

Who can remember go-go boots, mini-skirts, pill box hats, stiletto heel shoes and Beatle boots? Let us now go back 70 years to 1964.



Sir Robert Menzies was the PM, Henry Bolte our Premier and Norman Joseph Oliver was the mayor of Bendigo. It was the year Eppalock Dam was officially opened. Conscription was reintroduced in Australia after we were all saddened to hear of our first casualty in Vietnam. The Beatles not only appeared on the Ed Sullivan show, but also came to Australia. Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, Martin Luther King Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize, Britain and France agreed to build a tunnel and a young Cassius Clay became the heavyweight champion of the world. It was a year 'The Bear' will never forget. Back-pocket player, Neil Crompton, followed a resting Collingwood rover up to the centre of the MCG to kick a miraculous goal in the dying minutes of the Grand Final to win the flag for Norm Smith's Demons.

It was also the year, E M Monotti became the president of the Rotary Club of Bendigo. According to members of our club who were members at this time, Rotary was much more formal than it is today. Members in 1964 all wore suits and ties to Rotary and all members felt it was an enormous honour to be asked to

be a member of our club. Attendance rules, at this time, were also very strict. If any member was not seen at meetings (without good reason) for more than two meetings, they would more than likely be told to leave the club. For the 1964/5 year, 13 members had 100% attendance and 24 members had at least 90% attendance. At the time, there were 85 members.

The focus of Merv's year in 1964 was that fellowship was the very basis of Rotary. Consequently, there were a number of events organized which not only proved very popular with members but were also great opportunities to raise money for vital club projects. For example, there was a wine and dine night at Favaloro's, a picture night at the Bendigo Drive-In, a day-out at Serpentine (in conjunction with Bendigo South that was attended by over 300) and a Xmas party that was held at the Axedale Camp. During weekly meetings, there were even regular musical interludes from a member playing keyboards. Unfortunately, there is no record of whether Beatle songs were sung at weekly meetings to enhance fellowship!

At the end of the year, substantial funds were distributed to numerous local and international organizations. Among them were: Save the Children Fund, Legacy, the Scouting movement in PNG and the McDonald Oral School.

PP Ian Monotti is Merv Monotti's son (Ian's maternal grandfather was J R V Anderson, our first vice-president in 1925). I asked Ian what he remembered of his father at this time, and he commented: -

My father was a very busy Solicitor practising on his own, yet found time to take on the role of Rotary President. My mother, Elsie, who was actively involved in Inner Wheel, at one time President thereof, was a tower of strength and support and no doubt made his task easier. Although I was away at university, as a guest, I attended several the Rotary meetings which were held upstairs in Favaloro's Cafe in Pall Mall. Not only were the meetings formal, but also on occasions the Guest Speaker's presentation was broadcast over radio 3BO. Merv was generous to the hilt, reserved in nature, with a wonderful sense of humour, one to get the job done, and well regarded by those with whom he came in contact. I know he was immensely proud to have served as President of our Club.