

Balcombe Street & South Blackburn (SB's) Clubs – Club Histories

Written by Hazel Clarke Aug 2010

In 1950, Eric, Hazel and their daughters moved from Hastings to Frankston, moving into a house they had purchased.

Sometime later Hazel went Square Dancing with the friends that she had made at the Overport Primary School Mothers Club. Eric wouldn't go the first night, but thought he had better go next time, and from that night on he was hooked. In no time he was having a go at Calling; he was used to being MC at local Dances and Balls and loved singing in Church Choirs.

They started attending other Clubs going twice a week. Eric was a Spec Builder at the time, so once the floor was down in the house, they invited their friends over for a Square Dance.

They had small Clubs around the area and lots of one-night stands all over Victoria. Eric then decided to build a new house with a dance floor in it. That house was in Balcombe Street, just around the corner from their original house in Reid Street, Frankston. That's where Balcombe Street started. Every Tuesday night until it got too big a crowd for the house and we finished up in Delacombe Park Guide Hall on a Friday night, keeping Tuesday nights for beginner's classes at the house.

Eric was big on party nights and spent many hours making and painting backdrops and decorations for themes on, Birthday and Christmas nights.

A close friend Jean McMahon made all the 32 birthday cakes needed, Bev and Ian Becker were willing helpers, along with Don & Marge Head of the SB's Club.

Eric was also instrumental in building and organizing 12 Square Dance floats for Moomba in Melbourne, and then entered them in the Hastings Day Parade at Hastings and won three trophies.

In 1973, Eric was asked if he would take over the calling at the SB's Square Dance Club, which he did for 17 years. Balcombe Street and the SB's combined well, with many caravan trips to the National Conventions in each State.

On Melbourne Cup weekends away, Eric would organize dances at a local hall on the Saturday night. Sunday was car trial or picnic somewhere. Croquet on the lawns, or just sitting round the caravans talking with hot scones for afternoon tea. The largest group of caravans was 24 at Warburton. Lots of fun was had swimming in the Yarra River.

In the years of 1976, 1977 and 1978, Balcombe Street won the Square Olympics that was held at Pakenham, but it got a bit willing so the Victorian Square Dance Association (V.S.D.A.) abandoned them.

Eric and Hazel were presented with a plaque by the Victorian Callers Association (V.C.A.) for work done over the years. Eric was given a Life Membership of the V.C.A. and was also given the V.S.D.A. Service Award.

14 Caravans travelled over to the first Western Australian Convention across the Nullarbor. Hazel and Eric stayed on in Fremantle for 6 months, and whilst there, Eric was asked if he would call for the Riverside Square Dance Club, as they needed a Caller. This he did until the wet season finished and they continued on their way up the West Coast then across the top of Australia to Brisbane for the next Convention.

To close the Balcombe Street Club (the end of an era) a big farewell party was held in May 1991. Eric was later farewelled at the Victorian State Convention in Shepparton that year.

Eric died later that year (2nd November 1991) whilst on a Cup Weekend trip to Neerim South. Eric died doing what he loved and with his family and friends there with him.