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**WOR. BRO. COLIN ALEXANDER PEDEN MUNRO O.A.M.  
ABC BROADCASTER**

**(1940 – 2010)**

The following article by Malcolm Brown appeared in *Timelines* in the *Sydney Morning Herald* Weekend edition of 11 – 12 December, 2010.

Colin Munro, who was to become a dominant figure in rural reporting in Australia, almost did not make it to dry land, given the circumstances of his prenatal life. Early in 1940, his mother, Barbara, pregnant with him, was in the second of three ships taking expectant mothers from England to Canada.

The first and third ships were torpedoed. It was fortunate for him and his mother that his ship was spared and for the millions of people in the vast reaches of regional Australia who would one day see him as their champion.

Colin Alexander Peden Munro was born in Montreal, Canada, on July 7, 1940, son of Colin Patrick Munro who, serving with the Cameronian Regiment in the British Army, had been captured as he fought a rearguard action in Dunkirk in June 1940.

Young Colin was briefly in Canada, then, through her mother's connections with the Australian Ambassador in Washington, Richard Casey, got her to the United States of America, then by flying boat to Sydney. Mother and child went to live with her father-in-law, the dean of law at the University of Sydney, Professor John Peden, in Chatswood. With his father surviving the war and returning to work for the Burns Philp Shipping Company, Munro went to Mowbray House School in Chatswood, to Sydney Grammar, then to Wagga Wagga Agricultural College.

After graduating, Munro went jackarooing in north Queensland, then thought he would try his hand at radio. Told by ABC Radio in Sydney he was too young, he went to Mount Gambier, South Australia, where he worked for a pastoral company developing properties in the state's south-east. He applied again to the ABC in 1964, was accepted and started a career that took him to virtually the whole of Australia, where he met scores of people and made lifelong friends. His association with the *Country Hour* was to last 40 years.

Munro met Lynnette "Muffy" Cameron at an agricultural college graduation and married her on March 14, 1970. The couple lived in Sydney and in Melbourne. A son, Colin, was born in 1973 and a daughter, Kirsty, in 1975. Munro was involved in the earlier series of ABC television's *A Big Country* and ABC Radio's *Morning Extra* with June Barton. He was promoted to head of the ABC's rural department in 1985. There he fought long and hard to keep the service to the bush going.

The national editor of ABC Rural, Leigh Radford, said: "There were periods when the very existence of ABC Rural was tenuous. But Colin fought to keep programs like the *Country Hour* and regional reports going.

In 1995, Munro took on a senior role in radio management. He continued his extensive travel, performing an ambassadorial role for the ABC, opening agricultural shows, cattle field days and similar events and launching books. In the latter days of his career, he hosted *Summer All Over*, filling in during the holiday period for *Australia All Over*.

The President of Rural Media South Australia, Ian Doyle, said: "When people rang from everywhere in Australia, he was capable of connecting with them. He knew someone in the local area, the name of the crossroads up the track, or who was running the local pub. He was a connoisseur of single-malt whisky and owned an impressive collection of tartan ties.

One of the many stories Munro told was of rural reporter Alec Nicholl, who interviewed a woman who had 13 children and ran the Kerragundie exchange on the Bourke-Cobar party line for 55 years. She had been so committed that when there was trouble in "station country" she would sleep beside the switchboard. Asked if she had ever been ill, she did not understand the question. Nicholl asked again and still she did not understand. Finally, he said: "Have you ever been bedridden?" To which she replied: "Oh yes Alec, hundreds of times – and twice in a sulky."

Munro supported the Royal Flying Doctor Service and in the early 1990's organized annual national ABC radio appeals to help fund the R.F.D.S. He sat on numerous boards, including Isolated Children's Parents Association, and was a past president of the Farm Writers Association of NSW and the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists. Mentored by the likes of R.M. Williams, he played a vital role in establishing the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach.

Munro retired five years ago and moved with his wife to Burrawang, NSW. Munro was recognized with a Queen's Birthday honour in 2007 "for service to regional Australia through the promotion and preservation of rural culture, particularly through television and radio broadcasting". His health declined markedly in his final year and he died at Moss Vale on November 29, 2010. Munro is survived by Muffy, his son and daughter, two grandchildren, another two about to be born and a small blue heeler, Oak, who, according to his son Colin, has been "the second great love of his life."

