

Aub Gillespie

Clarrie Neal

Aub Gillespie was born in 1917 in Bathurst, NSW and lived there until 1940. Like many other lads in country towns he only had a few years of schooling. As a youth he was a keen cyclist and loved road racing, being a regular competitor in the Bathurst to Lithgow and the Bathurst to Orange races. As a 16 year old he competed in the Goulburn to Sydney Classic and though he finished in the middle of the field he was the youngest competitor that year to finish in the stipulated time.

For Aub to get to Goulburn was quite an achievement in itself. On Thursday he rode his bike from Bathurst to Sydney and stayed overnight at the Peoples Palace. On the Friday he rode his bike from Sydney to Goulburn, stayed overnight, then competed in the big race to Sydney on the Saturday. He spent Sunday resting in Sydney and on Monday he rode the bike back home to Bathurst.

Aub loved boxing and at the age of 17 was billed as the Lightweight K.O. King of the West. Aub said he now looks back on a career of 40 fights in the ring, 300 tent fights and 40 street fights.

Later Aub developed an interest in motor bikes - his first bike was a B.S.A., then an Ariel and his last bike was an Indian. It was on the Indian that he performed his stunt riding, appearing with the American Putt Mossman and his group that were touring the western towns. Sometimes these appearances were followed by an exhibition boxing match, often against Putt who Aub said was a very good boxer. Putt wanted to take Aub back to America to perform but the war intervened so he enlisted in the RAAF, doing his initial training at Richmond, NSW, then Mildura, Victoria and finally at Charters Towers, Queensland.

Two trophies in the cabinet that he is very proud of are the Vultee Aircraft Trophy and the Old Mill Stadium Cup, won in 1942 at Mildura, Vic. The Vultee was a fighter plane used to train the U.S. and Australian pilots during the war, and the trophy was donated by the American pilots.

He then spent four years of service with the RAAF in New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. He was a man who firmly believed in physical fitness and as he loved boxing, he figured prominently in their regularly held boxing tournaments. Aub said although he got along very well with the Yanks, he loved fighting against them because they always had more money and better trophies.

After the war he was discharged in 1946 and came to Riverstone, buying a house in West Parade, then known as Railway Parade. It was here in this backyard he built the "Outer Town Gym". Besides the boxers training there the gym proved very popular with the local footballers and some of the names Aub remembered were Peter Rosa, Barney Doolan, Bill McNamara, Dickie Stacey, Eric Gunton, and Dessie Cartwright.

Aub had the misfortune to lose a lot of equipment from the gym when it was flooded to a depth of four feet during the flood that swept the area in 1961. Equipment destroyed included all the padding on the floor of the ring and surrounds, gloves and mitts, a piano and a film projector that was used to show old time boxing and training films.

Several of the boys who trained under Aub in the gym went on to become very competent boxers and won NSW and Australian titles -

Colin Clarke from Maraylya - was trained early in his career by both Aub and Georgie Cafe and went on to become the Lightweight Champion of Australia.

Norm Harvey - won the Light Heavyweight Championship of NSW.

Georgie Cafe - fought under the name of 'Digger' Williams and is described by Aub as being the best street fighter he has ever seen in action.

Merv Cobb - from Seven Hills was another well known and successful heavyweight fighter. Aub recalled getting Merv to don 26 ounce gloves that were imported from America to save his sparring partners getting hurt.

Jimmy Woods - another heavyweight who trained regularly at the gym and had many successes. Jimmy was the last man ever to fight the great Dave Sands.

Alan Williams - held both the Light Heavy and Heavyweight championship titles of Australia.

Other well known boxers who trained at Aub's gym were Jimmy McHenery, Johnny Blumanis, Arthur Luland, and Jack Dempsey (it was his real name).

Aub's first job when he came to Riverstone was driving a truck for Don Lamont who had a carrying contract with Riverstone Meat Co. Later he bought Joe Smith's taxi and a year later bought Norm Heather's taxi, with Norm continuing to drive for Aub.

Aub remembered the rough dirt roads that existed around Riverstone in those days, the corrugations and the gutters, and when it rained, getting bogged. He said the roads in the Marsden Park area were notorious for getting the taxis bogged.

The taxi business in the 1950s was not a great money earner. Aub said you would often drive to the station to meet the arrival of a train and not get a fare. However he operated the taxis for 25 years, finally selling the four cabs to a Mr Lowenthal.

To get additional income in the 1950s Aub used to travel to the boxing tent events that were held at all the districts shows and carnivals. These boxing tents were run by such showmen as Jimmy Sharman, Les McNabb, and Dickie Tuite. Aub said in those days you received ten shillings per round which wasn't much but you could always get a bet on the side.

Aub commenced his career as a showman and comedian in the Islands during the War when doing a tap dancing and comedy act at the concerts for the troops. Somebody who recognised him from those days introduced him to the hypnotist, the Great Franquin, and he was invited to appear on the stage with him.

His first appearance on the stage resulted in Aub becoming appropriately enough, Cassius Clay (now known as Muhammed Ali). As he performed his skipping, shadow sparring and "I am the greatest " routines he was so successful he brought the house down.

This success led to Aub appearing on many of Franquin's shows. However, there was the time Franquin changed the script slightly and Aub became the world's greatest violin player. Aub felt terrific, played with such charm and to him it sounded so great, and was delighted after the show to receive the compliments from so many in the audience.

Aub really believed he was on to something and some time later went up to Windsor and bought a violin. No matter how hard he tried he could never play it, he still can't, and after 30 years still has the violin, and it has never been played.

Aub became very good friends with Franquin, with daughter Gail Gillespie becoming Franquin's stage hostess and travelling all over Australia and New Zealand with the show.

This exposure on the Franquin show enabled Aub to become a part time actor who has appeared in over 60 films and TV series, and numerous TV advertisements.

Films and TV series he has appeared in include -

Love Boat - as a wealthy tourist and seen with a girl on each arm.

Cries from Beyond - as a priest.

Phar Lap - as another horse trainer.

Five Mile Creek - appeared in early episodes as an English gentleman, Mr Abernethy.

In *The Timeless Land* Aub played dual roles as an English gentleman and as a convict. Much of this TV series was filmed on site at Schofields and Aub recalled that when watching shooting dressed as the gentleman there would always be a girl on his arm. When dressed as a convict nobody wanted to know him.

The Dismissal - played the role of the Minister Fred Daly.

Country Practice - appeared in numerous episodes of this TV series as a country gentleman, as a piano player, and various other roles.

The Young Doctors - often played the role of a sleeping patient and recalled the day he did go to sleep and the rest of the cast left him there. He also played the role of a patient in *Sons and Daughters*.

Other films and TV shows he appeared in include *Mad Max*, *Burke and Wills*, *Kitty and the Bagman*, and *Archer*.

Some of the better known advertisements he has appeared in are -

The Jeldi ad - as a bagpipe player.

Smith Chips - as the Stage Coach driver

Kentucky Chicken - has appeared in two ads, as Colonel Ponsonby and then as a Digger.

The Raine and Horne 100 year ad - played the grandfather.

I.M.B. Building Society - the wounded farmer.

Grace Bros. - the German musician playing the piano accordion in the Octoberfest ad.

Sitmar Cruises - played the role of a gentleman passenger. Aub said it was tough work to make this ad - he had to go on a 14 day Sitmar cruise around the Pacific Islands while the ad was being produced!

Aub Gillespie passed away on the 1st April 2002 aged 84, and was buried at St Matthew's Church at Windsor.