



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### Bro. Montague Thomas Archibald Wedd - Artist.

In the 1940's and 50's, buoyed by import restrictions, Australian comic books sold in their hundreds of thousands. Among the most popular was the masked vigilante Captain Justice, who fought bushrangers and "righted all wrongs" in colonial N.S.W.

Captain Justice didn't survive the return of the U.S.'s comic book stars, but his creator, Monty Wedd, went on to produce comic strips, pulp-magazine covers and the famous "Dollar Bill" character for the Decimal Currency Board, teaching Australians about the new currency in 1965-66.

A pioneer of Australian animation, he worked on Australia's first animated film, *Marco Polo Junior versus the Red Dragon* (1972).

Montague Thomas Archibald Wedd was born in Glebe on January 5, 1921, the son of Archibald and Minnie Wedd. Fresh out of Randwick High School, he designed furniture and drew advertisements for Grace Bros. He enlisted in the Army during World War II, later transferring to the R.A.A.F.

After the war, while at east Sydney Technical College, he created a French Foreign Legion cartoon strip, *Sword and Sabre*, which appeared in Syd Nicholl's popular *Middy Malone* magazine. In 1949, Wedd married Dorothy Jewell. At Nicholl's suggestion, he devised several more strips, including *Captain Justice*. His artwork was polished and realistic, but the most notable aspect was the period detail, which arose from his love of history.

Wedd created another popular comic book, *The Scorpion*, about a masked criminal. Years before anti-heroes became all the rage, *The Scorpion* struck a nerve, selling 100,000 copies in Australia. Yet in 1955, after only a year of publication, the character was banned by Queensland's Literature Board of Review. "The authorities objected to the Scorpion not being brought to justice," Wedd said, "but if he had been, I would not have had a series."

The distributor, Gordon and Gotch, washed its hands of the title, which was soon cancelled.

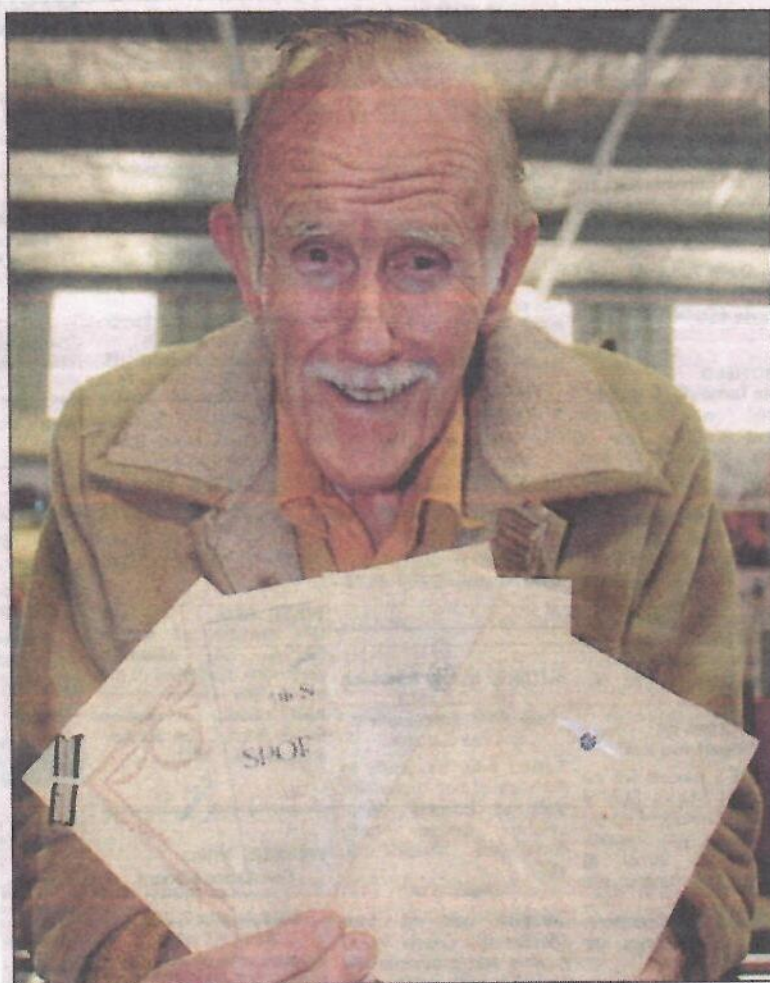
Wedd also painted covers for Australian pulp magazines featuring glamorous, scantily clad women, violent fights, or whatever other lurid scenes entered his imagination.

"They'd take the covers and find stories to go with them," he said.

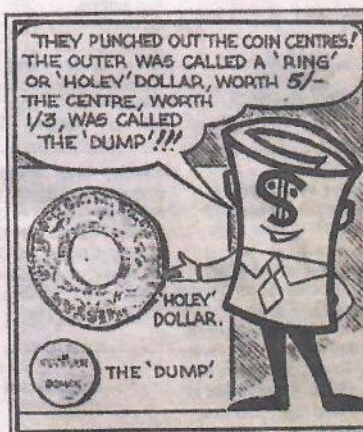
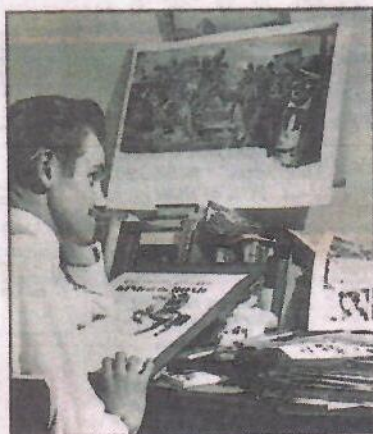
He turned his hand to animation at the Artransa studios in Frenchs Forest. He was a layout artist for Artransa for two decades, eventually handling classic comic book heroes, including Batman and Superman, in the fondly remembered *Súper Friends* T.V. series, which began in 1973.

In 1960, Wedd started the Monarch Historical Museum (Mon for Monty and Arch for Archibald) in Dee Why.

It is now at Williamstown, north of Newcastle, and run by his son Justin. Wedd also drew Australian military trading cards for the Golden Fleece fuel company, turning the project into a well-regarded reference book, *Australian Military Uniforms 1800-1982* (1982), for which he did both text and illustrations.



Animated ... (clockwise from main) Monty Wedd with RAAF memorabilia from his museum; his Dollar Bill creation; Wedd at work. Photos: Sarah Price, Fiona Morris



(Cont'd overpage).

Wedd's interest in history and comics merged in 1970 during the bicentenary of Britain's claim over Australia. Wedd did a popular comic-strip version of Cook's journal for *The Daily Mirror*.

He was then asked to do the Ned Kelly story. His 140-part "true crime" biography of Kelly was followed by a comic-strip rendition of the life of bushranger Bold Ben Hall, which ran for 400 weeks. Another long-running historical strip, *The Birth of a Nation*, was syndicated to coincide with Australia's bicentenary celebrations in 1988.

It was for his work as an historian, as much as for his artistic achievements, for which he was made an officer of the Order of Australia in 1993. In 2004, Wedd received the Silver Stanley Life-time Achievement Award from the Australian Cartoonists' Association.

Monty Wedd passed away in 2012 and he is survived by Dorothy, children Sandra, Justin, Warwick and Deborah, and their families.

Bro. Montague Thomas Archibald Wedd was made a Mason on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1946 in Lodge Randwick No. 388.

He was passed Fellowcraft on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1946 and raised a Master Mason on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1946.

He called off on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1967.

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