My name is Ken Chapman

I'm going to record a few of my experiences in the running of the torch in 1956. The torch landed in Cairns and then was taken to Melbourne by way of relay runners, each running a mile carrying the torch. The army was in charge of distributing the torches and recharging the spent torches with a new chemical capsule and taking it onto the next runner.

The Gympie section to be run was between Gympie and Pomona. I think that was 26 miles requiring 26 runners. We called for runners to take on this task. For a start we got about 40 runners and we used to go out onto the road, we had to run the distance of a mile in 7 minutes carrying a beer bottle full of water that was the approximate weight of what the torch was going to be. After a while a few runners dropped out because they couldn't make the time or they lost interest, but we still had too many so they reduced the time until they got it down to around about 6 minutes and that got us down to about the 26 runners.

As the torch was running 24 hours a day nonstop, the torch was going to arrive in Gympie somewhere between one and two o'clock in the morning. I went to a dance in the old soldier's hall in Reef Street and went home from the dance about 12 o'clock, got dressed into my white shorts and t-shirt and sandshoes, and went down to the townhall for the torch to arrive. The torch was brought in and handed to our local Mayor, Ron Witham. He received the torch and made a short speech and then the torch was handed over to, I think it was Peter Komino who disappeared up over Caledonian Hill with the torch. We followed him out some of the way. My run was to begin around about a couple of hundred metres south of the Kybong Hall finishing at Matilda. It was a run that I was familiar with because I used to walk that particular stretch of road on the way to school in about 1947-48. I finished my run at Matildas and then went with my parents to Nancy and Rod Powell's farmhouse right opposite Matilda. The house is still there today. We had a cup of tea and something to eat, then went back to town, had some breakfast, not having any sleep that night, going to the dance and then running with the torch. After breakfast I went back and worked for the day. So that was my memory of the running with the torch.

Another thing I just would add, that when the torch arrived in Sydney some of the local lads had made up a torch with a jam tin and a broomstick. They moved out of the crowd about 10 minutes ahead of when the torch was due to arrive and handed to torch to the local Mayor and he started his speech on the stage and then he noticed that the handle of the torch still had wet silver paint and he realised then that it wasn't the torch at all so that was a little bit of a funny thing that happened in Sydney when the torch went through.

So that's all I have to say on the matter so I hope to see you at the reunion at the library.