



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### **Bro. WILLIAM BERGE PHILLIPS, OBE (1913-2003)**

William "Bill" Bérge Phillips, who has died at 90, was a pre-eminent figure in Australian and world aquatic sports. He called swimming the No. 1 Olympic sport and, in one capacity or another, supported Australia at every Olympic aquatic event since 1948. His achievements in the administration and advancement of swimming, water polo, diving and synchronised swimming earned him the title of father of modern Australian swimming success.

Phillips brought passion and energy to all of the many activities he was involved in, using analysis and advocacy to advance his case. His natural skills in these areas were enhanced by his education and professional training in the law.

After the suspension of the Australian Swimming Championships during World War II, Phillips persuaded the Amateur Swimming Union of Australia (ASUA) that it should expand the program of events for junior swimmers and conduct a special Australian junior swimming championship in 1945.

He was then instrumental in getting Professor Frank Cotton, professor of physiology at Sydney University, with Phillip's protege, Forbes Carlisle, and other leading amateur coaches, to establish a detailed training program. This was distributed to all potential top swimmers, together with a book on swim training from the United States.

From these competitors came the backbone of the 1948 Olympic Games team, the vanguard of Australian swimming success that culminated in its' domination of the sport at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games.

Phillips was born in Sydney and educated at Fort Street Boys High School. At Sydney University, where he studied law, he won a Blue in water polo and remained a competitor until he was 40. In 1936, after a period as an articled law clerk with D.R. Hall, a former NSW Attorney-general, he was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of NSW. In 1949 he established the law firm of Herbert Smith & W.B. Phillips. He was made a life member of the Law Society of NSW in 1986.

Phillips had many interests outside his profession. One was as a breeder, exhibitor and judge of dalmation dogs, and he was foundation president of the Dalmation Club of Australia in 1943. He served on the committee responsible for establishing the RAS Kennel Control (now the Royal NSW Canine Council). He was also for many years a judge of the non-sporting group of dogs.

However, it is for his contribution to aquatic sports that Phillips is best remembered.

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