



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER: No. 43

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DATE: 23 March 1998

BRO. JAMES FITZGERALD - ('JIM GERALD')

James Fitzgerald was born on 2nd January 1891 at Darlington in Sydney, the youngest of four sons of Australian born parents, Stephen Australia Fitzgerald, an actor, and Mary. His father was bitten by the acting bug and came to Sydney where he was a noted performer in old style melodramas. All four boys went on to the stage under the various names of "Max Clifton", "Lance Vane", "Cliff Stevens" and "Jim Gerald". Jim became a professional performer at the age of seven, having very little schooling and really receiving most of his education in the sandhills at the back of Centennial Park. He went there, while wagging school in the company of his brothers, to watch teams of professional acrobats and jugglers practice their craft. Not content with watching Jim pestered the performers to teach him the art of tumbling so that the age of seven he became a proficient tumbler and acrobat.

About this time Fitzgerald's Circus, owned by two of his uncles, came to town and Jim showed such talent and exuberance that a strongman in the circus, Oscar Pagel, persuaded Jim to join him in his act. Pagel was billed as the world's strongest man, claiming to be able to carry a horse up a ladder, support the weight of an elephant on his arched back and even wrestle a lion.

Jim, in 1898, at the age of seven went to Africa, Asia and North America with Oscar Pagel's Circus, touring for ten years, before returning to Australia in 1908. He was then a tumbler as well as a trick motor cyclist. It was claimed that Jim could do sixty somersaults in sixty seconds on a trampoline. He worked with several circuses under the name of Diabolo and was billed as the first person in the world to loop the loop in a globe on a motor cycle. An extra dimension was added to this by having gates snapping open on the globe just after the motor cycle had passed. In later years Jim Gerald often said that, not surprisingly, he had broken just about every bone in his body during these trick motor cycle performances. In 1912, while touring in Queensland with Frank Barton's circus, Jim was driving one of the big wagons with circus equipment on board. He was so interested in circus talk that he did not notice trucks in front swerving to avoid overhanging trees with the result that the truck crashed, the performers were thrown out and the truck was smashed beyond repair. As he was unable to pay for the repairs Jim then quit Barton's circus. He returned to acrobatics and added wire walking to his repertoire performing on the booming vaudeville circuit. In 1913 while performing in Adelaide he was supposed to somersault off a table on to a chair, go over again and land lightly on his feet in the orchestra pit. One night he slipped, crashed and was knocked unconscious. When he recovered he

