



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER NO. 58

PREPARED BY: D.G. DAVIS

WOR. BRO. JOHN MICHAEL ARMSTRONG STRINGER OAM, JP, MCIT, ASO.

GUEST SPEAKER AT THE SOCIETY'S 'YEAR 2000 CELEBRATION DINNER' HELD AT 'LAURELBANK' MASONIC CENTRE, WILLOUGHBY, ON MONDAY 24 JANUARY 2000.

John Michael Armstrong Stringer is a fifth generation Australian. He was born on 16 January 1939 in Brisbane, Queensland, son of Captain John Rickard Stringer and Mary Elizabeth Stringer, JP.

Michael began school at Bellevue Hill Public School, shortly after his father was killed in the Middle East Campaign, 2/25 Battalion. He then attended St Andrews Cathedral School in Sydney. He was a good scholar and enjoyed study. He enjoyed sport and participated in cricket, football, athletics, swimming, fencing and tennis.

He became a school prefect and house captain for the House of York, and a chorister in the Cathedral Choir. He became a leading chorister and a member of the Royal School of Church Music. He sang at numerous State Services including the service on the occasion of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and for Her Majesty the Queen on her first visit to Australia. He also sang at the funeral of The Honourable W.(Billy) Hughes.

He did not go on to higher education as the family could not afford it at the time.

Michael began his working life as an apprentice carpenter and joiner after leaving school at Intermediate Certificate level. He worked for A.W. Foreman on the construction of several cottages and a block of Doctors Rooms in the Manly Warringah area. He was appointed foreman on the site of Inder Motors new showrooms and workshop facilities in the same area.

On completing his apprenticeship, he was offered a position with Antill Ranger & Co. Pty. Ltd. as the foreman for the construction of the new transport depot at Alexandria. It was built on the site of an old foundry. He later became Branch Manager with Antill Ranger, a position he retained when the Company was taken over by Mayne Nickless Ltd. His interests in transport caused him to be included in the team that developed the northern Queensland road transport services of Antill Ranger.

Michael studied Transport Administration which included law, economics, accounting, personnel management, operational methods and management, fleet management for road, rail sea and air and transport safety. He became a Member of the Institute of Transport as a result of these studies.

In 1964, recognising the commercial potential within the emerging computer industry, he joined Data Card Australia, later to become the Computer Resources Company. He became the Company's first salesman with customers in New South Wales, the A.C.T. and Queensland. He later extended his sales activities to all the

Asian countries and finally was promoted to National Product Manager responsible for all manufacturing, warehousing and distribution with an annual budget of over 40 million dollars.

He requested to retire from the Computer Resources and retired on 29 May 1994 at the age of 55.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTER

During the 1960's, at the age of 22, Michael Stringer became a member of the Australian American Association and was elected President of the junior body and a Councillor of the senior body of that association. The junior body was responsible for the entertainment of visiting United States service personnel from ships and other guests. He was one of the organisers of the R&R program in Sydney during the Vietnam war.

Michael has been involved with the maritime community for over 40 years. He was, as a small boy, first involved as a sailor of dinghies and later became a crewman of ocean racing yachts. He sailed his 28 ft yacht, *Sea Mist* with the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club of which he was a member.

In 1970, he joined the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol where he attended all their training programs and completed every course. These included all divisions of navigation, rescue work, seamanship, etc., and he attained his Ocean Going Yachtmasters Certificate. Michael has held numerous positions within the Coastal Patrol being appointed Flag Officer Commanding from 1988 to 1994. He was made a Life Member in 1993.

On becoming Chairman in 1982, he developed a strategic master plan for the Coastal Patrol which included among a host of plans, the introduction of Coastal Patrol owned rescue vessels, the establishment of additional Rescue Base sites and a medical unit and water ambulance service, fire fighting units and improved radio communication. As Chairman, he represented Australia at the international Lifeboat Conference in 1983 at Goteborg, Sweden.

He has undertaken, at his own expense, two world study tours on search and rescue including U.K., Europe, U.S.A. and Asia. During these tours he established close working relationships with members of the international maritime rescue community and regularly exchanges information with them.

In the early 1980's, he negotiated with the Australian Yachting Federation for the Coastal Patrol to partner the A.Y.F. in introducing a new national training scheme for the boating community.

He was directly instrumental in having His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales accepting the position of Patron-in-Chief of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and of Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot KBE, AO, RAN, accepting the position of a Patron.

