

A Biography of the late Ronald Cheong (9 June 1944 – 29 March 2021)

Ron Cheong was the epitome of the quiet achiever. He was a low-key person who throughout most of his life toiled away for the greater good and made a substantial contribution to the enjoyment and welfare of others in the many spheres of his influence. His health failed him in the last 12 years of his life, which prompted him to pass the baton on to his successors to advance the many causes that he helped flourish in his prime years.

Ron's parents were both of Chinese descent who were born in Australia. They lived in Darwin in the late 1930s and early 1940s, with Ron's father working as a civilian at Darwin airport. The eldest two of the Cheong family's seven children, consisting of four boys and three girls were born in Darwin. In early 1944 during World War Two (WW2) bombs started to fall around Darwin airport and Ron's father was instructed by his employer to remove his family from the city.

The family relocated to the central west Queensland town of Longreach, a town of around 2,000 people, 700 kilometres west of Rockhampton. Ron, the family's third born child, was born on 9 June 1944 in Longreach and he spent the first two and a half years of his life there. As Ron's older siblings were approaching high school age, Ron's parents reasoned that educational opportunities would be better for their children in Brisbane than in Longreach, and moved there in 1947.

Ron's parents bought a corner grocery shop in Stanley Street, a major thoroughfare in central Brisbane, which was open six and a half days a week, 52 weeks a year with never a holiday or a break. The Cheong children helped their parents in the shop.

For high school Ron went to the Brisbane State High School, after which he studied Pharmacy for two years at Queensland University, before deciding that life as a Pharmacist was not for him. In his early 20s Ron found work with the Australian Public Service in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), in the accounts department, and stated moving up the ranks in this department, and in the late 1960s became head of accounts for the CAA in Brisbane.

In the early 1970s, Ron transferred from Brisbane to Sydney with the CAA, working in the accounts department at Sydney airport, and living at Normanhurst. It was at the CAA that he met his future wife, Lorraine. Lorraine was born and bred around Moree in northern western New South Wales, 628 kilometres from Sydney, and like Ron had come to Sydney seeking work. Ron was a quiet reserved chap and Lorraine was an outgoing livewire. They enjoyed other's company, and they married in 1981, a second marriage for both of them.

Their first house was a single-story terrace house in Ross Street, Glebe, which is where they initially reared their four children Panda, Andrew, Alison and Adrian. As the children grew and the house became too small for them, the family moved to a larger two-story house at Wigram Road, Glebe.

In 1995 Australia's airports were privatized and CAA was disbanded. The managing entity of the privatized Australian airports was then called the Federal Airports Corporation. After working for the CAA for over 30 years, Ron then aged 51 was made redundant. It was a difficult time for him.

After leaving the CAA Ron worked in several jobs for shortish periods of time, including as a factory forklift driver, a truck driver, and then as a delivery driver for Glebe District Hockey Club Sponsor, Galluzzo Fruiterers, at 187 Glebe Point Road, Glebe, for 4-5 years. He was reliable, honest, thorough, and hardworking and well-liked by his fellow employees. A bad back and then a diagnosis of lung cancer in 2013 curtailed his work activities.

Panda Cheong, the eldest of Ron and Lorraine's, children started school at Saint James' Catholic Primary School Glebe in around 1989 and her siblings followed her to Saint James. Saint James is the school at which the Founder of the Glebe District Hockey Club (GDHC) taught as a Patrician brother in the boy's secondary school. He started teaching there in 1931.

In the 1990s there were a dozen or more families with children who attended Saint James and whose children also played in the GDHC junior teams. Panda and Andrew wanted to play sport with their friends and started out with the Glebe Minkey Squad of 1990. Club Life-Member Peter Busch was the Minkey coach at that time, assisted by Life-Member Geoff Paterson. In 2021 Peter plays in the Club's men's Fourth Grade team.

Lorraine and Ron helped out when and where they could at Minkey and so began Ron's 20-year association as an official of the GDHC. Ron was one of several parents of children at Saint James' Primary School who were members of the GDHC Junior Committee throughout the 1990s. Jim Oman was for many years the Club's Junior Convenor and his fellow Committee men were Mick Tapsell and Ron Cheong.

