

## NOEL JEFFREY – AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE LEGEND

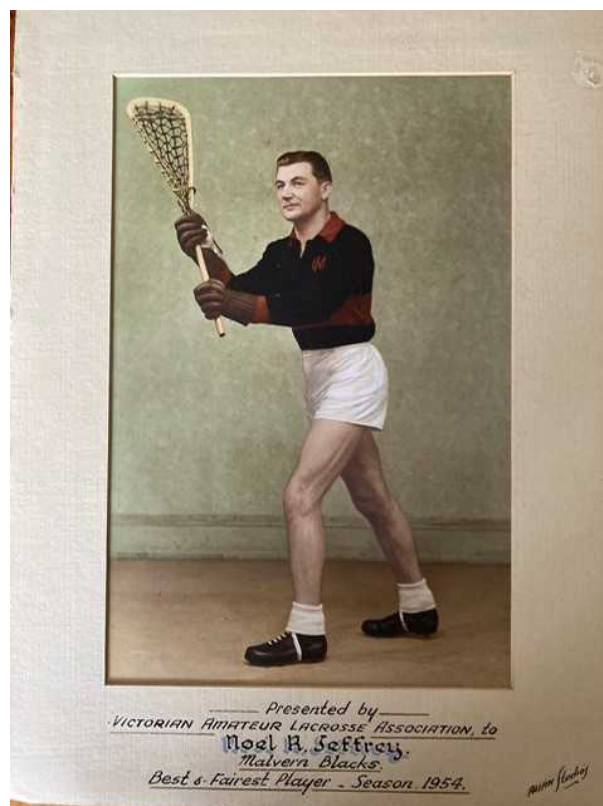
Noel Jeffrey commenced in the local interschool competition provided by the Malvern Lacrosse Club in 1935 as a 12 year old and played in Malvern junior teams from 1936-1941, possibly recruited by Frank Lansbury or one of the few active lacrosse builders in the Malvern area.

He enlisted in the army in 1941 and served in New Guinea and Bougainville from 1943 until he was discharged from the army in early 1946. His rank was corporal and he served in the AIF HQ152 Australian General Transport Company, in support of U.S. Services in the South West Pacific.

Noel played in the B grade team upon his return from the War in 1946 but was the centre for Malvern's 'A' grade team from 1947-62, playing in 16 consecutive grand finals of which Malvern won 12, including a record 10 consecutive premierships 1950 – 1959, captaining Malvern's 'A' grade team from 1959-60.

He played centre for the Victorian senior team in 1951 and from 1953-1961, captaining the team in 1959 and selected as centre in the All-Australian team in 1953 and 1956 (Remember, they only played carnivals every 3 years in those days).

Noel was also a member of the inaugural Australian team to play overseas, touring the U.S.A. and England. Noel turned 40 years of age in 1962, the oldest player in the team.





Roy Sloggett (Former Malvern and Victorian champion and team mate) made the following observations about Noel Jeffrey - "His stick skills made it look easy, he was personable, he was extremely fit, particularly for a man of his age. He missed 7 years of his lacrosse career because of the war, and was probably the dominant centre man in Victoria throughout the 50's, and possibly Australia.

He played in the centre where fitness and skill were the main attributes and in these he excelled. A rarity in those days, he prepared for the beginning of the season at a gymnasium as pre-season training. He was seldom beaten. He also had to contend with the Malvern cricket pitch black mud and this situation did not dent his skills. He was a regular goal-scorer.

During his playing days Noel was also a member of Malvern Committee for 20 years, he was also a very important member of VALA Committee for many years and was the manager of the Victorian senior state team from 1964-65.

While Noel was not only an outstanding player, particularly for his age, he was also an exceptional fund raiser and entrepreneur, and without his fundraising for the Victorian team and the dogged determination of Laurie Turnbull in the West, it is unlikely that the inaugural tour of 1962 would have taken place.

The following are some extracts of what was happening around 1961 that demonstrates the incredible impact Noel Jeffrey had on fund raising in Victoria, which resulted in Victoria having the vast majority of players in the team, not because they were necessarily the best, but they were the best funded, thanks to Noel Jeffrey.

