

Life Membership - David James

- awarded 28 July, 2002 -



Very so often it is the privilege of the President and the Committee to pay a tribute to someone who has made a special, lasting and memorable contribution to the Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria.

Today is one of those occasions ...

It would be accurate to say that **David James** has always been interested in cars and motor sport.

His first real involvement commenced in 1982 when as a business student he joined the Swinburne Car Club and met many other like-minded enthusiasts. He was soon rallying, primarily in Datsun 1600s, where he navigated in many club rallies, with a range of drivers and to varying degrees of success.

As skill – and interest – grew, he settled into a regular team with fellow student and good friend, Peter Thompson, and set about trying to win the Victorian Rally Championship ... which they did, in the Clubman Category, in 1984. This partnership continued for a number of years but eventually ended with their retirement from rallying in 1996. Alas, like Nellie Melba, there was to be a comeback and the old team reformed and again won the Victorian Rally Championship in 1995, this time in the Group N5 Class.

Over the past 20 years David has competed in all levels of Rallying, including many State and National events, and several Australian rounds of the World Rally Championship in Perth. He claims it is the equivalent of being a privateer in Formula One ... nowhere else in motor sport can you run alongside the best drivers in the world and share a beer with them after the event!

The 1994 Targa Tasmania was David's first real introduction to the Mazda MX-5. Whilst competing there in a Lancia Stratos replica, he met David Henry (an early club president and now MX-5 Club life member) who was following the event. A friendship developed and David (Henry) invited David (James) to join the MX-5 Club and compete in sprint and track days.

But that was only the start. Wife Meriden was soon involved and on their first club event together (in David's GTV Corolla) declared "We have to have one of these!" It was in Easter of 1995 that David fulfilled a life-long ambition to own a sports car – red of course! And so the 1989 MX-5 – DAJ 333 – became part of the family, and so commenced the next stage of David's involvement with the MX-5 Club.

1995 saw the two original MX-5 Clubs merge to become the Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria Incorporated. David joined the committee and took on the role of Club Captain, during which time he competed in another two Targa Tasmanias, both times in Mazda MX-5s as navigator for Ian Morris. There has been strong camaraderie between MX-5 teams in Targa and David has developed strong and lasting friendships with MX-5 competitors from other States.

After two years as Club Captain, in 1999 David took on the job of President and helped steer the club towards the strong position it finds itself in today.

Among his achievements as President, we list:

- two years as a very active President, forging closer relationships with Mazda Australia, key suppliers and the other clubs
- improving all aspects of the Club's management ... re-invigorating the Committee and the Club, and tidying up many outstanding issues for the Club, including:
 - a cleaned-up, consolidated version of the Constitution, with amendments properly incorporated
 - bringing us into line with regulatory requirements, including the use of the incorporation number on all documentation and sorting out the corporate returns for the previous three years
 - a much more vibrant social calendar
- working closely with Stuart Taylor on the new generation of MX-TRA, the Club magazine
- overseeing the development of the Club's first website, as well as its maintenance
- a pivotal role in the success of NatMeet 2000
- improving the viability of the Committee and ensuring its effectiveness well into the future
- his proudest achievement: securing a permanent home for the club, for the first time ever, at the Albert Park Sailing Club.

He led from the front at all times, with consideration only for what was best for the Club. In the words of our chief spy, his wife Meriden, "he likes what he does because he likes what he does."

*T*he conferring of Life Membership of this Club is not something which is done lightly. It has gone to only five other people in our 12-year history.

Our Constitution requires that it be awarded only in recognition of "*exceptional service to the Club spanning at least three years or having an effect that will (or has) benefitted the Club for three years*". It also requires a unanimous vote of the Committee in favour before it can be conferred.

I'm very pleased to say that David has more than qualified on each of those requirements.

Throughout his time with the Club, there has never been any agenda seeking personal recognition for David James; in fact, more than once he has threatened to walk if there was any attempt to shine a light on his efforts.

*S*o, today, I would like to ask David to walk ... to walk up here and accept this award of
Life Membership of the Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria.