



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### Mervyn Lloyd COLES-Schoolteacher Extraordinaire and Freemason

Lloyd Coles was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1921 in Broken Hill to Andrew Coles, a Mine Supervisor, and his wife Emily Matilda, (nee Pearce) He grew up in Wolfram Street in the centre of Broken Hill with his parents and sister, Valma. During his childhood he learnt to play the violin and joined the Scouts, attending a Jamboree at Frankston. When the mines were closed over Christmas the family holidayed in Adelaide, a tradition that he carried on with his own children as they grew up. His father died six weeks before he sat for the Leaving Certificate but he was still able to pass the exams and gain a scholarship to Sydney Teachers College, boarding in Glebe.

While he was in Sydney he met Joyce Woodhouse, who was to become his life long partner. At this time Lloyd and Joyce became close friends and continued to write to each other when he left Sydney for country teaching posts and during the war.

His first teaching post was back in his hometown of Broken Hill. It is here, following his fathers footsteps, that he joined Freemasonry which was always an important part of his life.

After Broken Hill his next post was to a one teacher school in the tin mining town of Tallebung, 65 miles NW of Condobolin, a place described as red earth with a harsh and barren landscape. Here he taught children from kindergarten to leaving certificate. He was spread around the town, sleeping in one house, showering in another and finally having his meals in yet another, such was the life of a teacher in a one teacher school.

From Tallebung he enlisted in the RAAF and was posted to No 23 squadron as a member of Ray Cupper's crew on a B24 Liberator flying heavy bomber missions out of Darwin. Lloyd was the leading wireless operator and as a teacher was also the Squadron's Education Officer providing further education to its members. Many of his Liberator crew became friends for life and kept regular contact.

After the war Lloyd and Joyce were married on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1945 in St. Giles Greenwich and following a honeymoon in Urunga they moved in with Joyce's mother in Osborne Road, Lane Cove. Lloyd's next teaching post was at Lane Cove Public School and it was then that he took up the university option for returned servicemen, enrolling in a Bachelor of Arts with majors in History and English, graduating in 1950. This was a particularly busy time for the couple as they secured a block of land in Taleeban Road, Lane Cove in 1948. Lloyd was an owner builder and over the next two years he project managed and helped build the two bedroom house that was to be the family home for the next 62 years. He walked to the building site each morning to discuss with the carpenter what were to be the days activities, then walked to the school for his real job. Lloyd personally built many of the cupboards in the house including those in the present kitchen. These were to remain sacrosanct from then on apart from a laminate top installed later. The building continued, with Lloyd making a studio bed for Robert using a model in a Home Renovation magazine. Later with the help of a neighbour he built a carport, laying the concrete and then building the structure.



Lloyd and Joyce were always very supportive of the development of their children, he being long term manager of Robert's Rugby team and building a high jump bar in the backyard using garden stakes set in large pineapple tins with a bamboo bar at the top for practice.

In 1956 delivery was taken of a 1956 Holden Bluebird Special and Lloyd learnt to drive and thus began the school holiday travels-to Adelaide at Christmas staying at Semaphore, a block from the beach- to the farm at Yorke Peninsular with family One very memorable trip was a hot trip back through Victoria. Lloyd remained calm at one stage the family pouring cold water over his head to keep him cool, with the car boiling every few miles and needing stops to cool down.

Lloyd and Joyce were involved in the building of St Marks Church of England Tambourine Bay in the mid 1950s. The Rev Alan Pattison was a strong influence at this time with many young families in the area. Lloyd joined the St Marks Men's Committee. He became the Sunday School Superintendent with over 200 children. Every year the church ran a Spring Fair and Lloyd always ran a stall and worked behind the scene with working bees, making pencil cases, decanting honey into jars and encouraging shopkeepers to donate prizes. Their association with St Marks lasted 30 years until it closed in 1985 when they became members of the St Aidans congregation

At this stage Lloyd decided to remain in the primary school system, moving to various schools and travelling many miles each day while continuing to live at Lane Cove. He went to Blacktown as Deputy Principal in 1957, mostly travelling by train and taught English to Dutch migrants one evening a week. From there he went to Hilltop road, Merrylands for a year then to Horsley Park in 1964 as Principal. This was a Maltese community-children worked in the market gardens before and after school. Lloyd introduced school uniforms to make everyone feel equal, started football and introduced sporting activities, even organising a Sydney harbour Ferry trip. Lloyd had a great impact on a school community, leading by example and providing opportunities for all to grow and develop.

In 1967 Lloyd went to Daceyville, a very innovative school with classes for autistic children and accelerated learning opportunities. At that time he was able to drive his own children to high school and university with all agreeing that the many traffic jams provided quality time together. Daceyville also had a renowned brass band which played at many functions around Sydney including the St Marks Fete. In 1974 Lloyd returned to Lane Cove Public School-this time as Principal and which was to be his last appointment.

During his career Lloyd received many cards and letters of appreciation and here are a few quotes.

*"I have really appreciated all the help you have given me during my 4 years on your staff. Your counsel and general guidance I have valued greatly. I hope I can follow your example and carry on as calmly in the years ahead."*

From a parent:

*We have been fortunate to have four children under your care and guidance. Your Christian principles have been so obvious in your professional practice and personal*



*standards and these will add to the esteem and affection with which you will be remembered. Your contribution to our nation's future by your guidance of the next generation's citizens has been great."*

A song from lane Cove Public School students (to the tune of Waltzing Matilda.)

*"Once there was a pedagogue  
And his name was Lloyd Coles  
He was the Principal of Lane Cove School  
He was loved and respected  
By parents, teachers, kids alike  
We know you'll be happy  
At last you'll be free."*

Music played a large part in the life of Lloyd Coles. He continued to play the violin and was a member of the Lane Cove Ensemble led by Charles Wentzel. He introduced music in all the schools where he taught. At lane Cove School he instigated visits by musicians to provide children with unique opportunities to develop their musical talent. A music prize is named after him at Lane Cove School. He was also instrumental in setting up the Lane Cove Orchestra which allowed adults and the primary school students to play together in a formal orchestra. In the late 60s and 70s he was the secretary of the Public School's Concert Committee led by Terry Hunt. They organised the choral concerts in the Sydney Town Hall and later the Sydney Opera House. The family continued to have several trips away together, many of them being caravanning. The most memorable was to far north Queensland and Cairns.

Four months before his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday Lloyd retired and commenced overseas holidays. The first was to the UK with a base in London, then came touring through Europe in 1981, the Canadian Rockies, a tour of Alaska in 1984 before returning to England and Ireland in 1986. Back in Australia he and Joyce travelled to outback Queensland, sailed to Thursday Island and back, a four wheel drive tour to Cape York and many short trips with his Probus Club. Certainly never a dull moment.

Here special mention should be made of Joyce's younger brother, Hilton Woodhouse, who was a large part of their lives together. Hilton and Lloyd were great mates and fellow Masons.

No story of Lloyd Coles could be complete without Joyce. She was his great companion, his best friend and above all the love of his life. She was by his side for 66 years devoted in her love and care for him. Her hard work allowed him the dignity of living his last few years in the family home, the strengths of each complementing the other.

In the words of a teacher at lane Cove Public School on his retirement;

*"He is a man who sends out ripples-ripples of wisdom-understanding-goodness, compassion and caring"*

Mervyn Lloyd Coles was Initiated, Passed and Raised on 25/9/1940, 22/11/1940 and 23/4/1941 respectively in Lodge Umberumberka No 141 UGL of NSW & ACT meeting at Broken Hill.. He was a Foundation Member of Lodge Advance No 695 meeting at Artarmon on 24/4/1947. After progressing through the offices of that Lodge he was installed as WM in April 1957.He called off that Lodge on 15/6/1983. He affiliated with Lodge Artarmon No 285 on 15/6/1983. He was installed as WM of that lodge on 18/5/1993. Lodges Artarmon and Advance consolidated on 29/2/1999 becoming Lodge Artarmon United No 695. Lloyd served as DGIW District No 10 for the term 1972/1974 and the rank of PGJW was conferred on 9/9/1983. Lloyd Coles received a 50 Year Certificate on 19/9/1990 and a 60 Year Certificate on 28/10/2000. Lloyd Coles died on 16/4/2012. He was survived by his wife, Joyce, daughter, Judith, son, Robert and their families.

Ref: Judith MacCallum and Robert Coles,;edited version of eulogy given at the funeral of Lloyd Coles.

Records UGL of NSW & ACT.



Right Wor. Bro. Mervyn Lloyd Coles  
Past Junior Grand Warden.

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