

EULOGY FOR THOMAS LESLIE WILLIAMS – Community Service By Ray Stuart

Tom Williams began his most esteemed association with the Chelsea Football Club 50 years ago this year. Tom began playing in 1950 as a handy rover and wingman, and for the next 5 years played under coaches Pat Phillips, Bonnie Johnson and Stuie Hamilton.

Although turning his attention to his young family and business in the mid to late 50's and early 60's, he remained a loyal supporter, particularly when his boys Paul and Shane were playing in the 60's and 70's – Paul winning a Best and Fairest award with the club.

In 1978 I approached Tom To stand for president. Tom accepted and so began an unparalleled record of 17 years as an uncontested run as president.

Part of Tom's character was that he always had a cause to aim for. When elected, he was greeted with a ground floor social room that was cold, had concrete floor and bare walls. Within 12 months Tom had raised enough funds to paint the walls, carpet the floor, install honor boards, reframe football photos and install the club mural on one end wall. We were off and running and momentum quickly spilled onto the field, finishing third in 1979 and ultimately reaching the Grand Final in 1981 under former Collingwood champ John Greening. This side always held a special place in Tom's heart. He often reminisced about the 81 side. As a matter of fact he loved all his coaches – Mal, Noel, Howard, Gerry and Boofa.

Midway through 1985 Tom said to me, "Ray, I think we've got the club in a position to win the next 5 flags." We learnt very early that Tom's opinions were to be respected. So it was to be that in 1985 we were runner-up; 1986 premiers; 1987 premiers; 1988 third; 1989 runner-up and 1990 premiers – overall, 5 grand finals, 3 flags, 2 runner-up and a third, all in 6 years.

Tom's style as president was that he always sought consensus with his committee, But it was he who had the knack of ultimately giving the right answer to the situation and always stood by the decision and rarely was it debated.

Let me list some of Tom's endearing qualities and his loves: He always

- Aided the less fortunate (and there were many)
- Treated all people as equals
- Never complained about his own problems – health or otherwise
- Was an ardent football follower
- Loved his boxing and Jeff Fenech
- Loved to boast about his children, grandchildren and wife Gene
- In recent years developed a summer love for cricket with the Chelsea Cricket Club's 6th XI, where he was appointed coach
- Loved his end of season trips to Tassie with the boys and the scallywags that went along

It was on one of these trips to Tassie that the boys stopped at a pub on the way home (as if they needed to) and Tom couldn't help but admire a large framed print of Prime Minister John Curtin on the wall behind the bar. An hour or so later pulling into his driveway at Chelsea, Tom went to the boot to get his bag. Joe leant in first and pulled out the 2'x 2' framed print of John Curtin and said, "Tom, you liked it so much I thought it would look much better on your wall." Tom loved telling that story. (Joe, by the way, assures us that he purchased it from the publican.

I said earlier that Tom always had a cause. In recent times it was raising funds for renovating the Players' gymnasium and naming it in memory of Frank Parsons. Yet back in April 1987, Tom's proudest moment came when the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, officially opened the "Tom Williams Social Room". It was the culmination of several years' hard work and commitment by Tom to have quality off field amenities for his members and players.

When Bob Hawke put his hand on Tom's shoulder that night and said "My little mate" – he spoke for all of us.

A little mate, but a giant figure who stands so tall for all of us at the Chelsea Football Club.
From his knockabout mates and from all of us here today – Tom, your legacy will live on forever.