



## **CROQUET LEGEND BUILT WORLD CLASS FACILITY**

### **George Latham Croquet Administrator**

14-1-1941 — 21-3-2010

By Shirley Hallinan  
and Roy Palmer

George Latham, the mainstay of Victorian croquet for the past many years died on Sunday, March 21, after a short illness.

His loss was felt throughout the croquet world and over 300 family and friends attended his funeral service at the Victorian Croquet Centre, Cairnlea.

Life is like an orange. An entity in itself but when you peel away the skin you find segments that are inter-related. It is sad to think that it is not until somebody passes away that we learn about the whole of their life. So it was with George Latham.

George was born in Albury. He had one sibling sister and the two of them had a happy but well disciplined childhood. From an early age George was an avid sportsman. His early interests were hockey, football and cricket. At this stage he also used to hang over the fence at the Albury Croquet Club intrigued and interested in the tactics of the sport.

In later life he added orienteering and marathon running to his sportsfolio and in all these activities he showed the ability to teach and enthuse others in these sports.

After completing High School he came to Melbourne to train at Teachers Training College, attached to Melbourne University. It was there that he met his future wife, Marian. George became a qualified Specialist teacher, teaching Music, Art and P.E. George travelled around the State before being attached to Oak Park Primary School. His family remember their home as always being full of music and musical instruments.

George played cricket for Essendon for 3 years and whilst playing on the oval he could see into the croquet section and it revived his interest in the sport and he eventually joined the Club in 1975, being only the second male member of the Club. During his time at Essendon he held office in every administrative role imaginable, being President for two terms. George became the Club Coach, the Club Captain, the Green-keeper, the Handicapper and a Referee. He even took his turn at cleaning the Club rooms.

He represented the Croquet Club on the Board of the Essendon Football and Community Sporting Club and has his name engraved on two tiles in the Path of Honour, one for his sporting achievements and one for being a Life Member of the Croquet Club.

George's talent was such that by 1984 he was Australian Open Singles Champion and over the next 15 years he was, at various times, Australian Open Doubles Champion, Australian Men's Singles Champion and a member of the Australian team. He was also a Victorian Team member and holder of many Victorian Championships.

From 2000 to 2006 he coached various Victorian and Australian teams and also for many years acted as a Victorian and Australian selector.

His contribution to croquet was not confined to playing and coaching. George was at various times, Vice President of the Australian Croquet Association, President of the Victorian Association as well as President of Essendon and Brunswick clubs.

It was however in the last decade when George was Secretary of Victorian Croquet Association that he had his greatest achievement.

Backed by the Council of the Association, George managed a project which was to give Victoria a world class Croquet Centre, and an investment fund, the income from which will help develop the sport into the future. He achieved this without Government financial support and with the work of guiding the project being done by volunteer croquet players.

The Victorian Croquet Centre at Cairnlea will be a permanent memorial to George Latham and his love of croquet.

George, in all his endeavours was supported by his wife Marian, his children Peter, David, John and Elizabeth, who, together with his grandchildren survive him.

His family and all his friends are very proud of his achievements. He will be missed, not only for all that he did for his family, his friends and for croquet, but for all the other little things that made him such a friendly warm person, the quietly spoken "well done", the word of encouragement, the offer of help, the just being there when something needed to be done and doing it without fuss or bother. Yes, George will be sorely missed.

He has now handed the baton to others to carry on his good works. May he rest in peace.

Shirley Hallinan and Roy Palmer worked with George Latham at Vic Croquet Association. They were assisted by the Latham family.

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