

Lawrie achieves in family, business and community

Lawrence (Lawrie) Henry Green was born April 24th, 1940 at Penzance House, Numurkah, the seventh of nine children for Alfred William Green and Melba May Christie Green (nee Batty).

His parents settled on an irrigation farm at Marungi-Katandra West area and moved to Tallygaroopna in 1939 to run the post office and store. In 1948, Alf and family returned to Numurkah to build dairies on the Soldier Settlement Scheme. The business, A W Green and Sons, was the forerunner to the GreenCon company that operates out of Cobden today.

Lawrie went to primary school at Tallygaroopna, Katandra West, Marungi, and Numurkah and then Numurkah High between 1952 and 1955. School was mostly a happy time for Lawrie although some subjects (Maths II, English and French) were a little boring while Art, Geography, History, Woodwork and Sport were more his line.

“Good memories are plenty with standouts being part of the high school footy team and winning the intermediate swimming and diving championships,” he said. “School socials were always looked forward to.

“Growing up in a small town like Tally was always fun even though there were only a few kids my age. We had nine children in the family but we never wanted for anything. We were well-fed, well-clothed and comfortable but it was still advisable not to be late for a meal.

“My brothers and sisters were always close. Losing Dad (1960) and Mum (1974), brothers Richard (1971) and Alan (1995) was obviously difficult. Currently, the other six are aged between 72 and 86, and in various stages of health.”

OFF TO WORK

Lawrie’s working life began in January 1956 as a 15 year-old building dairies and other concrete work, mainly around Numurkah. ‘For tax purposes’, he was soon a 15½ year-old partner with A W Green and Sons which, in 1959, brought him and other staff to the Heytesbury to do settlement dairies.

In 1960, Lawrie met future wife Thelma Smith in Warden’s Bakehouse, Cobden where she worked, and the couple married in 1961. They lived in Simpson, Murungi (Numurkah), Irrewarra and Simpson again before settling into a new Silvester St home in Cobden in 1966.

Thelma was the daughter of Victor and May Smith who had property at Elingamite North but also lived in Cobden. Victor was a jack-of-all trades who worked at the local factory while May was a brilliant seamstress, responsible for many bridal gowns. Apart from Thelma, the Smiths had two other daughters – Margaret (Mounsey) and Ruth (Judd).

The period between 1962 and 1964 saw Lawrie (and Thelma) back in the Numurkah area milking cows and growing wheat. Despite doing well with these enterprises, the call of the Heytesbury pulled him back to Simpson – and LH and TO Green, as this area knew the business, was born.

The couple lived in Silvester St, Cobden, a short time before selling their new house to the National Bank as a manager’s residence. They re-built in Rix Ave where they lived for 20 years before building just out of town on the Simpson Rd. In 2010, they built for the fourth time on the corner of Victoria and Neylon streets. “No more,” he said. “This will do us.”

When Lawrie and Thelma returned from Numurkah in 1964, they brought with them Max and David Staggard who, with Francis Togni, Peter Clarke and Bob Knowles, staffed the new business. Thelma



Thelma and Lawrie, dressed for the races.

explains she had responsibility for the bookwork and two star boarders (Max and David) in Simpson. Much to daughter Tricia’s disappointment, the Staggards didn’t come up to Cobden with Lawrie and Thelma.

From three double-up walk-through bale dairies to herringbones (eventually) in the settlement, it was an interesting period for the Greens. One year, the business produced 65 dairies for the Rural Finance Commission across Victoria.

In 1970, business slowed and a former Heytesbury Shire engineer Ross Wilson convinced Lawrie to buy a \$2750 kerb machine that enabled him to do 10,000 feet of kerb and channelling in Warrnambool. That, and the construction of three bridges near Lorne, stabilised things significantly. “A resurgence in dairy-building happened at about the same time, and we were suddenly run off our legs,” Lawrie recalled.

“Although Ross only worked for me for twelve months, he was a hell of a help,” Lawrie said. “The Westgate bridge in Melbourne crashed about that time so we had to be ready for a tightening of safety regulations . . . and we were.”

The business which eventually became GreenCon in 2006 has tackled some significant projects – not only locally but also in South Australia, Gippsland, NSW and, maybe, in Western Australia. The payroll generally numbers about 30 employees.

Lawrie recalls the bridge job in the middle of Walhalla (Gippsland) back in 1982. And the day he had a lot of luck when a tree fell across his new Holden ute, smashing his windscreen and pushing him to the brink of a drop to oblivion. “There was nothing to stop me, I was teetering over the edge of the Walhalla-Erica road.”

