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Bro. EARL STANLEY WHITE (1900-1996)

There are many stories in Australian history of the country boy who came to the 'big smoke' to make good.

Earl White was one such boy who was born just outside Armidale and who came to Sydney to take a job with the Post Office. At age seventeen, he believed he had little future in the postal services, so he took a part-time job with the *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, a successful Parramatta newspaper which had been founded in 1887.

It was the beginning of a life-long association with the newspaper industry.¹

As a junior reporter, his area covered The Hills district, then mainly orchards, and the open farmland west to Penrith.

Transport was limited to the railway, horse-drawn vehicles and the very rare motor car. Roads were gravel; dusty in dry weather and mud, ditches and bogs when it rained.²

Young Earl White, Having learned something of his chosen profession, left Parramatta to become a general news and court reporter on the Sydney afternoon newspaper, *The Sun*.

During the great economic depression of the 1930's, the newspaper laid off staff and Earl White was one of many to lose his job.

Many were devastated by the depression, but White decided that Parramatta needed a second newspaper and, in 1933, he launched the *Parramatta Advertiser*.

It was free and so it proved to be popular in direct competition with his former employer, the well-respected *Argus*.

White's *Advertiser* was so successful that, just three years later, he bought the *Argus* and formed Cumberland Newspapers.

White then saw potential in the newly-expanding suburbs on the outskirts of the city and beyond to the Blue Mountains.

He started local newspapers in these and other areas and before long he was publishing 20 papers from Leichhardt to Katoomba.

He also saw an opportunity in the wave of migration to Australia after the second world war and, in 1951, he started *The Dutch Australian Weekly*.

The phenomenal growth of Cumberland Newspapers made it a target for two, unsuccessful, take-over bids by Ezra Norton, the proprietor of *The Daily Mirror* and *Truth*, and Sir Frank Packer and Rupert Murdoch also competed in the buy-out stakes.

Eventually, in 1960, Rupert Murdoch's bid of \$2 million Dollars was successful and the newspaper tycoon took his first step into the Sydney market.

Earl White continued his newspaper interests with the *Hornsby Advocate*, the *Mosman Daily* and the *Gordon Courier*.

His local newspaper empire then spread further afield and he became involved with the *Manning River Times* at Taree and other country papers.

During a lifetime which included the federation of the Australian colonies and the mind-boggling technological advances of the 20th century, Earl White found time for other activities.

He was the founder of the Parramatta Building Society and he was a Freemason.

Bro. Earl Stanley White was initiated on 11 December 1920, aged 21, in Lodge Wentworthville No. 350, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and, on 2. June 1923, he became a foundation member of Lodge Merrylands No. 479.³

Earl White was twice married and was survived by his widow, Margaret and two sons from his first marriage.

He was a remarkable Australian who became one of the nation's great achievers.

NOTES

1. *Hills Shire Times*, Tuesday, 6 August 1996, p.12.
2. *History Lives*. West Sydney Radio Pty. Ltd., 1981, p.77.
3. The United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, Membership Records.

Bro. Earl White pictured in 1992, talking about his newspaper days.

