

# Bob Marsh

SSAA President 1991 - 1993 Life Member of the SSAA.

**L**ike many people who started in the storage industry 30 years ago, Bob Marsh's first introduction to the industry was on a trip to the USA. While getting petrol, he noticed an adjacent storage facility, what he wasn't aware of at the time, this facility housed over 1000 units and was 90% full.

On return to Australia, Bob couldn't stop thinking about this as a potential business opportunity, and with a construction background, the plans began to formulate. In 1987 Bob purchased two acres and built 32 units and they were all fully let within two weeks, and from then on, the buildings kept growing.

In Melbourne, there were a few other storage facilities in operation during this time. Bob and the other five to six owners used to meet every few months in Caulfield for a chat about the industry and how each other was going. Bob produced a monthly newsletter that he mailed to about twenty facility owners around Australia, including Jim Miller (a facility operator in Sydney), which built up a level of awareness on how all of the owners could work together.

Bob helped gather the facility owners from around Australia for the first-ever meeting as a group to establish the SSAA 30 years ago in Sydney.

Before the SSAA was formed, an operator in Sydney had been liaising with the USA Association in regards to becoming a part of that. They soon realised the need for an Australian Branch that met Australian requirements. However, the American contacts gave a level of awareness of what was needed for an Australian Association.

During Bob's time as President, the industry was paying a lot of fees to the banks for credit card payments. It appeared that the fees were approximately 1% higher than

**“ Bob helped gather the facility owners from around Australia for the first-ever meeting as a group to establish the SSAA 30 years ago in Sydney. ”**

anywhere else. With the strength of the newly formed Association behind him, Bob successfully lobbied the banks to get this fee removed so that the storage industry was on par with everything else.

One of the other things Bob oversaw was how, in each of the states, there were variations of leasing arrangements between the client and the storage operator. One of the first things the Association did was to have a uniformed agreement drawn up by a solicitor which was fair to both the tenant and the operator which all facilities could use.

Bob recalls an interesting story that happened during his time as President of the Association. A customer was locked in a facility after hours and was unable to get out. When he was finally released, he approached the Association for compensation for being locked in. He never received any compensation, however, this led to guidelines being established about checking the facility when locking up to ensure no one was left behind. Nowadays with 24-hour access and mobile phones, this isn't an issue.

Bob has been out of the industry now for 20 years due to illness, but he remembers it fondly. The first two conventions were held in Melbourne. There were awards for Best Facility and Bob traveled around Australia looking at the facilities who were eligible to win. Bob also said that in those days, everyone knew each other and shared information freely as there was no cross-pollination of territories or saturation.

These days you will find Bob living with his wife Sallie in a lovely home in a retirement village in Vermont South, Melbourne. His extended family occupies a lot of his time and he has one son who runs a storage facility as well as working in construction for the disabled. ●

