MY EXPERIENCE CARRING THE OLYMPIC TORCH IN 1956 60 YEARS AGO

At that stage I was a member of the athletic club in gympie & we met every week at albert park

One night a friend of mine Bevan McLennan came to me & said crossey do you want to become a part of the Olympic games & become a team member to carry the Olympic torch from gympie to Pomona & so it all started

We had to be able to run one mile in six & a half minutes to be able to take part.Training was done by running with a brown beer bottle full of water held up over your head ,this bottle full of water was equal to the weight of the torch ,this continued for several months before the big day arrived

I arrived at the town hall in the early hours of the morning about 2-30 am & was surprised by the number of people that were already there ,people of all ages dressed in pyjamas, dressing gowns,etc, all waiting for the torch to arrive

Eventually the torch came up the street carried by the mayor ald Ron Witham & Maryborough runner Barry Nielson both holding the torch high

That hour of morning sixty years ago and all the excitement I do not remember much of the reception however we were put into the back of a army truck & we left for our various positions along the road .I was runner number 12 . I ran from the bottom of the hill just past the matilda service station [which was not there then] to just past the cooran turn off .

I do know what time of day it was,,about 5.00 am I guess but it was still dark when I was droped off . I did not have to wait long when a light appeared over the hill & Geoff Brown arrived with the torch . With sparks going every where we lit my torch and off I went . You had to hold the torch away from you or the sparks and flame would burn you or singe your hair

I remember going past Traveston crossing turn off as there were hundreds of people there shouting & cheering & flash lights going off , maybe one day I might see one of those photos .Eventually I came to the next runner who was Warren Hall ,we lit his torch & off he went . A couple of army chaps took my torch & put it out I climbed into the army truck and we followed it through to Pomona

When the torch left Pomona Con Comino said he wes going to go through to Brisbane as he had his car there , so Bill Jamieson Peter Comino Bevan McLennan & myself went on to Brisbane following the torch at different stages

Before we left Brisbane to come home Bevan & myself decided to have a look around , I still remember that we got thrown out of this shop because we were not dressed proper [two boys from the bush dressed in sand shoes shorts & tee shirts] got put out because of our clothes (not dressed good enough) .I forget what place it was , some place where the standard of dress was very formal

So that ended our experience of carrying the OLYMPIC TORCH to the 1956 OLYMPIC GAMES IN MELBOURNE...

BEVAN CROSS

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