



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Paper No. 181.

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Date: 23rd August 2010.

**Bro. Colin Maxwell Whitehead  
(1922 - 2010)**

### 'CHESTY BOND'

It is not known if Max Whitehead was ever besieged by couples seeking to have him sire their children - the experience of Charles Atlas - but Max Whitehead, the original model for Chesty Bond, was known to have a "quick sidestep".

Blessed with a glorious physique, he also excelled at using it, as a surf lifesaver, rugby league player and wrestler. A gentle soul for all that, Whitehead was the epitome of clean living and health. Like Chesty Bond of the cartoon world, he rescued damsels in distress.

Colin Maxwell Whitehead was born at Riverstone, in western Sydney, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1922, son of a bricklayer, Colin Whitehead, and his wife Florence. The family then moved to Narrabeen. Colin died when young Whitehead was eleven. So at a very young age, to help support the family, young Whitehead became a golf caddy and ball collector. He started Rugby League in 1935 with Narrabeen Sharks Juniors. As a member of the South Narrabeen Surf Lifesaving Club, he helped win the National Surf Life Saving Championship and was runner up in the National Belt Championships. When the family moved to Manly, he joined the surf lifesaving club there.

In 1942, Whitehead joined the North Sydney Rugby League Club as a second-rower and played with Norths' premiership finalists in 1943. He joined the police force but left to join the air force, where he spent four months. He then became a Manly lifesaver and during the winter months worked as a chicken sexer. He played another season with North Sydney in 1946 but joined Manly Rugby League Club at its formation. When Manly took the field in its first match, at Brookvale Oval on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1947, Whitehead led them on as captain. Whitehead played 20 first-grade games for Manly and scored four tries.

To earn extra income, Whitehead did male modelling, appearing in magazines advertising gym equipment. In 1951, he was spotted by executives of an advertising agency seeking a human model to match the Chesty Bonds (as originally named) character. Handsome, superbly fit, muscled and strong jawed, he slipped easily into the role, though a prosthetic chin was fitted for his photo shoots to make it a little more jutting.



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There was nothing of the dandy about him. He became a professional wrestler under the name of Max Steyne and won the European Heavyweight Wrestling Championship in Munich in 1954, going through 16 matches undefeated. He lost to Killer Kowalski.

Max Riddington, a one-time captain and president of the Manly Surf Life Saving Club, said Whitehead never married because of his sidestep (evasive action). "He had some lovely ladies but he felt that sort of life was not for him," Riddington said.

One woman did, apparently, get through the guard. Whitehead once told journalist Steve Warnock that his wrestling partner in the U.S. happened to be the lover of Mae West, then in her 60s but ageing well. When the partner went away for a week, he asked Whitehead to look after her. Whitehead turned up to her home, where she apparently looked after him.

There were occasions when forcefulness and women came together. Interviewed by the Herald in 1959, he said he was once forced to knock out a struggling woman in the surf to get her to safety. When she came round, she slapped him in the face and cried: "You brute! Hit a lady, would you?" On another occasion, a man walked up and said: "I don't want to be an alarmist but I am sure there is a body of a woman in the surf." And there was. She was out beyond the breakers and it became a desperate, but successful, race to save her.

Newspapers around Australia carried Chesty Bond until 1964. The character found its way on to television and cinema screens and was credited with selling more than 130 million of the athletic singlets. But in the 1960's, Whitehead suffered a blow when his chicken sexing skill became outmoded by technology. He suffered depression and had a battle with alcohol. To his credit, said Sid Barnes, son of the cricketing great, Whitehead beat it. And he never lost his sense of humour. As Riddington recalled, on one occasion some young members of the surf club grabbed Whitehead and shaved him bald. "He was walking round next day with his mother's tea cosy on his head," Riddington said.

