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BRO. ROGER FREDERICK PEGRAM 1923 - 2007 N.S.W. SWIMMING ASSOCIATION

John Devitt, the Olympic swimming gold medallist, thought of Roger Pegram "as a bloke with a little blood in his veins, mixed in with the chlorine". Pegram, a man of gentle manner, was certainly devoted to the sport of swimming, but he juggled throughout his life this and his other abiding interests: family, friends and his work with an electrical installations company, being a respected engineer with Stowe Australia.

The swimming connection reached back to the years before World War 11, when he splashed around as a boy in Lavender Bay. In 1938 he and Stuart Aldritt, a friend who was also to take a prominent place in Australia's swimming story, sold programmes for the Empire Games competition at North Sydney Pool.

Pegram managed the Australian swimming team at two Olympic Games. Rome 1960 and Munich 1972. At both he had to attend with controversy. In Rome, Devitt and the American Lance Larson hit the wall almost simultaneously in a flurry of white water in the final of the 100 metres freestyle. Confusion reigned before Devitt was finally awarded the race. The genial Devitt then had to survive a protest from the American camp-ultimately dismissed-and the long aftermath of a bitter debate,

Pegram, who had watched the event lying on the ground in direct line with the finish, had no doubt, stating in his official report "Devitt had a winning margin of four to six inches".

At Munich's tragic Games, Australia's Brad Cooper fought out a furious finish with the American Rick DeMont in the 400metres freestyle final, Cooper went down by one-hundredth of a second. Three days later the news broke that DeMont had tested positive to a banned substance and he was disqualified. In the face of an International Olympic Committee decision to declare the title vacant, Pegram robustly fronted the campaign to have Cooper declared the winner. A week later Cooper was awarded his gold medal.

Pegram's contribution to Australia's oldest sport was remarkable. President (or Chairman) of the NSW Swimming Association for 22 years, he became the top man in the sport nationally, as President of the Australian Swimming Union. Along the way he was a race starter, selector, a driving force in establishing schools and interclub competition after World War 11, and enthusiastic worker in teaching blind children to swim.

He was a life member of the North Sydney Swimming club, the Northern Suburbs Swimming Association, Swimming NSW, the NSW Olympic Council and the NSW Commonwealth Games Association.

Roger Pegram, who has died at 84, was born in Auckland, New Zealand, to Londoners Arthur Lancelot Pegram and the former Amy Rosina Chalk. His father worked for a company making weighing machines and the family came to Australia when Roger was three years of age. He attended Cammeray Public School and North Sydney Technical High.

Pegram was a man for the long haul, joining North Sydney Swimming Club as a boy. He was a member for 70 years, he worked 57 years for the same company, he and Pat were married for 44 years and for many golden years he was a member of a very powerful triumvirate-with Bro Bill Berge Phillips and Bro Syd Grange-that set the course for Australia's most successful Olympic sport.

He cared deeply for young swimmers. As a race starter he would walk along the blocks to check the youngsters were not worried by the gun start. If there was a problem he would set aside the starter's gun and signal the "off" with a handclap.

Steel lived behind his calm exterior but there was a serenity and wry humour to the man. After a disagreement with a workmate Pegram feigned anger, reached into his desk, pulled out a gun and fired at his friend. The weapon was a starting pistol from swimming. He enjoyed telling the story of travelling in the team bus at the Rome Olympics when a young swimmer, gazing out of a window at passing crowds, said "Gee, there are a lot of New Australians here!".

After a private funeral his family and friends came together to celebrate his life. This was hosted by Adam Spencer, one of his many friends, and over 200 guests including John Coates, John Konrads, Norman May, Ursula Carlile, Lisa Forrest and many other great names in swimming.

Roger Pegram held the MBE and OAM for his services. He is survived by his wife, Pat, their 5 children, Phillip, Bernard, Beth, Sally and Caroline and 10 grandchildren.

Roger Frederick Pegram was initiated, passed and raised in Lodge Australia Lewis No 554 UGL of NSW and ACT on 26th January, 23rd March and 22nd June 1949. He called off that lodge on 28th July 1965 after becoming a Foundation Member of Lodge Olympus No 861 in May 1953 and called off that lodge on 26th October 1990.

Roger Pegram died in August 2007.

Ref: SMH 2nd November 2007
Records of UGL of NSW and ACT.



Great support ... Roger Pegram with Beverley Whitfield, 200-metre breast-stroke gold medallist at the 1972 Olympics.