Lawrie believes he has led a blessed life. From the time he was a young fellow when he loved fishing with his father and uncles on the Murray, Goulburn, Darling and Murrumbidgee rivers catching 80lb Murray cod – he has photos taken with his Brownie camera to prove it! Model aeroplanes, cycling, football, swimming, scouting, water-skiing have all kept him occupied at some time or other.



A young Lawrie Green wields the hammer.

Football has figured prominently. Lawrie played in Simpson’s first-ever team in 1965, and was a selector and committeeman. At Cobden, he was vice-president for twelve years, president for four years and is a life member. He served on the Hampden Football League board for three years.

He has had several stints on the Golf Club board as a member, vice president, president (three years each) and is the current captain.

COBDEN CALENDAR

- Wednesday 24th August:** 5.45pm Cobden Business Network meeting at Thompson’s Hotel.
- Saturday 3rd September:** 8am “Spring into Summer”, a free event. Walk/run the 4klm “Circuit de Savage”, meet at 1 Station Street.
- Monday 5th September:** 7.30pm Progressing Cobden meeting, Heytesbury Room.
- Monday 19th September:** 7.30pm CopRice Spring Festival committee, Heytesbury Room.
- October 14th - 16th:** CopRice Cobden Spring Festival

An enjoyable period through the 1980s saw Lawrie breeding thoroughbreds and racing them with good friends Alistair and Dianne Lord. The partnership yielded 17 wins by horses like Curriejong Lady, Tandarook Lad and Mr Silvester. “Every horse we bred from Our Grey Lady won a race which was the most satisfying aspect of our involvement,” Lawrie said.

Away from sport, he has served on the school councils at both Camperdown College (five years) and Cobden Technical School (three years). And he was an Apexian at both Numurkah and Cobden so he’s a life member of that organisation too!

In his spare time, Lawrie was the local representative on the Australian Life Saving Society. He spent several years in the 1970s training and testing young swimmers working towards awards of merit and bronze medallions.

HEALTH SCORE

At this stage of life, fishing with ‘whoever’s available’ and golf are his preferred pastimes. But both are on hold while he recovers fully from his triple heart bypass operation which he underwent on June 14th.

“I just didn’t feel well,” he said. “Blokes I knew well had suffered heart attacks so I thought I would get checked out. The rest is history. I was on the table a week later and now, thankfully, I’m well on the way to recovery. I’m walking a lot and still being monitored by my doctors.

“I was certainly pleased to wake up to see Thelma and Sally at my bedside,” he said.



Lawrie sits proudly among the 16 premiership cups won by his beloved Essendon Bombers.

Much of Lawrie and Thelma’s social life revolves around their adult children – James, Sally, Tricia and Matthew – and their children. He and Thelma proudly take credit for producing engineers (with honours), scientists, nurses, occupational therapists, builders, business graduates, computer programmers, even movie-makers.

They are also delighted that their children are involved in community organisations – schools, health and community bank boards, service, sporting and life-saving clubs etc. “It’s good to see them putting back in,” he said.

The Greens are staying in Cobden. “I’ll be honest,” Lawrie said. “I could afford to live anywhere else but I love it here. I have a lot of time for its people. We have enjoyed holidays all round the world, America and Europe, New Zealand, and most of Australia but Cobden is the best place to come back to.

“I guess all the messages of support and friendship during my recovery really brought home to me how much I value living in Cobden . . . and I’m certainly keen to master the golf course and reduce my handicap.

After losing two uncles on the battlefields of World War I (at Bullecourt and Gallipoli), plus being brought up by parents who taught their nine children the true values of life while striving to provide them with the best education, plus having lost two brothers already plus just enjoying feeling so much better . . .

No doubt, Lawrence Henry Green has a balanced view on where he’s at and where he’s been.



Lawrie with photographic memories of his fishing passion and his racehorse successes.

ASSISTANCE FOR THE FARMING COMMUNITY

An initiative of the Corangamite Shire through the Camperdown Food Bank.

For farming families feeling the pinch, food hampers are available at the Uniting Church Opportunity Shop, 50 Curdie Street, Cobden.

You are welcome to come into the op shop for a coffee, or a chat, during opening hours, Monday - Friday, 10am - 4pm: Saturday, 10am - 12pm

A qualified counsellor is available upon request. This service is confidential and free of charge.

We are there to help.