



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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**WING COMMANDER V. Wor. Bro. WILLIAM SIMPSON McALONEY, G.C., OBE.
(1910 - 1995)**

William McAloney was born on 12th May 1910, in Adelaide, South Australia. He was educated at Thebarton Technical High School and the Adelaide School of Mines. In 1935, McAloney married Dora Winifred Johnson; the pair later had seven children. On 1st July 1936, McAloney enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force.

On 31st August 1937, three aircraft from No. 1 Squadron RAAF were engaged in flight training, during which they landed at an airbase in Hamilton, Victoria. Recommencing their journey, the first aircraft had already taken off when the second was seen to have difficulties. Out of control, the second aircraft struck the ground, bursting into flames. McAloney - who was a passenger in the third aircraft - immediately leapt out of his plane and ran towards the wreckage. Dashing into the flames, he began searching for Pilot Officer K. W. McKenzie, the aircraft's pilot who was trapped. McAloney continued his attempts to rescue McKenzie, until he fell unconscious from severe burns to his body and was dragged out of the aircraft. Due to his wounds, McAloney spent the following four weeks in hospital receiving treatment.

Although McAloney's rescue attempt was unsuccessful, his actions were recognised with the award of the Albert Medal, formerly the highest decoration for gallantry awarded to civilians or to military personnel for actions "not in the face of the enemy" in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. The notification and accompanying citation for the decoration was published in the *London Gazette* on 18th February 1938, reading:

Whitehall, February 4, 1938.

His Majesty The KING has been graciously pleased to award the Albert Medal to Aircraftsman William Simpson McAloney, Royal Australian Air Force, for conspicuous gallantry in attempting to rescue an officer from the burning wreckage of an aircraft at Hamilton, Victoria, on the 31st August 1937.

Despite the fact that the aircraft was ablaze from nose to the rudder, Aircraftsman McAloney dashed into the flames and continued his efforts at rescue until pulled away in an unconscious condition, having received severe burns which necessitated his removal to hospital.

Recovering from his burns, McAloney continued to serve in the Royal Australian Air Force. During the Second World War, he was posted to New Guinea, where he served as an engineering officer.

Between 1960 and 1966, he served as Officer Commanding Engineering Squadron, Aircraft Research and Development Unit, based at Laverton. For his services to the unit, McAloney was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the 1966 New Year Honours List.

He retired from the air force on 9th December 1966 with the rank of wing commander.

During 1971, the British Government announced that all living recipients of the Albert Medal and Edward Medal would in future be treated as recipients of the George Cross, and were invited to exchange their medals for the latter award. As such, those who wished to exchange their insignia were invited to attend an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace to receive their George Crosses. McAloney was among five Australian Albert Medal recipients who received their George Cross from Queen Elizabeth II on 12th July 1972.

Aged 85, McAloney died on 31st August 1995. He was survived by his wife and six of their seven children. Heroism, it seems, runs in the family. The seventh child, John Douglas McAloney, had served as an army officer during the Vietnam War and was decorated with the Military Cross on 1st August 1967 for rescuing one of his men who had been wounded by a Viet Cong sniper, and then personally clearing several caves defended by Viet Cong, despite himself having been wounded in the right temple; he died in 1991.

Bro. William Simpson McAloney was made a Mason on 2nd February 1933 in Epworth Lodge No. 159 Grand Lodge of South Australia meeting in Adelaide.

He was passed Fellowcraft on 6th April 1933 and raised a Master Mason on 8th June 1933.

He called off on 30th September 1944.

He was a member of Adastral Lodge No. 397, United Grand Lodge of Victoria from 25th March 1947 to 26th November 1990.

He was installed as Master of this lodge on 25th November 1955.

He was also a member of Black Rock Lodge No. 370 from 20th August 1951 to 31st May 1989 and Ebdon Daylight Lodge No. 871 United Grand Lodge of Victoria.

He had conferred the ranks of Past Grand Sword Bearer in 1972, Past Senior Grand Deacon in 1979 and Past Grand Inspector of Workings in 1986.

He received a 50 year membership jewel in 1988.

He was exalted in the Royal Arch in Streaky Bay Chapter No. 24, South Australian Constitution and affiliated with Sandringham Chapter No. 78, Victorian Constitution on 14th March 1972.

He was installed as First Principal on 13th May 1975.

He called off on 11th November 1987.

He was also a member of Nepean Sovereign Chapter No. 437 of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for England Etc., which met at the Melbourne suburb of Moorabin.

REFERENCES:

* Wikipedia

* They Dared Mightily, Lionel Wigmore, Australian War Memorial, A.C.T., 1986.

* Grand Lodge Records.
