

Memories of the Chapman Valley Show

My main memories of the show are from my childhood. I remember the committee being formed to decide the way forward when it was felt that a showcasing of the district might be a good initiative.

As a result the first district displays were held in and around the Nanson Hall. Early in the 1950's the venue became the Nanson Showgrounds where the shows are now held.

My father, Austin McDonnell was the inaugural president and after the first one or two years took on the role of secretary, a position he held for eleven years.

We were all involved to some degree. Prior to the show there was a great deal of planning to be done. The correspondence was all handwritten and phone calls were few as we did not have a phone in the early years. After a time, we had a phone connected and the show paid for the calls made for the show business. Each year members received a copy of the show schedule in the mail. These were posted giving adequate time for exhibitors to decide on and take the necessary steps towards preparing their entries. We would help Dad to roll the schedules in wrappers and he would address them. I remember taking them to Geraldton on the school bus when I was going to secondary school and going down to the Geraldton Post Office at lunchtime to arrange postage. Of course I had to get permission from school to leave the school grounds.

When we were in primary school we always had an exhibition of schoolwork as did the surrounding schools. This was non-competitive. There were other sections however where we could compete at a children's level – art and craft work, flowers, cooking etc. We also had a lot of fun decorating bikes and my youngest sister's dolls pram. These were judged as we paraded around.

At night there was the Show Ball. Mum always made us a new dress – later a real ball gown. She loved to do this employing her dressmaker skills. Mum also exhibited some items mostly sewing and some cooking, but in the main she supported Dad in his role which was a very busy one. Dad entered in crop and sheep sections when he had time to prepare exhibits.

There were and still are, some very talented people in the district as was evidenced last time I was present at a Chapman Valley Show. In earlier days there was quite a ceremony attached to the presentation of trophies usually held at the ball when we could witness first hand who all these clever people were. I felt it was also recognition of the efforts made to display the work done. That is one aspect I missed last time I was present.

The show has certainly come a long way since its inception and I am sure its pioneers would be delighted to see the number of people who attend, seven decades later for a wonderful day out.

Rhonda Hickey (McDonnell) daughter of PA McDonnell First President 1950-1951 and Secretary 1952-1963