

# Vale George Earnest Harding

30<sup>th</sup> May, 1921 - 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2017



Formby Crest



Formby Art

## **Silver Medallist 1996 awarded for outstanding service to the dahlia**

George was a man of many talents that only a few of our members would know about. George enlisted in the army at the tender age of almost 20 years. He served overseas in the Middle East being involved against Rommel in the El Alamein. A part of his life he didn't speak about but never forgot some of his friends who lost their lives.

Before and after the war he was a very successful distance runner and regarded as the best miler in Tasmania. George went on to coach many others in the sport.

George met and married Valmay Crabtree and had 4 children. George lost his wife after 65 years (*8 years ago*). Having little money they bought a block of land for 64 Pounds (*\$128*) Living in a garage he built a house himself (*having had no experience at all in building*) making bricks after a days work and laying them at the weekends. How many people build their own home and live in it for 70 years?

Of course George had many other interests. He established a magnificent vegetable garden and he had been introduced to fowls when quite young so when he was introduced to a keen local breeder, George

became hooked and became an expert in breeding Bantams and larger breeds to become the most prolific breeder and exhibitor and judge of fowls in Tasmania.

George was into everything and to tell all would be a volume in itself.

Some areas that George excelled at were: Sign Writing, Marquetry (*some pieces still hang in his children homes today*) Landscape Painting, Bonsai, very capable on the keyboard (*self-taught*). Took up Fly Tying and became so efficient he taught fly tying at TAFE for 15 years. President or Secretary of numerous clubs and recognised by the Devonport Council for Community Service.

In the early 1960's George first got to know Chas Smith who was a dominant dahlia grower. Charlie offered George some dahlia tubers. It was the beginning of a strong rivalry and an even stronger friendship that lasted decades.

George was known around the country through his poultry and chrysanthemums and his dahlias took him to a higher level. Over the years his precise approach (*something he does with every project*) he produced over 100 high quality new varieties naming them with the prefix "Formby" Formby Perfection was inducted into the American Hall of Fame and many other of George's varieties have been acknowledged by the Chelsea Gardens in England.

George came to our 1996 Annual show to help with the judging. He became interested in a new points system we had devised for seedlings, and said he would use a similar system when he was assessing his seedlings when he returned home. That particular day a seedling of a particularly high standard was on show and received 88points. The seedling was a flower from Bob Trotter who had passed away and never saw it. Emily named it Bobs Dream. It stays in my memory because George and Ron Wilkes who saw it at different times said to me "a true Champion" Unfortunately we haven't seen it again.

**As his daughter Karon said**

**"When God made George Harding, he was REALLY SHOWING OFF"**