They formed an effective and efficient junior committee that organized a vibrant junior club and also attended meetings and were actively involved in running the Central Area Junior Hockey Association (CAJHA), that organized junior hockey south of the Harbour. Ron was secretary of the CAJHA for 5-6 years and was an important link between the CAJHA and the GDHC. He was one of the best secretaries that the CAJHA ever had, and his organization of teams, competitions, grounds and lines of communication was even handed and efficient. He always took good care of Glebe's best interests, but was equally fair and reasonable in his dealings with all CAJHA affiliated clubs. Despite being a quiet, unassuming, softly spoken chap, Ron was a good communicator, and an excellent organizer.

Other junior parents of the day who were heavily involved in running the juniors were Eddy Crook and Neil Lawson. Neither Jim, Ron, Mick, Eddy or Neil had ever played hockey, they never coached but they were expert and dedicated sport's administrators who provided an environment that was well organized and ensured things ran smoothly for the Club's coaches, managers and its players.

Ron was actively involved as an administrator with the Glebe juniors for 14 years, from 1990 to 2003. The consummate team player Ron slotted in where and when needed without complaint or grumble. He just did it because it needed to be done. During these years he also distinguished himself as a great cook on the clubhouse barbeque, not only at Wednesday night training all winter, but at other social events like the much-loved annual Junior Barbeque fundraiser where he produced some amazing dishes on the hotplate.

Panda Cheong played 100 junior games from 1990 to 1998. A recurrent dislocated patella ended her hockey career. Andrew played 192 junior games from 1990 to 2003 and 340 senior games from 2001 to the present, and he is still going strong in Third Grade. Alison played 110 junior games from 1993 to 2003, and 95 senior games from 2004 - 2009. Adrian played 22 junior games in 2007 and 2008.

For many years during the mid to late 2000s Andrew and Alison helped Vernon Howe run the Glebe Minkey Squad down at Jubilee on Saturday mornings.

The Junior Convenor of 2000, Andrew Dart wrote about Ron in the 2000 Junior Annual report: "In my first year as junior Convenor I would particularly like to thank my Co Junior Committee Member Ron Cheong. Ron is a 'Tower of Strength'. Apart from his roles as Junior Equipment Officer and

Junior Committee Member, Ron also holds the position of Central Area Junior Hockey Association Secretary, a job he fulfils with immense passion and commitment. Without Ron's support and encouragement and the ease with which Jim Oman handed over the Junior Convenor's role, I would never have lasted the season."

In the 2001 Junior Annual Report Andrew wrote: "Once again, Ron Cheong, as Co Junior Committee Member, was fantastic. As many of you know, Ron is a workaholic. Apart from his position on the Junior Committee, he also, alongside Lee Farlow, looks after the Club House Canteen, is the Junior Equipment Officer and secretary of the CAJHA, so in effect he has 4 caps. I know how much time and effort he puts into all his positions, and would also like to thank Ron's wife Lorraine, for basically putting up with both of us over the season."

In 2002 Andrew wrote in the Junior Annual report: "Once again, Ron Cheong was sensational, taking on the responsibilities of four positions—Junior Committee Member, Club House Manager, Junior Equipment Officer and Secretary of CAJHA. I personally know that this year was extremely difficult for Ron, particularly in regards to a family bereavement, however, on behalf of the Glebe Junior Club—a very big thank you!"

Ron continued on as Club House Manger in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006, stepping down at the end of the 2006 season. He served on the GDHC Management Committee for the four years from 2003 to 2006. The 2003 Junior Annual Report records: "to our ongoing Club House manager, Ron Cheong once again a very, very big thank you. Ron as usual had everything under control throughout the year and the Club House Canteen ran extremely efficiently and profitably." Ron was actively involved in organizing the early Glebe Junior Carnivals held at Jubilee Oval, Glebe, which were a great success.

