

FRANK MCGUIRE, VRWC LIFE MEMBER

Frank, born 29 March 1912, commented on his early years as follows

Having always been interested in gymnastics, athletics and fitness, I spent much time running or walking every time I had the chance and managed to run second in the combined Fitzroy School Sports at 13, in 1925, and won the Fitzroy Cricket Club medallion for the best Fitzroy School allrounder the same year. I joined Collingwood Harriers in 1929, made the team for the 880 yards in 1930 but switched to racewalking in 1931 and managed to finish 5th in the State five miles championship at John Wren's Richmond Racecourse and won the Junior Title (then Under 21). I was 19.

He also joined VAWC as a junior in 1931, the same year as Gus Theobald. As he commented above, he was immediately successful, winning the Victorian Junior walk titles over 880 yard (3:30) and 7 miles (61:47) ahead of Collingwood teammate Jim Gaylor. In 1932, he won the Victorian Junior 5 mile title in 40:05, again just ahead of Jim.



Our oldest photo of Frank, circa 1932

Frank at one time showed me a trophy that he won in 1931, during his first year as a VAWC club member. The trophy is engraved

*Byrne Trophy
Season 1931
Most Improved Member
F. M. McGuire*

Having found walking and liked it, Frank stayed with the sport, competing throughout the 1930s with Collingwood Harriers and VAWC. However, like most athletes his age, his career was interrupted by the Second World War and time in the army.

While still in the army, he and Freda moved to Chelsea in 1943 and accordingly, he transferred to the newly reformed Chelsea Club in 1946. Because the club had many young and inexperienced members, he became involved in coaching and promoting, especially on the walking side.

Soon after, he achieved his best national performance - a third placing to Ted Allsopp and Ray Goulding in the inaugural Australian 10,000m title in 1948. He won the 1951 Melbourne to Frankston 25 Mile handicap and became VAWC Club Captain in 1952 and stayed in that capacity until 1956. His last interstate competition was the 1954 Australian 50 km championship as captain of the Victorian team (he was also captain of the 1948 and 1952 teams) and soon after that, he retired from racing and turned his attention to coaching.

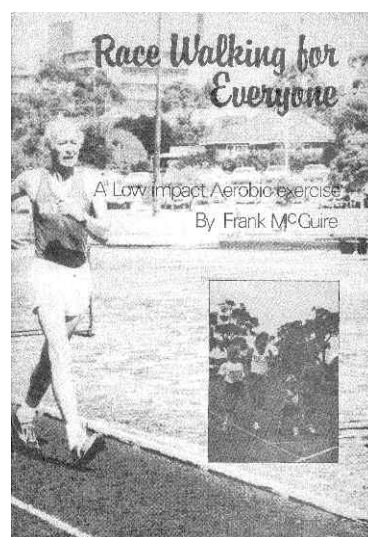
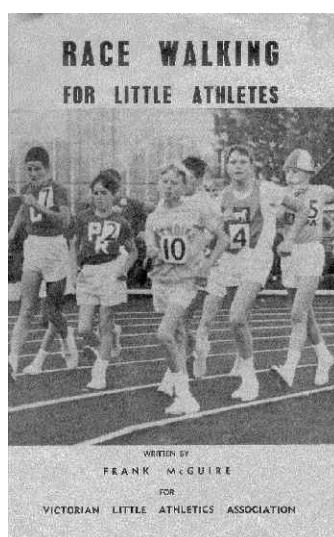
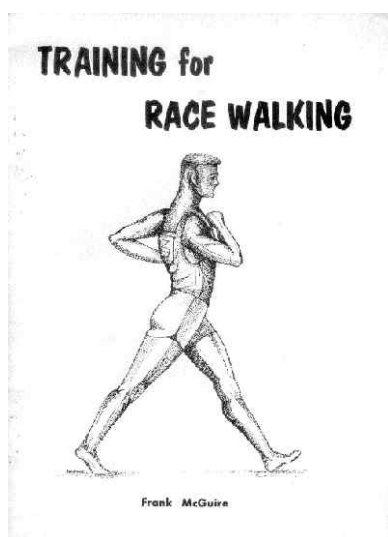


1949 - Alex Philpott, R Horden, Frank McGuire (centre front), W Knott and G Smith

He was appointed VAWC Club Coach in 1954 and attacked the task with great vigor. His innovative use of slow motion cine film to analyse walking technique was revolutionary and his recommendations that judges adopt angle judging was accepted first at VAWC level and then at Federation and Australian level. Not surprisingly, he had the job of filming the 1956 Olympic road events in slow motion for Guy Buther, the IAAF official photographer. It was at this stage (1956) that he was awarded life membership of VAWC.

Frank became an IAAF walking judge in 1959 and National Walking Coach that same year. He judged at the 1960 Rome Olympics and in the same year was appointed national walk coach. Always innovative, he tried to introduce examination by movie (video), but the suggestion was rejected by other judges.

He gained international respect and recognition as the author of numerous books on coaching and training, with emphasis on junior walkers in many of his publications. When his definitive book *Training for Race Walking* was published in 1962, he presented 40 copies to the club to sell for club funds.



Three of Franks' many racewalking publications – 1962, 1970 and 1987

Frank had a keen interest in history, sparked by family stories such as his grandmother witnessing the send-off of explorers Bourke and Wills in Parkville in 1860. In 1963, he founded the Chelsea and District Historical Society and subsequently wrote several books on the area's history including *A Short History of Chelsea* in 1965 to mark the centenary of the first land sales. Frank was the Society's Historian from 1963 until he retired from office in 1996. He was fittingly recognised with life membership of the society and he still attends Monthly meetings when possible.

Frank was also a prominent weights training coach, for many years operating a gym on The Strand in Chelsea. The annual VAWC St Kilda to Chelsea 15 mile race used to finish at his gym and I remember competing in it in 1967 as a sub-junior (U17). Over the years, he coached many famous sportsmen at his gym, amongst them top football players like Leigh Matthews, Stan Alves and the Moncrieff brothers as well as Olympic athletes like shotputter Ray Rigby.

In fact, it was his gymnasium work that resulted in him being stripped of his amateur status by the AAU in 1965. In 1966 VAWC had to follow suit and he was forced to resign his position as VAWC Club Coach. It is recorded that the committee received this resignation with great regret. But Frank continued to work tirelessly behind the scene, coaching and writing.



Frank's gym in the Strand in Chelsea

Frank and his wife Freda helped set up veteran athletics at Mentone in 1978 and the venue is still going strong over 30 years later. He was also prominent in Veteran Athletics as a competitor and formed an unbeatable duo with Tom Daintry and Jack Webber. Together they won the teams event at the 1981 World Vets in Christchurch (65+) and in the 1987 World Vets in Melbourne (70+).



The 1981 World Veterans M65 podium – Frank McGuire, Tom Daintry and Jack Webber in the centre

Frank was awarded a BEM in 1981 for services to Athletics and in 2000 he was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for outstanding contribution to sport.

And his amateur status - *“I got my amateur status back when everyone else was a pro!”*

In 2007, Frank bid farewell to Chelsea and moved to the Emerald Glades Hostel in Emerald to be closer to his son. At that stage, at 95 years of age, he finally retired from Saturday morning coaching at the Mentone Athletics Track.

Frank is a living legend and his contributions to Australian sport and local history are enormous. He remains our link with racewalking in the early 1930s and an invaluable resource on matters historical.