Wor. Bro. Colin Munro was made a Mason on 21 April 1972 in Lodge Duke of York No. 690 meeting at Turrumurra. He was passed Fellowcraft on 16 June 1972 and raised a Master Mason on 20 October 1972. He was Installed as Master of Lodge Duke of York No. 690 in September 1977.

The members of Lodge Duke of York surrendered the Warrant on 16 September 1983. Wor. Bro. Colin Munro, along with 30 other members, affiliated with Lodge Turrumurra No. 360. He called off on 6 October 1998 and died on 29 November 2010.

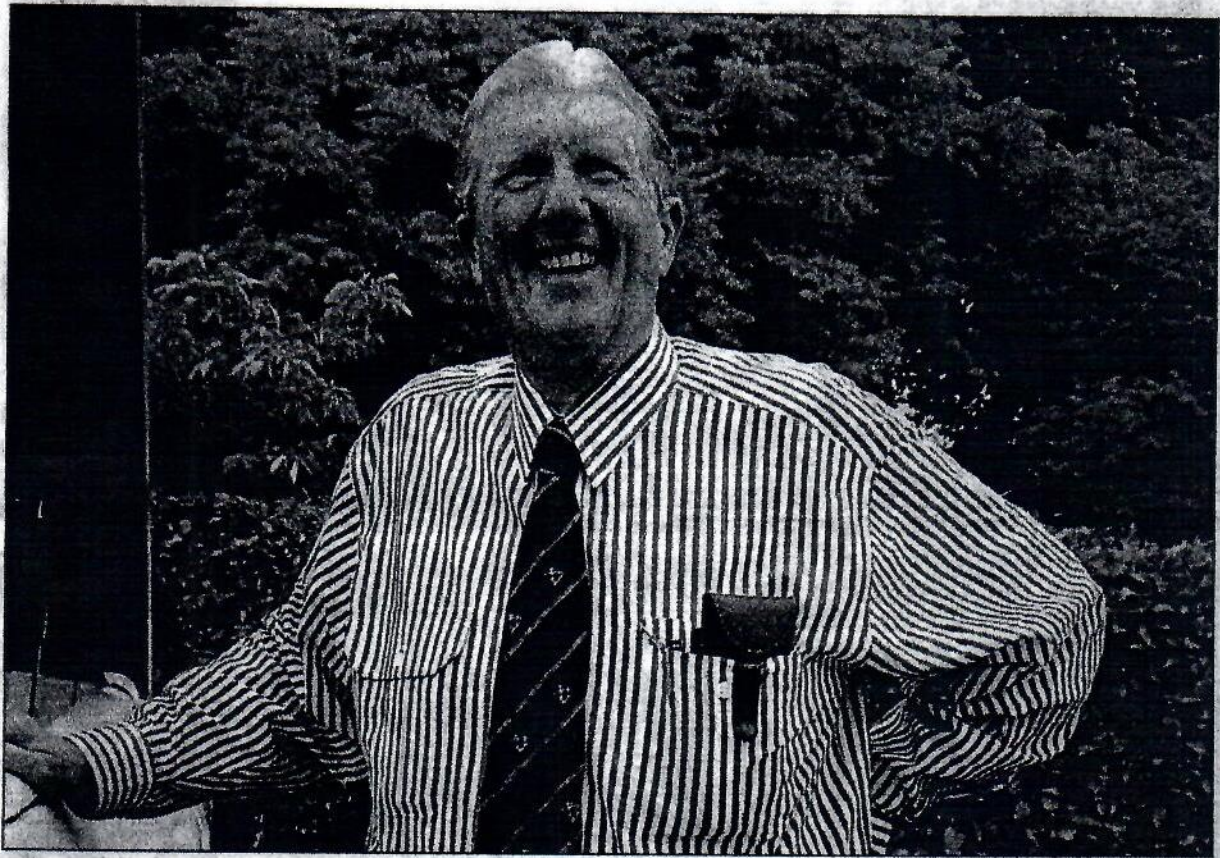
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#### REFERENCE:

Grahame H. Cumming - *Freemasonry in Turrumurra NSW., 1920 – 2000.,* Privately Published, Sydney, 2005.

COLIN MUNRO 1940 - 2010

# A champion of the rural airwaves



Outback man ... Colin Munro connected with rural Australians on a deep level.