In the mid to late 2000s Ron would usually come out to watch the senior men's games on a Saturday afternoon, which he enjoyed doing. Ron liked a smoke while he watched the games and often sat away from the rest of the Glebe supporters, behind the goals with Club Life-Member Martin Howe, who also liked a smoke. Unfortunately, both Ron and Martin developed lung cancer and died from the disease.

Ron developed lung cancer in around 2013 and his prognosis on diagnosis was considered poor. He had a lung resection, chemotherapy and immunotherapy for the disease and lived another 7-8 years. Most of these years after his diagnosis he had a reasonable quality of life. He was troubled by moderately severe depression for the last 10 years of his life.

In the last couple of years of his life Ron's health was poor and he had several admissions to the general wards and the ICU ward at RPAH, Camperdown for respiratory and gastrointestinal bleeding, secondary to his lung cancer, but each time he recovered against the odds.

Ron's wife Lorraine died suddenly of a heart attack on 10 October 2020, which was major setback for Ron and all the family. His final few months were spent at the Annandale Nursing Home at 76 Johnston Street Annandale, which is where he died on 29 March 2021.

Ron made significant contributions to the school community at Saint James' Primary School, Glebe, the GDHC, the CAJHA and to the wider community. He led by example, and was a doer rather than a talker.

A couple of ex-Glebe hockey players who lived in the local Glebe area would from time to time find themselves down on their luck and short of cash before their next welfare cheque payment landed in their bank account. These chaps would on a regular basis would call in on the Cheongs at 168

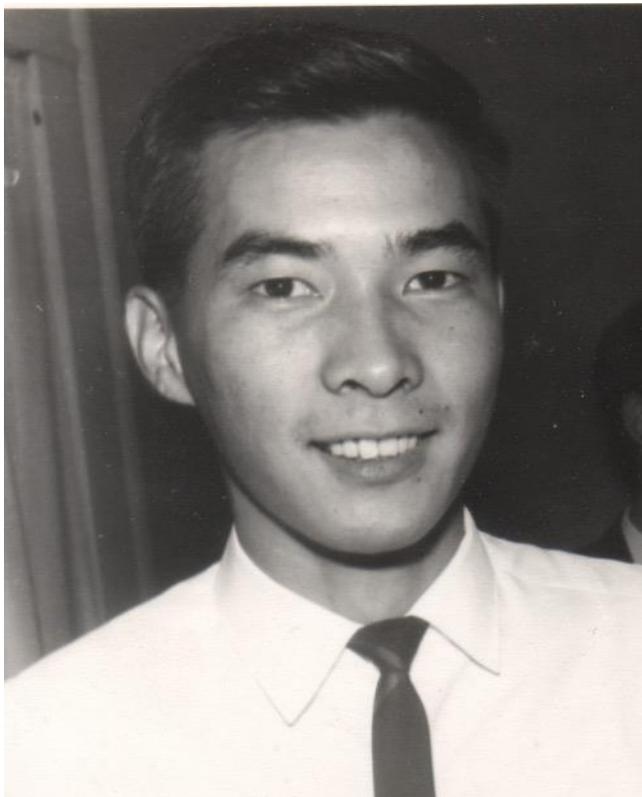
Wigram Road Glebe for a chat, an affirmation of their importance to the Glebe Hockey Club and the Glebe community. The doorway chat was a positive, uplifting experience for both parties.

At the end of the friendly positive discourse at the front doorway Ron or Lorraine would slip the envelope some money to buy food, to sustain them until the pension cheque arrived. Ron and Lorraine were very generous people and although “not rolling in it” they willingly shared what they had with those people less fortunate than themselves.

It was my privilege and pleasure to have known Ron, Lorraine and their family for over 30 years. They were constant contributors to the society in which they lived, and Panda, Andrew, Alison and Adrian are carrying on in Ron and Lorraine’s footsteps in this regard.

Rest In Peace Ron Cheong. One of the GDHC’s finest.

Harry Wark



Ron Cheong as a young man



Ron Cheong as an old man.



Ron Cheong with his extended family. Ron is at the right hand-end of the right row with the beard. Ron's wife Lorraine is in the middle of the front row with the scarf.