Consider the following historical comments provided prior to the 1962 tour:-

"Funding of many V.A.L.A. projects was made possible largely by the success of the "Monster Efforts" organized and conducted by Noel Jeffrey. Originally, the proposition had been adopted by the V.A.L.A. as a "one off" venture, and had been begrudgingly supported by the members of most clubs. The first "Effort" having achieved a success beyond the imagination of all but a few of Mr Jeffrey's supporters, was followed by a number of similar efforts. In 1960, the year before the proposal to send a team to America had been implemented, Mr Jeffrey embarked on another effort. The Monster Effort was drawn at Caulfield Park in August 1960. At that function it was revealed that the net profit to the association was £1,851-1-0 (\$3,702). Among the expenses was the payment of £981 as a distribution to clubs.

A vote of thanks was passed to Noel and Sheila Jeffrey for their work in connection with the "Monster Effort" and it was clear that this was a great method of raising funds. Putting those amounts into modern day values, we are talking in the vicinity of \$30,000-40,000.

Not every state had a member on its executive with the plans and energy of Noel Jeffrey. Without his efforts the Victorian finances would have been more modest. Through his Special Efforts he raised £5000 towards the American tour. Since 1955 he had raised over £10,000 (\$20,000) for the Victorian association. This is pounds, not dollars!!!

The reaction in Victoria was immediate. They had supported the proposal to send a team to America from the beginning. At a general committee meeting in November 1961 they passed the motion "That this meeting resolves that a team should be sent to the U.S.A, in March 1962, opportunity to be given to S.A.L.A and W.A.L.A players of suitable calibre to join the team at their own expense. Application is to be made to the A.L.C to grant the team recognition as an Australian team.

It was also moved that Laurie Turnbull, the original W.A.L.A nominee for manager, be appointed manager of the team, travelling at his own expense as already suggested by himself.

Clearly without the involvement of Noel Jeffrey and his fundraising ability and organizational skills, and Laurie Turnbull's organizational skills and dogged determination to make it happen, the tour in all probability would not have happened.

Another point that would not be widely known is that Noel was instrumental in seeking and securing personal loans for several of the players who would otherwise have been unable to make the trip.

Not only had the fundraising in S.A. and W.A. been very poor but the tour had virtually been kept secret in S.A. in particular, and while they employed a professional fund raiser, they only raised £55. W.A. had been a little better and without Laurie Turnbull personally promoting the tour among players in W.A. and S.A. the tour would have been a Victorian team. In the end only 2 players from W.A. and 2 players from S.A. could afford the tour and thus the vast majority came from Victoria. Why? – Because Noel Jeffrey raised an incredible amount of money, as did several clubs.

The team was selected and announced by A.L.C. in mid February 1962, a matter of weeks before they departed, with much to do including organizing uniforms, etc. Noel Jeffrey was selected in that team as a player at the grand old age of 39.

Noel Jeffrey had a tremendous bearing on Australian international relations and really came to the fore as an administrator. He saw the possibilities of overseas tours to and from Australia as a marvelous opportunity for Australian lacrosse to prosper and develop as an international lacrosse nation.

Noel served as Australian International Liaison Officer for 9 years from 1963 – 1971, a period during the conceptual growth of international lacrosse.

In 1967 Noel represented Australia as I.L.O. at the 'Inaugural' meeting in Toronto prior to the first World Championship.

Moving forward to 1971 the following are a couple of insightful observations from a report on the 1972 Australian tour on the power and impact of Noel Jeffrey, and of course Laurie Turnbull, perhaps the two greatest contributors to Australia's presence in world lacrosse and to the commencement of international lacrosse

"It was unfortunate that at this advanced stage in negotiations in 1971 that Noel Jeffrey was obliged to tender his resignation from the position of I.L.O. His services in this position had been invaluable as had his contribution to the ALC generally, and the VALA. Noel Jeffrey was at that time already a senior executive in his firm, and had been promoted to a more senior position in Baltimore, Maryland. It was anticipated that he would be absent from Australia for several years but his career progression turned that into a lifetime. This was a severe loss at this critical time".

"Of course, the need to standardize rules had begun prior to 1972, but by 1972 sufficient important contacts had been made in different parts of the world for real progress to have been made. The names of men such as Noel Jeffrey and Laurie Turnbull carried weight in international deliberations and Judge Hammerman in America carried similar influence. The project of a world championship in 1974 made it imperative that a generally accepted code of laws must be devised, added the final incentive".

Noel was a member of the Board of the International Lacrosse Federation for several years and played a significant part in the development of world championship lacrosse and the inaugural 1967 World Championship.

