A full life devoted to community

George Tonkin (Skippy) Skipworth
World War II pilot, community stalwart, farmer
Born: February 25, 1922; Kadina
Died: February 11, 2007; Ardrossan

GEORGE Tonkin Skipworth, fondly known as Skippy, led a fascinating life which saw him do his duty in World War II and later devote himself to help the community. He was the eldest of four children raised by George and Edith – George, Garth, Margaret and Esma. He started his schooling at Weetulta Church Hall in 1927. A school was built at Weetulta in 1928 and he attended by horse and sulky.

His mother died in 1933 and he lived with his grandparents at Wallaroo. He attended the Wallaroo School, then went on to Kadina Memorial High School.

On leaving school, he worked on the family farm with his father at Weetulta.

George joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1942 and was deployed overseas where he trained for wireless and gunnery at Oxford and Silverstone. He went on one operation to France in a Wellington bomber and was then posted to Ringway for a course on parachute jumping.

After three jumps, he was posted to Squadron 512 at Silverstone and flew in Dakota aircraft towing gliders and dropped parachuters over Europe. He was then posted to Brussels, Belgium.

He returned to Australia in 1945 and was discharged soon after, returning to work on the farm. In February, 1949, he married Joan Evelyn Melville at the Pirie St Methodist Church. He bought half of the Weetulta farm from his father and raised their two children, Clyve and Anne.

In 1970, they built their home at Ardrossan.

George played football for Moonta after the war, winning the R.G. Richards Medal in 1947 for best player in the association. He won four Mail Medals while playing for the Arthurton Football Club between 1949 and 1953. He captained/coached the Arthurton club to a premiership in 1955 and was a member of the golf clubs at Moonta and Ardrossan. He was awarded life membership to the Weetulta Cricket Club, Arthurton football and bowls clubs and the Ardrossan Bowls Club.

George was president of the Price/Arthurton RSL from the time he returned from the war until he moved in 1970 to Ardrossan, where he was still active – even joining in the last Anzac Day march on his gopher. He represented the state in RSL bowls for several years.

George was an active legatee for 38 years and went on to become state president in 2001-02 of the Legacy Club of South Australia and Broken Hill.

The Freemasons lodge was a substantial part of his life. He was initiated into Ardrossan lodge in 1954 and served in all offices and became master in 1966. He again served a year as master in 1994.

He joined the Grand Lodge in 1976 as grand steward, then assistant grand director of ceremonies from 1978 to '81. He was appointed district grand superintendent in 1982-84 and received the conferred rank of past junior grand warden in 1986.

In recognition of his faithful service, he was awarded a 50-year jewel in December, 2004.

George had a full and active life, finding time for some of his loves including fishing, crabbing, playing cards and enjoying a beer with his mates. He also developed a taste for good red wine.

George loved his family. His grandchildren and great grandchildren gave him immense joy. He will be sadly missed by all.