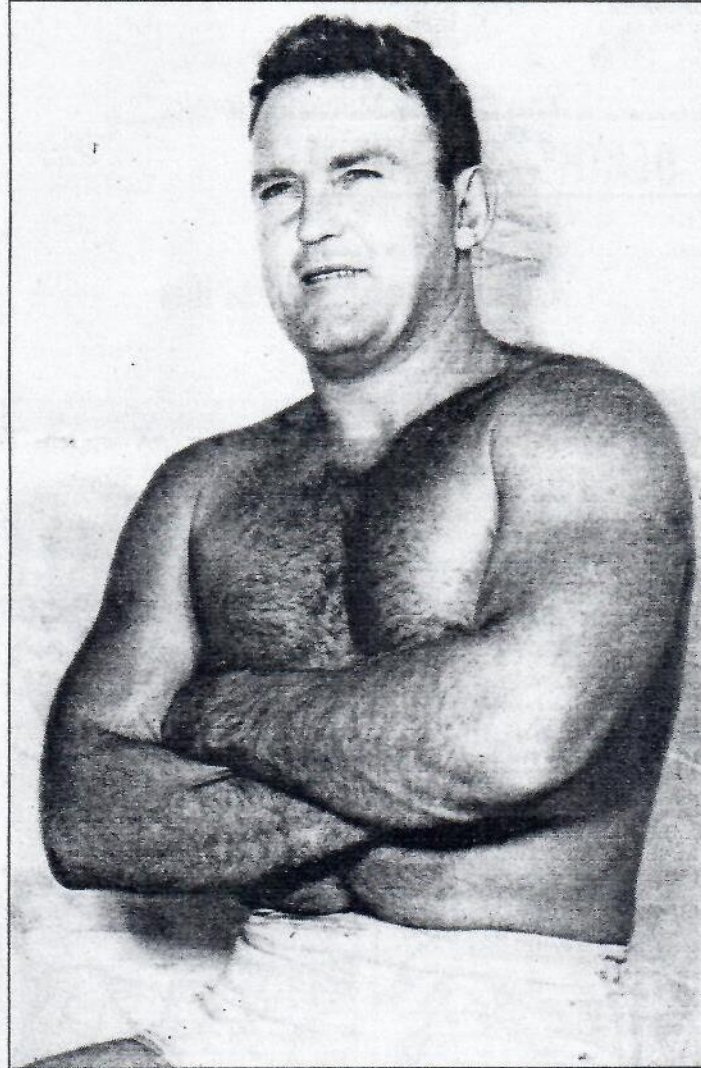
When he was 71, according to the journalist Bob Beale, the hairs on his chest "might be whitening against his leathery tan but he's still strong and supple enough to exercise for an hour each day."

The Chesty Bonds company looked after him in his later years, Barnes said.

When Whitehead's health started to decline, Barnes became his carer. A nurse, Samantha Green, took Whitehead to Manly home games. At the Club's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, surviving captains were called together and Whitehead formed a special bond with the players. He attended the launch of Manly Rugby League's 2008 season.

"For some reason he was not invited to the 2009 launch," Barnes said. "As things turned out, it was just as well."





Max Whitehead ... had a glorious physique and excelled at using it.

Whitehead was a special guest at the launch of Manly's present season. He died on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010. His funeral at St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Manly, on 7<sup>th</sup> April was well attended. At the time of writing, his ashes were to be scattered at Brookvale Oval and South Narrabeen and Manly beaches.

Kerry Sibraa, who was Whitehead's paymaster at Manly Council when he was a life-saver, later became president of the Senate and is now patron of Manly-Warringah Rugby League Club, said: "He will remain with us forever."

Bro. Colin Maxwell Whitehead was made a Mason on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1944 in Lodge Jethro No. 448 at Manly.

He was passed Fellowcraft on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1944 and raised a Master Mason on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1944.

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 1949, he affiliated with Lodge Port Jackson Lewis, also at Manly. He called off on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1965.



**REFERENCE:**

Malcolm Brown

The Sydney Morning Herald,  
3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2010.

**Some Bonds Memorabilia**

Cartoon Strip: 1954

Advertisements:

(h) : 1938.

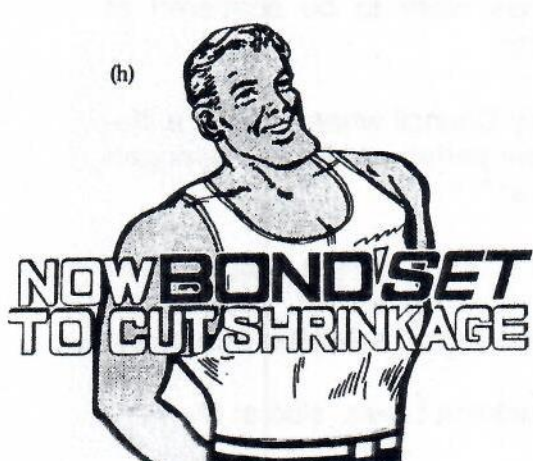
(l) : 1956

(J & k) : Current.

(L) : Chesty Bond Junior.



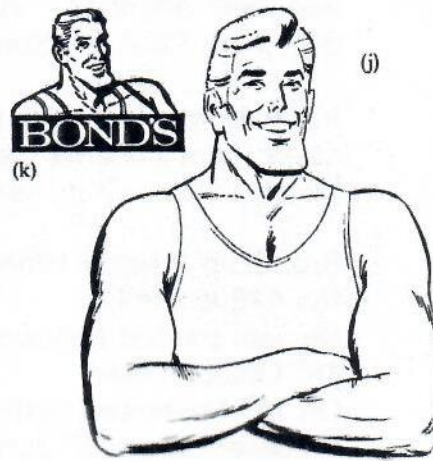
(l)



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