

A little bit of history returns

Red Dog's collar resurfaces

By Courtney Bertling

It had been years since anyone had seen the original collar of Red Dog, last worn in 1979 and long thought that it was gone forever.

However, just recently, it has been found in a safe at the Karratha Vet Hospital where it had been put away for safekeeping.

Safe it was indeed; Dr Rick Fenny, who was the veterinarian who worked on Red Dog in the 70's, thought it was long gone.

When the collar was found, Dr Fenny described the feeling as though a weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

"I was responsible for it and I thought I must have lost it, been stolen or disposed of," he said.

"It (the collar) means a lot, as it was the last tangible link to Red Dog and although simple, it represented what the community thought of him, that they would give him his identity and register him.

"He always wore it."

When the collar was given back to Dr Fenny, one of the first calls he made was to Red Dog movie producer Nelson Woss, who had asked to see the collar years before hand.

Mr Woss raced round to Dr Fenny's house with star of the movie Koko, where the collar was then placed around Koko's neck.

When looking at Koko with the collar, Dr Fenny said it brought a tear to both his and Mr Woss' eyes.

"It was quite significant since he

(Koko) played Red Dog's part and it was 33 years since it had been worn by any dog," he said.

It is no wonder the vision of seeing Koko wearing Red Dog's collar brought a tear to Dr Fenny's eyes, as well as being one of the many who knew him, Dr Fenny was recognised by Red Dog.

"I looked after him from time to time, I was ultimately charged with his health and was with him at the end when I buried him," he said.

Dr Fenny has a lot of fond memories of Red Dog and is planning to share them all in his four book set named Red Dog Vet.

"It describes my life and development from childhood to man, always with a red dog in the background," he said.

"In fact there was a red dog in each of four main eras in my life, from childhood, university, the Kimberley's and the Pilbara."

"The 'Red Dog' will be book four and will be all about him and the Pilbara in the 70's.

"They all influenced me and my career and knowledge of dogs."

The books are a chronicle to Dr Fenny's life, and the fourth one being to document the true story of Red Dog.

"The Louis de Bernieres' book was a work of fiction and the other books, though more factual, were too brief," he mentioned about the other published Red Dog books.

"There are more untold stories out there about him, more people who knew him who have never been given credit for it and more photos which

have never surfaced."

So, Dr Fenny is in search of the public's photos of Red Dog and stories they have of him.

"I only have a few photos and I would love the people who used to bring him to me, to contact me and remind me who they were, why and when they brought him in and what my reaction to him/them was," he said.

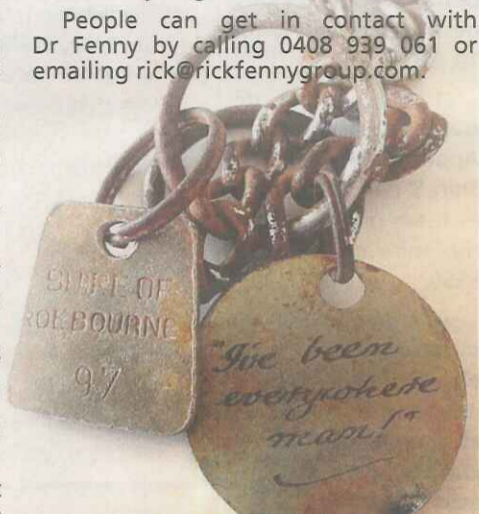
"Especially the two blokes who brought him to me in Roebourne late one night when it appeared he might have been poisoned.

"Also the people who initially brought him to me in the old 'Sea Ripple' centre when I was first starting in Karratha and didn't realise he was a community dog."

People can get in contact with Dr Fenny by calling 0408 939 061 or emailing rick@rickfennygroup.com.



• Red Dog's original collar from the 70's



• The back of Red Dog's collar



• Dr Rick Fenny with Koko wearing Red Dog's original collar

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