



Sydney 2000

10th Anniversary Celebrations



Spirit of the Games driven by volunteers

On 24 September 1993 when Juan Antonio famously announced “the winner is Sydney”, Mavis Booth realised her dream of an impending home Olympics.

On that day, Olympic legend Ian Thorpe was just 10-years-old. He may not have known that he would go on to win three gold and two silver medals in Sydney but for Booth, her destiny was as good as written.

“I put in my application at the Town Hall to be a volunteer all those years ago when Sydney won the bid,” Booth said.

“There was no question that I would sign up.”

Despite being originally from Melbourne, Booth calls Sydney her home and has been volunteering for over 30 years.

“I’ve volunteered on many, many events,” Booth said. “Nothing compares to Sydney 2000 though. It was a one-off experience – our lives went on hold for those four weeks.”

But it wasn’t just four weeks. Booth was one of 500 pioneer volunteers and saw the Games through from start to finish.

After a few years doing administration work in the Organising Committee’s Jones Street office, Booth moved into a new voluntary role as driver for dignitaries.

“From 1997 I was a driver,” Booth recalled. “I really enjoyed that and I continued to be a driver right through the Games.”

When the Games finally arrived on Booth’s doorstep, she was given the responsibility of being the driver for Dick Pound, then Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

“It was so exciting working with Mr Pound,” Booth exclaimed. “I also drove his son Duncan who was a member of the Canadian Mounted Guard and that was a hoot. He was over six foot and I’m just five foot two so we were quite the odd couple going round.”

For Booth, a self-prescribed “people-person”, spending time with IOC delegates was a thrill but it was the friendships she formed throughout the Olympic and Paralympic Games that make it such a memorable experience.

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"I remember being at the Closing Ceremony of the Paralympic Games after the most amazing weeks of our lives. There were six of us and we said 'We can't let this Olympic spirit go, we can't let these friendships go'," Booth said.

The group made a pact that they would be in Athens four years later. An accident requiring a knee reconstruction stopped Booth from being able to join her five friends to Greece but she followed them eagerly from Australia.

Booth continues to volunteer to this day. So what keeps her ticking?

"When you enjoy doing something, it's not work is it?" Booth said with a laugh.

"You get out of life what you put into it – and in Sydney in 2000, we got back double!"

A reunion for volunteers from the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held on Wednesday 15 September. For information go to www.sydney2000reunion.com

Alice Wheeler
AOC

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