became the Works Chemist and later became Production

Manager, Distribution Manager, and finally Senior Supply Officer before retirement at 60. He managed to get lots of test sample tins of paint that found their way onto a wide variety of surfaces and locations at the Aitken home.

In 1956 a miracle happened, the Aitken Triplets were born, Stuart, Kenneth, and Barry. They were 10 weeks premature and had given their mum a hard time whilst in the womb! Before they were born, Ian decided to get his troublesome knee operated on, "I'll have plenty of time to recover", good in theory, so when Ian was in the Freemasons Hospital having his cartridge removed, Dorothy goes into labour and out pop three screaming and very skinny little boys! Ian on the other side of town did not believe the nurses when they told him he is the father of triplets! So they trussed him up and sent him across town to see the new mum and babies.

The boys were in the hospital for quite a while, so Ian kept himself busy by doing a milk run on his way to work from Clayton to Port Melbourne!

Back to church and cricket. Dorothy and Ian had joined Clayton Methodist church and Ian helped set up a cricket team at the church. He had also joined Freemasons whilst living at Spotswood, and he continued to go to Lodge of Endeavour at Newport from Clayton. Ian had a 40-year association with the Freemasons. In 1970 he became Master and went on to Grand Lodge.

At Clayton, Ian was pivotal in the running of the Flower Show and the Sunday School anniversaries for many years. The anniversary was the only time he would sing and only in the back row!

Ian was active in cricket-playing with Clayton Meths and coaching the juniors, his son Ken, remembers going off to cricket on Saturday mornings in the overloaded Green Austin A40 and watching dad and his mates play on a Saturday afternoon. Ian was a good batsman and a very good slow bowler. A skill he developed after knee surgery because he couldn't bowl quickly anymore.

Our garden was always full of plants, mainly roses, and Ian & Dorothy developed their skills as competitors and judges. Ian became involved in the Rose Society of Victoria and strangely enough, he ended up at different times President, Judge, and Rose Show Manager.

The gardens at Clayton and Blackburn and Salford Park were full of roses and the wonder of the street. Ken remembers one morning in Clayton when his dad was running out into the street to pick up the milk cart horses droppings to put onto the roses. We were so embarrassed! For his work with roses, he was awarded the John Pascoe Faulkner Gold Medal for Distinguished Service to Horticulture in 1990. He was a Life Member of the Rose Society for his services.

In 1973 the family moved to 40 Williams Rd Blackburn. It was a bigger house on a smaller block. Ian started his garden again, only taking a few roses with him including Portrait, a rose from his grandparent's farm at Yarrowalla. The roses came first as we had to buy and park cars that would fit around the garden.

Ian started umpiring in the South Suburban Churches comp for several years after his knees finally gave out. He then joined Sub District Cricket Association at this time, and umpired cricket for 37 years and was very sad, when due to ill-health, he had to retire. Over his 37 year's he umpired country week, touring teams, charity matches, various carnivals, old boys games, in England, and of course the Under 15 carnivals.

Ian was awarded the Australian Sports Medal by the Federal Government in 2000 and Cricket Australia gave him an award for 50 years of service. He was also inducted into the Sub District Cricket Hall of Fame in 2010.

The Aitkin family always went to the MCG to watch Cricket and Football, this was only formalised when Ian stopped being a trainer for the Clayton Methodists football team. They had memberships with Melbourne and Richmond and went every Saturday whilst their Mum umpired Netball.

Ken recalls, "we would head off with tomato soup in the thermos and a bag full of licorice squares. We would come home with red lips and black tongues! Dad and I went to many grand Finals first off in the standing area then to seating. We would sleep out under the old stand to get tickets. I remember seeing Richmond and North Melbourne and Carlton wins after many years. And Jezza's mark!"

"Sheffield Shield cricket and test cricket over many years, not forgetting the pilgrimage on Boxing Day every year and the gathering of the clan at this time."

"So when the MCG began a program of conducting tours of the hallowed ground Ian was first in, in fact, he was in the first 25 and was called a Rover wearing a Gold Jacket. Ian went on to guide for just over 20 years and watched the ground change radically in that time. Unfortunately, he never got to see Melbourne win another flag though."

"Dad joined Forest Hill Probus in 1986 and of course, ended up on the committee for 5 years as the welfare officer. Even getting a Commonwealth Senior Citizen award for his work in 1999."

Ian & Dorothy moved to Salford Park, a retirement village, and loved it. "Taking any roses dad Ken asked", "No he said, won't bother" Well within several months they were off to Warrnambool and came back with a boot full. He couldn't resist and the garden at Unit 87 is full of beautiful flowers. Ken weakened and took Portrait the family rose and planted it in his garden as it had to stay in the family.

So his life had been fulfilled serving on up to 5 committees at a time, Ian loved his family, sport, roses, God, church, friends, and Dorothy.

Ian's innings closed over a decade ago, yet his legacy remains proud and strong. What a man!