



BY JACK CHURCH

DEANE Perry's passion for country shows has stretched more than 50 years, becoming Port Elliot Show president and coordinator of the beloved Southern Fleurieu Historical Museum.

But now, Deane will hang up the reins and remember a wild ride as he moves to Murray Bridge.

An influential force behind the continuation of the Port Elliot Show and the museum, Mr Perry has loved every minute of the ride.

Born in Victor Harbor hospital, he has spent most of his life in the district, growing up around Port Elliot and Middleton.

"We used to have a hell of a time here as kids, so I've always felt that these grounds were part of the welfare of Port Elliot," he said, reminiscing on how the show used to be.

"It's a different charm to what it was 50 years ago."

Mr Perry was first involved with the show following the 1959 Port Elliot fire, which burned down almost the entire showgrounds.

Eleven-years-old at the time, he went with Bun Basham in 1960 to fetch sheet metal to rebuild the grounds and he has been involved ever since.

"When the fire went through here it burned out just about everything in the showgrounds and the show almost folded," he said. "Bun Basham and Alan Higgins and a handful of others were keen to keep the show going so they tried to raise a bit of money and they built the Basham Pavilion.

"That's where it all started for me."

Since then, his involvement has deepened - he has been heavily involved with the Southern Fleurieu Historical Museum, which was born in the early 2000s. David Coote, a resident of the area, had a vision of building a museum for horse-drawn equipment in Middleton.

Deane Perry

FLEURIEU

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others

- Mahatma Gandhi

On his passing his wife Sheila, wanting to fulfil her husband's wish and finding that a museum at Middleton was not viable, approached the Southern Agricultural Society Inc with a view to establishing a museum at the showgrounds.

In the role of president at the time, Mr Perry presented the matter to the committee and members agreed to set up a museum at the grounds in David Coote's memory. The museum soon became a second home for Mr Perry, who worked hard to include the history of early settlement on the Fleurieu and broader South Australia.

Thousands of volunteer hours have gone into the maintenance of the museum, many of which have been given by Mr Perry.

The Coote Family kindly donated \$5,000 towards the building of the museum hoping that other funds could be found and within a short space of time generous donations of \$5,000 each were also received from Ian and Carol Youles and the Victor Harbor Harness Club, allowing the building of the museum to proceed.

"It's marvellous the way the museum has taken off," Mr Perry said. "Over the last six or eight years it's been an average of a couple days of week we're here."

"I've always enjoyed doing this and seeing the progress of the museum. "I believe now that I've been involved, the way the museum has been put together is a credit to the town, a lot of museums have too much agricultural machinery, I hate to see it sitting outside and further deteriorating. "I think this museum has something that everyone can appreciate."

The Southern Fleurieu Historical Museum is open on Thursday and Sunday from 10am-3pm and Mr Perry is encouraging people to sign up to volunteer to the organisation.