## **AWARDS**

1953 & 1959 - Winner of the Vince Healy trophy (Best & Fairest Victoria)

1953 & 1956 – Selected as centre in the All-Australian team

1961 - ALC Certificate of Merit

1963 - Life Member of the VALA

1964 - Life Member of the Malvern Lacrosse Club

1969 - VLA Past Presidents Trophy

2004 - ALC Fellows Award

Noel also played lacrosse in Miami from 1978 - 1987 and visited Perth in 1990 for the world championship and participated in the masters tournament at the age of 68, and played his final game of lacrosse in Perth at the Festival of Lacrosse in 2002 at the age of 79.

From his school days in 1935 he played lacrosse in eight consecutive decades - a remarkable feat!



At 90 the blue eyes still sparkled!

In nominating Noel Jeffrey for a Fellows award to A.L.C., Terry Allington (A legend in Australian lacrosse and a Fellow of, and historian for A.L.C.) made the following comments in relation to Noel Jeffrey:-

“In presenting this resume of Mr Noel Jeffrey, I am fully aware of his absence from Australia since 1971, consequently there could be a possibility that some members of the A.L.C. would not be aware of his vast contribution to Victorian, interstate and Australian lacrosse covering a period from 1935 – 1971, a total of 37 years.

Though living and working in the USA his enthusiasm for Australian lacrosse never waned, in fact it increased, mainly because of his experience as Australian International Liaison Officer for a period of 9 years (1963-1971) during the conceptual growth of international lacrosse.

As coach of the 1972 Australian team to tour USA and England, Noel Jeffrey was instrumental in advising me of the new equipment that the Americans were using, this was a big plus for us. Our manager, the late Laurie Turnbull, was successful in having the new plastic racquets sent to Australia, they were a huge success and no doubt contributed to our successful tour.

Noel also had a large input on our billeting arrangements whilst in Baltimore and in conjunction with Ian Jewitt (Coach of the 1967 Australian team) made arrangements for the coaches to talk to leading USA coaches. Noel and I interchanged tapes for some months before leaving Australia and on arriving at Baltimore - Jeffrey and Jewitt were in the front line to welcome us.

If you ask Australian coaches of the 1976, 1978, 1980, and 1982 teams, I am sure they will endorse the assistance Noel Jeffrey gave to the Australian teams.

I am enclosing a page of the International Lacrosse Magazine as it was then, showing a photo of the International Lacrosse Federation with the Australian representatives, Noel Jeffrey and the late Laurie Turnbull. This meeting was held before the “1967 World Championship”.

In hindsight Noel Jeffrey had a tremendous bearing on Australian international relations. In 1962, our first international team toured USA and was the absolute catalyst for future overseas tours.

The seed of the 1962 tour was sown in 1959 with the visit of the Washington and Lee/ University of Virginia team to Australia. They created a huge impression (as the Canadians did in 1907) on Australian lacrosse.

In 1961 Noel Jeffrey organized a car raffle to raise funds for the 1962 tour. 1962 saw the team depart with the majority of players from Victoria (no helmets or protective gear), they really did it the hard way. They did not win a lot of matches but their "trail blazing tour" certainly put Australia on the map for American lacrosse enthusiasts.

It was here that Noel Jeffrey really came to the fore as an administrator and entrepreneur, he saw the possibilities of overseas tours to and from Australia in the future and a marvelous opportunity for Australian lacrosse to prosper and develop as an international lacrosse nation.

Thirty five years later the vision of this small group of people has been realized and Noel Jeffrey played a very significant part in that vision.

I am sure this resume of Mr Noel Jeffrey covers the criteria required for the "Fellows Award" and I am equally sure there is not one lacrosse player or administrator who deserves it more".

## **CONCLUSION**

Without Noel Jeffrey and Laurie Turnbull it is unlikely that the proposed 1962 inaugural overseas tour would have taken place and international lacrosse may have taken many more years to eventuate. The 1962 team was predominantly Victorian because of Noel Jeffrey's fundraising activities in Victoria. He along with Laurie, were the pioneers of international lacrosse and world championships.

While he missed perhaps the best years of his career due to his service in WW2, he was able to perform at the highest level, representing his country at the age of 39, in 1962. This in itself is quite amazing in that he could perform as a player at the ultimate level and yet he had time and commitment to undertake invaluable fundraising activities and carry out administration at club and state level.

If we ever get a Lacrosse Hall of Fame in Australia this man is surely a candidate as a player, fundraiser and builder, but regardless, you in my H of F Noel Jeffrey!