



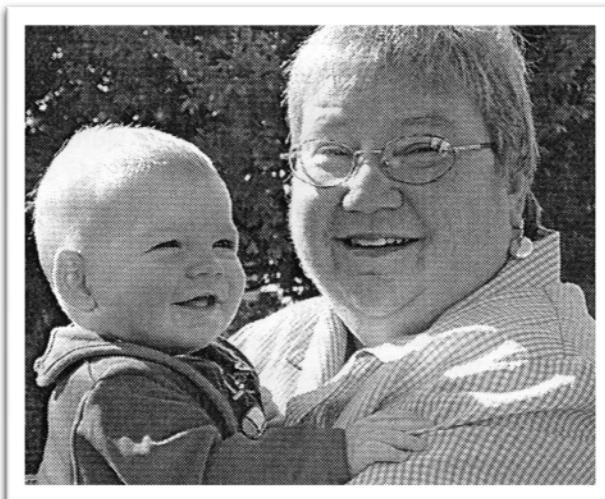
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SOLANGE SHAPIRO

(1)

When I first heard the news that Solange Shapiro was going to quit the DIAA secretariat (a) after all these years and (b) at the prime of her contributions to the DIAA, I was both saddened and perplexed. After all, she had accomplished so much for the industry, with plenty more to do – irreplaceable.

But all of her accomplishments have actually taken place over a relatively shorter period of time than I had envisaged. This only magnifies her loss.



Solange came on board in 1997 to help out husband Henry's chores as our President, but was persuaded to stay on.

At this stage, the deer industry was experiencing the beginning of its problems with respect to velvet sales and the influences of New Zealand and overseas markets, which continue to this day. Sadly, these influences forced the less committed deer "farmers" in Australia to quit the industry which resulted in non-viable organizations in a variety of states leaving only Victoria (and to a lesser degree South Australia) to weather the depressed velvet storm. To this day, it would be doubtful if Jim Moir could have kept the velvet industry going in Australia without the help of Solange.

Fortunately, the recharged New South Wales industry has spearheaded an influence on the marketing of venison which promises well for the industry.

Throughout the machinations affecting the industry over recent years is the loyal presence of Solange Shapiro.

Thank you, Solange – have a well deserved, happy "retirement".

By Dr John Thonard

(2)

Andy phoned and asked could I write a couple of hundred words on Solange's tenure as DIAA secretary.

I thought no worries, but then when I started to jot down all that she does and has done for the industry, I quickly realized that I could not do it justice in 200 words by listing all that she has accomplished in the last 15 years. So the following 200 words are a brief summary from a president's point of view:

If it had not been for her I would never have taken on the job but she has a way of convincing you that you can do the job, albeit I had no idea of the Government regulation minefield, petty differences and gripes that one gets with the job.

Solange was my Jiminy Cricket on deer industry matters and has shown me the other side of a discussion on many occasions. I have never regretted asking for her point of view or got a document through without corrections.

She is a true socialist at heart and I have never seen her do anything that was not in the best interest of deer farming even if it was at her cost.

For example when we increased her workload to include treasurer / reduced her salary / asked her to review grant applications when she was on holiday and a hundred other things, she would give me a hard time for about two minutes then accept with a smile.

Solange is leaving the DIAA in the best financial position it has ever been and you can be sure that all the T's are crossed and the I's are dotted and there is nothing outstanding.

Thanks Solange.

By Jim Moir

(3)

Who would have thought that a woman who had worked in the thick of local politics in the hot bed of the Collingwood Town Hall, then as an assistant to Australia's second woman state Premier (Joan Kirner) would find herself at home "running" the Australian deer industry? But then I suppose there is / has been a lot of politics in this industry over the years and it has perhaps been the political experience of this talented lady that has helped keep the wheels turning.

Apart from her background experience in political circles, Solange Shapiro also learnt the ins and outs of deer farming through hands on experience. She and husband Henry ran red deer at a farm in Gippsland before moving to farm in the Western District, so was well aware of the pressures on members.

Like the rest of us, she and Henry experienced the ups and downs of agricultural prices and the vagaries of the seasons and pests. When working for Joan Kirner, farmers pressured for permits to poison corellas that were in plague proportions and decimating newly planted grain crops, but the politicians and "minders" thought what the farmers were telling them must have been exaggerations until they undertook a field trip and experienced the birds themselves. Solange found it ironic that on a deer farm at Lismore she often awoke to the screeching of huge flocks of corellas as they came in to wait for their morning feed of grain from the trails being fed to the lactating hinds.

And, apart from the birds, oh how we have frustrated her! Those who have been late with orders for velvet tags; annual returns and exam papers for the National Velvet Accreditation Scheme; state branch financials for annual accounts and audits; committee reports as well as state branch presidential reports and confirmation for attendance at meetings and functions, but she has continued to hassle, plead and cajole with as much good humour as possible for us to get them to her so she could do her work for the industry.

We have had some very talented men leading the deer industry during the past 15 or so years, but as is often said "behind every successful man is a successful woman" and in the deer industry Solange Shapiro has been that woman. She has diligently prepared agendas and documents for meetings, drafted letters, spoken to government department officials and filed company returns. She also has ensured meetings were run in accordance with proper meeting procedures and that elections were always appropriately scrutineered and that members' calls and queries were answered and addressed.

Technically, Solange could have done the hours she was paid for and walked away from the computer and phone for the rest of the day or week. But that was not her way: She made herself available to answer calls at all hours of the day and evening to meet members schedules, thus often working many more hours than she was paid for.

Can we do without her? Probably, but only because we will have to. However I have no doubt there will be a list of policies and procedures documented and a task list for the next incumbent, as well as very orderly files. But the standard we expect will be high, as that is what we have become so used to.

Ciao Solange, and thank you for your excellent helmsmanship. Best wishes for a long and healthy retirement and we look forward to you and Henry's continued involvement in the industry in a social capacity.

By Nola Anderson