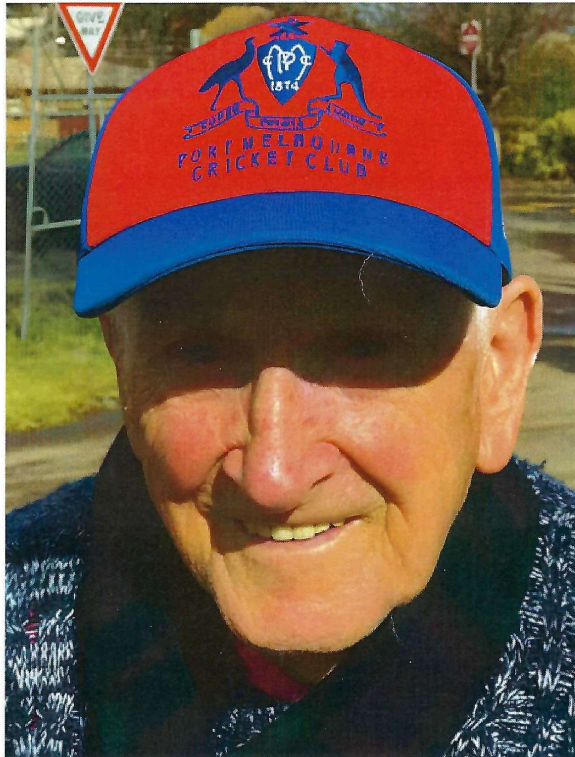


Welcome to

A Celebration of the Life of

Mervyn Frederick McKenzie



13th January 1928 – 16th February 2025

Poem by Donna Ashworth

YOU

If every single person who has liked you in your lifetime, were to light up on a map, it would create the most glitteringly beautiful network you could imagine. Throw in the strangers you've been kind to, the people you've made laugh, or inspired along the way and that star-bright network of you would be an impressive sight to behold. You're so much more than you think you are. You have done so much more than you realise. You're trailing a bright pathway that you don't even know about. What a thing. What a thing indeed.



[Merv (standing) and Stan McLennan (at piano)]

Order of Service

Commencement Music

Welcome & Eulogy

Chris Sewell – President PMCC

Words from

Robert McKenzie

Words from

Fiona McKenzie

Words from Merv's Grandchildren

Neil McKenzie
Annie McKenzie
Alexander Tsakanias

Poem

You – Author Donna Ashworth

Read on behalf of Merv's Niece Denise McLarty

Letter

Read on behalf of Merv's Niece Glenda Wevels

Photo Tribute

Music performed by Merv and Stan McLennan

Anyone with a memory of Merv is invited to share

Morning Tea Served

Merv's Story

Mervyn Frederick McKenzie was born at home at 56 Crichton Avenue, Port Melbourne on Friday 13th January 1928. His parents were Alec and Hannah McKenzie. His sister who was 8 at the time was named Marjorie.

Family

Merv is survived by his 3 children, Robert, Lisa and Fiona. And 3 grandchildren Neil, Annie and Alex. His daughter-in-law AnnMarie and son-in-law George.

Merv's Wife Lesley passed away in July 2023.

Merv has two nieces Denise and Glenda, who can't be with us today due to a family commitment.

Schooling

Merv attended Graham Street Primary School and then Middle Park Central School where he received an Honours in Latin and was the Dux of Form 2B in 1942.

A keen sportsman, Merv was captain of both the school cricket and football teams.

As a young man, every Monday night, weather permitting, he would go down to Station Pier with his dad, book in hand, noting what goods came into the country and what went out. He would then come home and tell his mother. He didn't know anything about imports and exports. It didn't mean anything to him. It was just something he did every Monday night with his dad.

Working Life

Merv was going to be a car spray painter when he left school but because of the war, (The Man Power Directive) able bodies got sent where needed. Merv's Mother decided he wasn't going to be a fruit picker, so she sent him to Hassets Business College in Prahran.

Merv's first job was at Dewars (Scotch Whiskey) in Queen Street, Melbourne. He started out as a Junior Clerk when he was 16 years old and attended Hassets at night.

In 1944 the family took over the running of the Grahamy Gates Milkbar on the corner of Station Street and Graham Street from a McKechnie cousin, for 18 months.

In early August 1945, while living there, Merv kicked a tennis ball and injured his back.

He entered Prince Henry's Hospital on 11th September 1945 and came home on Mother's Day 1946.

The Doctor misdiagnosed Merv, treating him for a fractured pelvis. Merv said it wasn't until his Uncle Billy came to visit him in 1945 and said that he had "done his sciatica" that he was allowed to come home from hospital. Uncle Billy had played 112 Games for Melbourne on the wing so he had some idea about back injuries.

After getting out of hospital in 1946 Merv went to work for the OT Case Factory as a Clerk, not too far from here on Normanby Road between Ingles Street and Boundary Road.

In his 6 and a half years at the OT Case Factory Merv only missed 1 day of work. Merv had a good work ethic. Merv moved on when the company closed down.

Merv's next job was selling insurance door to door for AMP for 6 and a half years. He worked around Port and Albert Park.

One day Merv was walking around with his supervisor, who said to Merv "Is there anyone you don't know in this place?" to which Merv replied "Only if they moved in this morning".

Sometimes when people fell short, Merv would reach into his own pocket to make sure they were covered.

Merv eventually moved on to work at his mate Ron Jenkins Garage where he pumped petrol and kept the books in order. He was there for 6 years.

He left to take a job at Ireland Milk Pty Ltd, a Dairy in Hawthorn so he could free up his daytime hours to help look after his parents. He was at the Dairy for 11 years. Merv spent his nights chasing his horse "Radish" around Hawthorn. Radish would stop at each house and then move on to the next.

In 1972 Merv started work at BP on Beach Road as a Storeman.

Merv's last job was with Wormalds working as a security guard at two sites. He worked at Nippon Denzo in Altona, where he practiced his Japanese with staff. He also worked at Melbourne University, where he would ensure that female students arrived safely back at their accommodation late at night.

Merv retired in January 1993.

Family holidays

From the age of 14 Merv's family rented a house in Daylesford for 12 years. They would arrive just before Christmas and leave after New Years. They would often invite friends to stay. One of those friend's was Merv's mate Alan Freeman. Alan had a radio show in Melbourne and one night the show suddenly went off air. Alan's mother called into the studio to check if everything was ok. Apparently Alan, and Merv, who had been with him at the time, had both fallen asleep while records were playing. Shortly after that Alan left for England where he became the host of Top of the Pops and appeared in a movie called "Trad Dad" with Helen Shapiro.

Footy

In Merv's words:

We used to play footy among ourselves. This side of Bay Street would play that side of Bay Street. Rossi Corner, Grahamy Gates and all that sort of thing.

You only just played where you could get a game, where you could get a ground.

We played a game of football once against a team at Scotch College. Merv Leedon arranged that. I was about 15 or 16. We weren't very old. We played the boarders who lived at the school.

When I was 18 I went to train with Melbourne Seconds. My Dad got me up there. He knew the trainer. Bobby Atkinson came up with me. Bobby said to me one day "What's with this left foot kicking?" I said to him "Do you think I'd waste my time coming up here to League Football if I couldn't kick with both feet!" We trained until 30th June when the clearances came out. Anyone from Port Melbourne had to be cleared by South Melbourne Football Club to play footy anywhere else in the League.

When I was training with Melbourne this Ray Olman said "Where are you playing football" and I said "I'm just training with Melbourne Seconds, I'm not playing anywhere and he said come and play with us". I said "Who are you?" and he said "The Diggers". I said "The Diggers? I am only 18. I can't play with The Diggers." He said "Of course you can, you just have a different jumper every week." We used to get half of the players out of the Port Melbourne RSL and half out of the Station Hotel.

These fellows all had VX numbers having been in the Army. So I gave myself a sales tax number which is VS. I was VS131313. I played as a rover in the centre. We played at the second oval at Baghdad, right down the end near where Carmel McCarthy lived.

While I was at work at the OT, one day this chap came to the door. He introduced himself as the Secretary of the South Melbourne Football Club. He started telling me what I would get for playing with South, he mentioned clothes etc. I said "I won't be doing that mate. I'll be playing as an amateur and buying my own clothes!"

South wouldn't clear me so I went to play for the amateurs. I only wanted to play for Melbourne.

I also played with the Port YMCA.

We used to play Saturday competitions. We would get changed in a house opposite the ground in Baghdad where we left football stops all over the bedroom carpet.

They used to give the Best and Fairest player a ten shilling note, and being an amateur I couldn't take money so they'd give me iridescent pencils. So I finished up with about 10 of these things.

Then one of my mates asked me to come and play at Power House where I played 53 games over 5 seasons.

I finished playing Footy when I left Power House.

Normie Goss used to say "Why did you give up football so easy?" I said "I couldn't get to Melbourne. Melbourne Seconds would have done, didn't have to be the Firsts!"

Cricket

After leaving school Merv played cricket for a team called North Melbourne ALP. He used to ride his bike out to the grounds in Brunswick near Sydney Road/Royal Parade.

Merv started playing cricket at Port when he was 20. Johnny May's father was the scorer for Port and he used to come into the Grahame Gates to get milkshakes and malted milks. And one day he said "would you be interested in coming down to Port Melbourne to play cricket and I said Oh yeah".

