

Royal Park

I would like to say a few words on behalf of my late father, Frank Flowers, who was a former President, Captain and Life Member of Royal Park Golf Club. I understand that Dad contributed to the book that is being launched today. Dad passed away 2 months ago, and he had been looking forward to today's occasion,

Dad joined Royal Park in the late 40's, and enjoyed membership of Royal Park and subsequently Tullamarine for the next 45 years. I was caddying for Dad when I was about 12. He was hitting off the 1st tee, which was then down near the station. The first two shots went over the railway line. I, like a good caddie, went to look for them. Bending over to get through the fence, the 3rd shot hit me square in the derriere. Dad wasn't worried about my condition, just that he was playing 7 off the tee, and it was Medal day.

The Club House was situated across the road from the 9th/18th green. Locker room at one end, verandah in the middle and then the lounge, with the pro shop at the western end. On the verandah was a board with the scores of the day. There was much chinking between the verandah and the 18th green, and a 5 ft. putt became a bit more difficult with the advice being offered.

In the late 50's, the Club obtained a liquor licence. This was not an easy task, as the Club House was so public, access via the verandah was not under supervision, and generally facilities were not designed for a licensed premises. The licence was a big move, as it not only stopped some members from heading to John Coleman's West Brunswick Hotel, or to the Car Park, but brought a lot more comradery to the Club, especially during the football season when the last quarter was televised live. When the Club House burnt down, a lot of history went with it, although the driver donated by Peter Thomson, from the 1948 Victorian Amateur, which was mounted above the bar, survived. The \$280,000 quote of damage came from my father, who mentioned 280 members, or lockers, which became \$280,000 by the time it hit the press. At this time, the conditions of occupancy came under pressure from the Council, and the Club took up the option to merge with Keilor to form Tullamarine. There were also some moves to close the area as a golf course. Thank goodness, common sense prevailed and the course remains as a centrally located gem, no doubt due to the people that carried on Royal Park Golf Club.

Around 1960, Larry Moore and Bob Ballingall were playing in the Australasian Foursomes at Southern. Bob was asked why players from Royal Park were always down the middle of the fairway. His response was that at Royal Park, if you strayed you were out of bounds on nearly every hole. During the time that Dad was President and Captain, the Club was blessed with many outstanding young players. Peter Thomson's brothers, Tony and later Michael, Bruce Davis, John Munro, Wes Willoughby, John Kellaway, Bob McKeown and later Larry Moore, Jim Dempsey, Denis Mahoney and Wayne Berger come to mind as young golfers playing off very low handicaps, who went on to play Senior pennant at the highest level with Division 1 Clubs. Dad was very proud of the achievements of these golfers and followed their careers throughout the years.

Royal Park is a course where one learns that golf is about keeping the ball in play and not just hitting the ball as hard as possible. It has been an accessible, centrally located and moderate cost course, where thousands of golfers of all ages and standards have learnt to enjoy this wonderful game. Long may it continue.

Frank Flowers Jr.
November 15th 2003