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President Mirina Hoare presenting Vic McCristal with the Ron Dempster Award

### **The Ron Dempster Award 1997**

There are some wonderful moments in one's life when you are asked to respond to a request to give a friend an accolade for receiving an award. This is one of those moments..... When I was asked to give a short testimonial to the recipient of the above award, I thought, "How in the hell could I do this? How does one give a fishing mate and a family friend, who has given so much of his life to the Association that some of us refer to as a way of life in our fishing activities, a few words of thanks for a job well done.

Vic's interest in fishing began as a youth in the New England district in Northern New South Wales. His keen observation and memory was to hold him in good stead for the following years when he travelled around Australia in his "job". It was during this time that he started to write for the "Outdoors" and "Anglers Digest" magazines. These two magazines were first published in 1948 and 1950 respectively.

There is no doubt that Vic's contribution to these magazines stirred the flame that was to become ANSA in the late 1960's. The Australian National Sportfishing Association was formed in February 1967 at an old hall at Yorkeys Knob just north of Cairns. This was changed to the Cairns Sportfishing Club on the 7th February 1968 and has the distinction of being the first ANSA Club in Australia. The NSW Branch of ANSA was formed on the 12th August 1967 and those present at that meeting in Sydney were John Bethune, Gary Jones, Bob Wilson, Jack Erskine, Clyde Kelton, Brian Eunson, Don Brooks and Dick Lewers. The Queensland Division of ANSA was formed on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1970 with three clubs, Cairns, Maryborough and Cardwell.

It was during those early days of the Association that I began my membership

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with ANSA and was involved with the first all junior ANSA Club, the Burdekin Venturers Sportfishing Club that was formed in March 1972. Vic was keenly interested in this Club and the young people of that time because he foresaw the value in leaning about conservation and club executive training. This was to be proved true with the many journalists who began their writing careers by reading Vic's articles on the sport of fishing Australia. Vic organised and conducted fishing lessons at the Cardwell State School for children at primary levels. This was possibly first of its type for a school curriculum. The highlight of the program was a fishing trip with Vic. The kids and teachers loved it

People like Laurie Woodbridge, Ross Digman, Don Porter, Laurie Smith, Vince Vitale, Harvey Lowe, Eric Moller, Gary Chapman, Malcolm Florence, and Dick Lewers were all prominent at this time and they will long be remembered for their input into ANSA and the helmsman quietly guiding them as a growing band of sport fishers was Vic McCristal. In those days in the mid 1970's, there were about 10 clubs in the Queensland Division (later changed to Branch). Vic McCristal was President Eric Moller, Vice President, Dick Winkel, Secretary / Treasurer, Jim Whittle, Recorder, Committee, Don Porter, John O'Sullivan, Doug Lee and Gary Wright. I think Malcolm Florence was in here somewhere as well as Tom Saunderson, Steve Theofanes, Leon Quinn, Ron Poole, Neil Yates and the first ever woman Executive member Lyn Nocholson from the Collinsville Sportfishing Club. ANSA membership fees were 50 cents per person and 25 cents of that went to National for the upkeep of the National Record Chart and postage. A point here is that the Queensland Branch kept and maintained their own Record Chart and all the Queensland Branch meeting records and books (minutes etc.) were kept in a small school suitcase. National ANSA comprised of Dick Lewers, President, Vic McCristal, Vice President, Ron Horne, Secretary, Hank Newman, Treasurer, and Bill Fitch, National Recorder. The State representatives that made up the National Executive were: - Vic McCristal (Queensland) Bob Dunn (New South Wales) Alee Blair (Victoria) Shane Mensforth (South Australia) and Reg Noble (West Australia).

Vic was first on every committee and it was his urging that was the catalyst that brought the Queensland Branch together at the first ever State Wide Meeting held at Yeppoon on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1979. This meeting was a huge success and was ably chaired by Jim McConnachie. There were 12 Clubs represented which involved 24 delegates as well as a host of interested people. It was at this meeting that Dr. Terry Russell of the Queensland Game Fishing Association spoke about the formation of an Amateur Fishing Council comprising of the various groups and associations of recreational fishing. Vic and I were nominated to serve as the Queensland Branch delegates to the newly formed Queensland Amateur Fishing Council. It was also at this meeting that the name Ron Dempster was to become associated with the fishing public, ANSA members and the Queensland Branch. He was a delegate from the Maryborough Sportfishing Club along with Col Kinbacker and Ron Kinghorne. I think that Bob Collishaw and Don Boneham were also present. One interesting activity that occurred during this time was the formation of the Queensland Tag and Release Club, which had it's first meeting on the banks of the Tully River. Those present were Vic (of course) Don Porter, Ken Spiegelhauer, John O'Sullivan, Leon Quinn, Steve Theofanes, Mick Dohnt and Roly Newton. This Club, which is still functioning, is the catalyst of all Tag and Release activity throughout Australia and is a direct result of the interest that Vic, Mick Dohnt and John Daniels showed in the early days of Sportfishing for the Future. Mick used to import his own tags from the United States for his own use.

Vic went on from being a Queensland Branch delegate to become the National President in 1984. It was at the 1983 Triennial meeting that Vic was appointed Life Member of ANSA, second only to Eric Moller who was the first ever Life Member. If I remember correctly the National Executive were Vic McCristal, President, Ron Poole, Vice President, John O'Sullivan, Secretary, Ian Ballard, Treasurer, Mick Dohnt, Recorder, Steve Theofanes and Ross Donaldson Committee Members. It was during his first term of office that Vic and I were

elected as ANSA delegates to the Australian Recreational and Sportfishing Confederation in Canberra, and Vic ensured that ANSA would have a place on this body. He served one term (three years) as National President and continued on the Executive as a committee Member for a further six years until the end of 1993. Not only is Vic worthy of the Ron Dempster Award for his contribution to the organisational side of ANSA, he is also a fine recipient because of his attitude to the conservation of fish and his ability to give so much of his expertise and knowledge to the fishing public of the whole of Australia. You don't have to be a member of ANSA to appreciate his wisdom, which has been well represented in the many books and publications he has produced over many years. One only has to read "The Rivers and the Sea" to appreciate his attitude to life.

So, in summing up, I am extremely fortunate in knowing Vic, to work with him, to fish with him and to listen to him and I am very proud to call him a friend. When my wife and I called in on him at Cardwell on Boxing Day 1997, (we often do this on our way to Cairns), he showed me the Ron Dempster Award. He stressed again to me that he was never a "trophy" person, but this one was special.

I agree. It couldn't have happened to a nicer person.

John W. O'Sullivan - Life Member ANSA

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