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Bro. SYDNEY STAAS (1921-1998)

Syd Staas, who was known as 'Mr Labels' and the 'King of Labels' once described himself as a 'very narrow-minded, one-eyed labelling man.'

He was born in South Africa to Dutch - English parents who migrated to Australia in 1925 when Syd was four years old. The family settled at the Sydney suburb of Artarmon.

Staas was an outstanding student and, after he topped the State in the Intermediate examination, he went to work for the NRMA while he studied accountancy at night.

When he turned 18 he joined the militia and he served as a commissioned officer in the 2nd AIF from 1940 to 1945.

He was wounded in the New Guinea campaign and was sent home in a hospital ship and, after treatment, he was posted to Cowra at the time of the breakout of Japanese prisoners of war.

It was in Cowra that Syd met Daphne with whom he celebrated 54 years of married life the week before his death on 12 July 1998. They had three sons, Graeme, David and Peter.

After the war, Staas and two others set up a small label printing business. They each worked at other jobs until the new venture began to succeed.

Fifty years later it had become the Assta group of companies with 130 employees in Sydney and factories in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

Staas was a workaholic and he devoted his life to his business. The Assta group won several awards in Europe and the United States and Syd Staas received recognition from within his industry.

He was a dynamic entrepreneur who enjoyed a drink, a bet, a party, a song and a good cause - sometimes all at once.

After a print industry trade show in Melbourne some years ago a dinner at the hotel turned into a late-night two-up game. As the game progressed, Staas moved round the room collecting \$5 and \$10 notes from the participants. The following week the

Institute for the Blind received a cheque for \$425.

He was District Commissioner of the Woronora Scout District for seven years and he helped the 1st Blakehurst group. In 1977 he received the Certificate of Long Service from the then Chief Scout, Sir Roden Cutler, V.C.

In recent years he became involved with the Neurofibromatosis Association (a disease of the nerve endings) and helped raise the Association's image.

Staas did not take kindly to committees. Always the autocrat, he made decisions and acted on them.

He was also a communicator and the Australian flag and the constitutional debate were favourite topics about which he would send handwritten notes which his secretary needed code-breaking skills to decipher.

His support for youth extended beyond the Scout movement to industry and apprentice training programmes.

He also provided comprehensive information to the Sydney Technical College School of Graphic Arts and he donated modern equipment to graphic art schools, not only in Sydney, but also in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.

Bro. Sydney Staas was initiated into Freemasonry in Lodge Antiquity No. 1, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales on 7 September 1953. He was passed Fellowcraft on 7 November 1953 and raised a Master Mason on 2 February 1954.

On 8 December 1967, he joined Lodge Halcyon No. 565 but called off this lodge on 16 November 1969.

REFERENCE:

The Sydney Morning Herald, Thursday, July 23, 1998.
