

The Don Kneebone

Many supporters of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association and the many attendees at Get-Togethers have heard of and seen 'The Don Kneebone' Bush Poetry competition printed on the program.

How many know the Don Kneebone story? What significance does it have with the Mountain Cattlemen? What is the history and tradition of Bush Poetry in general and of the Mountain Cattlemen in particular?

Long .. long before the times of television, radios, computers and ipods, the only entrainment around the lonely camps of long cattle drives was a man who could paint a picture with words, the teller of stories, the Bush Poet. Invariably these stories and poems revolved around the bush, of cattle drives, sheep musters and of the stockmen who lived and worked these lonely occupations and of the brave women who stayed behind and raised on their own the, mainly, large families as best they could. Stories were also told of Swaggies, of Prospectors, Shearers and other outback characters. These story tellers were not in the mould of William Shakespeare or Lord Tennyson and other European Poets. These rhyming Poets of Australiana were to become Australia's own 'Bush Poets'

Don Kneebone was one such man, a talented Bush Poet who walked in the footsteps of Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. A founding member of Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, Don would recite his descriptive verse on cattle drives, at cattle sales and very often in the Hotel after the sales.

Don Kneebone was born at Beechworth in September 1922. One of a family of 10 he went to school at Whorouly. His Grandfather, Albert Kneebone, was the first white child born in the Ovens Valley. From his early teens he handled mountain cattle, becoming familiar with Alpine grazing from Mount Bogong to Mansfield. A noted bushman, he also had a passion to work Clydesdale teams. As a poet he was inspired, during long rides through his beloved bush, to write and describe the mountains with vivid powers of observation and a remarkable memory.

Don Kneebone passed away in 1991, his book 'Where the Giant Eucalyptus grow & Other Verse' can be obtained from Dana Kneebone. Please contact either the MCAV or myself for Dana's details.

We, as supporters of the MCAV and supporters of the history, tradition and custom of the Mountain Cattlemen and all things dinky di Australian take our hats off to Don Kneebone. We remember him at every Get-Together. Please continue to support this important link with our past.

The 'Don Kneebone' at the MCAV Get-Togethers consists of three separate competitions:

The Don Kneebone
The Bush Minstrel
The Bush Laureate

It is open to performers of both Bush Poems and Bush Songs.

The Don Kneebone is the starting point for most Poets/Singers, a performance competition where the Poem/song must be original and will be judged higher if the theme is about the Mountain Cattlemen or their cause. The poem/song is permitted to be read and Bush Poets/Singers can only win the Don Kneebone once.

The Bush Minstrel is also a performance competition, combined with the Don Kneebone, but is only eligible to be won by past Kneebone winners or professional Bush Poets/Singers. It is preferred, tho not compulsory, that this poem/song be performed (ie not read).

The Bush Laureate is a written competition, original, and will also be judged higher if written about the history, tradition and cause of the Mountain Cattlemen.

All entries can be taken on the day of the Get-Together and a \$5 per section entry fee is applicable. All winners receive MCAV trophies and in addition, the winners of the Don Kneebone and the Bush Minstrel receive a perpetual, well presented cow's bell and lantern respectively, with all past winners engraved.

If anyone would like more information about the 'Don Kneebone' please do not hesitate to contact Dennis Carstairs on (03) 5145 6128 or email carstairs@netspace.net.au