

Vale Raymond George Thorpe (8 June 1926 - 28 May 2009)

Ray, who made a substantial contribution to Club affairs, died on 28 May 2009 and had a funeral service at Saint Nicholas Anglican Church Tuncurry on 3 June 2009. The funeral service was led by Father Stuart Benson and the eulogy was spoken by Mr Neil Puddicombe.

At the age of 26, in 1952 Ray came to the Glebe Club, the year the Sydney Hockey Association was formed after the merger between the Metropolitan and Northern Suburbs Associations. It was in 1952 that Jim Kenny played his 300th game for the Club. The Annual Report of 1952 makes the comment about Ray 'Imported Bloodstock—should improve the Club's general education'. Ray was a teacher.

Players who played with Ray in his first year with the Club were Frank Murray, Noel Walker, Bob Needham, Vernon Turner, Les Waight, Bill Ryan, Vince Halls, Ken Wark, Harry Wark, Jack Taylor, Bill Lord, Glen Elliott and Fred Needham. He took over the centre-forward position from Jack Sutherland, who, like Ray, was an impressive marksman. Both players had incredible goal-scoring ability.

In 1952 and '53 Ray played for the NSW Senior team at the Australian Championships and later became a NSW Selector. In 1953 Ray scored 27 goals from 17 games for the first grade team. In 1954 Ray was transferred to the country as a teacher, but managed to continue to play for Glebe. The 1954 Annual Report comments 'Ray certainly would take the Honours for the best Clubman, after travelling so far to have a game as he did. In each game he showed glimpses of his real form that make him one of the best forwards in the game.' Also in 1954 Ray married his girlfriend Beryl. They were in their 55th year of marriage at the time of Ray's death.

In 1955 Ray became Secretary of the Club, a position he held until 22 July 1963, when he resigned as a result of a work transfer to the country. Ray was Secretary for close on 9 years and he handled this position with aplomb. Many of the Management Committee Meetings were held at Ray's home, as the Glebe Clubhouse under the arch did not come on stream until 1960. Ray had a well developed sense of humour and Club stalwart Molly Wark remembers that the Management Committee Meetings of the era were enjoyable affairs. Ray was succeeded as Secretary by Fred Letts, another great servant of the Club.

In the 1962 Annual Report Club President Kelvin Dickey wrote: 'Here I must thank the work horse of the Club, our Secretary, Mr Ray Thorpe. Once again he has done a tremendous amount of work for the Club, without him we would be like a ship without a rudder. With his wife Mrs. B Thorpe, he was largely responsible for the financial success of our catering venture at Jubilee Oval.'

In total Ray played 211 games for Glebe, the vast majority of which were in

first grade. He won first grade premierships in 1952, '53, '55, '56, '58, '62 and '63. Players in the 1963 first grade team with Ray were Frank Vanderputt, Ken Wark, Graeme "have-a-chat" Gilmour, Bob "Rocker" Fox, Des "Warrant Officer" Wise, Len "Punjab" Needham, Robert "Charlie" Brown, John "the Reverend" Collier, Pat "Effort" Nilan and Victor "twinkle toes" Westacott.

Ray was succeeded as centre-forward in the Glebe first grade team by a Dave "cement head" Stephens, a mining engineer from Gave in North Queensland, who was transferred to Sydney on a work assignment.

Ray was one of the best, if not the best, goal scorers to have ever played for the Club. He could instinctively sense where he should stand to make himself available for a pass from a team mate, and could score a goal out of almost nothing. Ray gave the team teeth up-front. With Ray in the first grade team, Glebe was never beaten until the final whistle sounded. On many occasions the team came from one or two goals down with 10 minutes remaining in the game to snatch an unlikely victory.

At Bathurst and Goulburn hockey carnivals in the '50s and '60s, Glebe would make the final, which would be played before several thousand people, and the large parochial crowd would be very vocal in barracking for the team opposing Glebe. On many occasions the mighty maroons would win in the dying seconds of the match, much to the chagrin of the assembled throng.

The Glebe first grade team of Ray's era was a powerhouse. Glebe's outstanding first grade captain of the '40s and '50s Bill Ryan would often tell his team at half-time that it was the duty and obligation of every team member to do their best for themselves, their team and this grand old grand old Club of ours. Teams of this era had a never say die attitude. There was great pride in the performance of the team. Ray and his team mates played with pride and passion. They set an example for those following to uphold.

The Club was left a better, stronger organisation as a result of Ray's considerable efforts. The Club is indebted to Ray for his input, both on and off the field, given cheerfully, diligently and without financial reward - thank you Ray.

All his professional life Ray worked as a school teacher. He was an excellent teacher, who was loved by his pupils and their parents. Ray's sense of humour, common sense approach, and supportive attitude were his trade mark.

To Ray's wife Beryl and his family, all of us at the Hockey Club, members past, current members and loyal supporters of all eras, extend to you our utmost sympathy on Ray's passing. We all hope and pray that Ray is now enjoying his eternal reward in heaven, which God promises to all his faithful servants, of which Ray was one.