Michael operated his private vessel, *Coastal Explorer*, a 34 ft Riveria, as a registered rescue boat and has, with his crew, carried out numerous rescues for the Coastal Patrol. The *Coastal Explorer* won the best operational unit in the Coastal Patrol for 1988.

He has for over 15 years worked closely with Steven Hall, AM, and John Moulton OAM, of the Festival of Sydney in support of the many maritime events organised on Sydney Harbour, providing technical advice as well as organising safety vessels, water ambulances, fire support units and crowd control facilities.

He has given outstanding support over 18 years to the Maritime Services Board of NSW in the implementation of maritime safety programs through the Port Jackson Marine Safety Advisory Committee, The NSW Safe Boating Council, The Water Traffic Committee, The Navigation Lights Committee, and The Boating Equipment Committee.

He has been a member of the Sydney to Hobart Start committee for over 14 years and commanded the Coastal Patrol fleet during these races.

Michael is a staunch supporter of the NSW Water Police and has lobbied for them to be equipped with self-righting rescue vessels. He believes that all water police should come under the command of a single unit and not under police districts.

He was involved in the co-ordination of the infrastructure of all the events in NSW for the Bi-Centennial in 1988, especially those on Sydney Harbour.

He has also worked on every BOC Around-The-World-Alone Yacht Race providing Coastal Patrol support for the event with safety vessels and crews along the Australian Coast and at the finish and re-start in Sydney.

His efforts to have closer co-operation between the Royal Australian Navy and the Coastal Patrol resulted in the Chief of Naval Staff designate the Patrol as a Naval Support Unit. In 1992, Michael Stringer was awarded the Order of Australia Medal and in 1993 he was awarded the Australian Service Order.

He attained the Coastal Patrol rank of Commodore 1st Class which he retains to the present day.

AUTHOR

Michael Stringer has researched and written several books. One on the history of horse drawn vehicles in Australia, *Australian Horse Drawn Vehicles*, published in 1980 by Rigby. It received excellent reviews and is regarded as the definitive work on this period of our history. A copy was presented to His Royal Highness, Prince Phillip by the then Premier, Bro. Neville Wran.

His second book, *An Illustrated History of Sydney Harbour*, produced in 1984 by Rankin & Co., and published by J.M.A. Stringer & Co. This book also received excellent reviews and is used as a reference and gift for visitors to Sydney by the Royal Australian Navy. A copy was presented to His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, during his 1994 Royal Visit to the units of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol.

Michael has also written numerous articles for magazines on computer consumables, the road transport industry, maritime safety and horse drawn vehicles. He is a member of the Australian Society of Authors.

Michael Stringer is a very keen gardener and a student of agriculture, in particular beef cattle, sheep and wool production. His love of the country and rural areas led him to study for the first course in Real Estate. In 1961, He became a licensed Stock & Station Agent and Business Agent & Auctioneer. He trades as J.M.A. Stringer & Co. and sold several properties in conjunction with both Elders and Dalgety. He remains an active Stock & Station Agent today.

In his retirement, Michael has established an alpaca stud, Grantham Alpacas. where he has established a five year breeding program. He believes that the alpaca will have an excellent future in Australia and the fibre will continue to be in high demand as a high fashion fibre. It is better in many ways than wool and other fibres. He has also established another company, Alpaca Marketing Services to provide a marketing service for the alpaca industry.

Michael Stringer's sporting interests include sailing, snow skiing, water skiing, golf, tennis, squash, swimming, horse riding, carriage driving, weight lifting and bush walking.

Wor.Bro. Michael Stringer is a member of the following organisations:-

The Order of Australia Association (Life Member).
The Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol (Life Member).
The Royal National Lifeboat Institute, U.K. (Life Governor).
The Royal Motor Yacht Club.
The Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales.
The Royal Australian Historical Society.
The Royal Horticultural Society (London).
The Australian Society of Authors.
The Kondinin Group, Agricultural Support Services.
The Angus Society, Stud Cattle.
The NSW Stud Merino Breeders Association.
The Australian Alpaca Association.
Member of the Chartered Institute of Transport.

Wor. Bro. John Michael Stringer was initiated in Lodge Freshwater No. 901, meeting at Collaroy, on 10 August 1992. He was passed to the second degree on 9 November 1992 and raised a Master Mason on 8 March 1993.

He was installed as Worshipful Master of the lodge on 14 September 1998.