He turned 21 in January, 1949 and Tommy Lahiff and everyone came to his 21st Birthday. He started out in the 4ths, then progressed through the 3rds, then the 2nds until after Christmas one year he was given a game in the 1sts. A few players had been stranded up at Mildura and weren't back from holidays. He played his first game at Preston. Beautiful batting wicket. Merv got 4 wickets for 12. Then one bloke came in and he just started swinging the bat, hitting the ball and he took 24 off one over. It turned out to be a bloke called Baker. The Gary Baker who played football for Melbourne's father.

Merv played cricket for Port between 1948 and 1963. He was a fast bowler. Receiving his Life Membership in 1974.

Merv won the bowling average in the 1953/54 season and played in 4 premierships.

Music

While living at the Grahamy Gates Merv's mate Norm Smith taught Merv to play the Ukulele. Merv and Norm would entertain people.

Norm was invited to Daylesford and Merv and Norm would walk out to Sutton Springs and start singing. People from the Guests Houses would come down to listen. Norm would sing Al Jolson songs and Merv, Perry Como.

Merv's first singing engagement anywhere was at Kevin Woodruff's engagement to Pat at the Port Town Hall.

In 1948 Sharyn Hands' Grandfather knew these 3AW people were coming to the Social Club Night at Ariel & Swallows where he worked and he got Merv there to sing. That's how Arthur Lister saw Merv perform and asked him to come on Rumpus Time which was a weekly half hour show at 3AW on a Monday night.

At one point Merv was singing on Saturday nights at either the Collingwood Town Hall, The Masonic Hall in Collins Street or the St Kilda Town Hall. In those days you could buy a ticket and go from one to the other on a Saturday night to dance.

On Sundays he sang, when his turn came up, on the P & A Parade (Professional & Amateurs) which was held at the Williamstown Town Hall.

Mondays Merv was on Rumpus Time at 3AW from 1948 until the show ended in 1952/53.

The girls at the Greendale TB Sanitorium would ring in to 3AW

requesting songs and writing letters. Merv had his own fan club.

Merv had to join the Musicians Union to perform professionally.

At the same time Merv joined the Hobsons Bay Masonic Lodge where he met Stan McLennan. Stan was a pianist and song writer. So Merv was also performing for the Lodge during the week.

Merv appeared on 3UZ's Are You an Artist and regularly sang at wedding receptions.

While travelling to Sydney on the SS Orcades to visit his Uncle, Merv and Stan entertained passengers in the afternoon. Four of these passengers gave Merv their cards with references to various Theatres in Australia, New Zealand and the US. Merv never took up the offers.

Marriage

One night in the late 1940s Merv Leedon took Merv with him to a party at 28 Griffin Crescent, Port Melbourne. That is where he met Lesley Bennett, his future wife and mother of his children.

Children, Grandchildren and sport

When Port fielded an Under 12's cricket team in the 1970s Robert was part of the team. On a Saturday morning Merv and Lesley would load as many kids as would fit into their car and off they would go. Lesley would be scorer. The McKenzie's held a party at their place after the team won the premiership.

Merv would watch Robert in the higher grades and then Fiona started playing cricket for Altona North in 1979/80, a left hander like Robert. Merv only missed 2 matches in Fiona's 26 years of playing with the Club.

Then when his grand children starting playing sports Merv could be found every weekend at Neil's cricket or footy, Annie's Netball and then Alex's cricket.

When the Junior Cricket Program started back up at Port Melbourne Merv would be there watching Alex and then helping out with coaching in the nets during the week. Merv was very proud of the accomplishments of the young blokes who made their way from Milo Cricket up through the Juniors, often travelling to games on public transport when he could no longer drive.

Exercise

Merv was an avid walker. When he was about 88, Merv walked from Chelsea to Port Melbourne, to the Botanical Gardens and then home again. It took him 23 hours. Multiple people stopped him on the way offering a lift but Merv just said "if I do that then I will have to start all over again!" Only telling his family after he had completed this feat.

Merv was swimming laps in Lisa's pool on his 80th Birthday.

Merv spent the last 5 years of his life at the Mecwacare John Atchison Centre in Hoppers Crossing. He loved outings. Often going out for breakfast and polishing off a Big Breakfast to the astonishment of the waiters. Trips to Daylesford, Torquay, Werribee Zoo and of course Port to watch some cricket brightened his days as his mobility decreased.

Merv's children and family would like to thank everyone who was able to make it today.

Thank you

Robert, Lisa and Fiona and our extended family would like to thank the Staff at the John Atchison Centre, Mercy Palliative Care Team and everyone for all of your kind messages of sympathy and support received at this difficult time.

In particular, we would like to thank Chris Sewell and the PMCC for their kindness in holding this celebration and morning tea in the clubrooms where Dad spent many happy hours in the suburb he called home.



Port Melbourne Cricket Players Lounge - Saturday 15th March 2025