

ROGER WILSON 50TH – JULY 14TH 2021

BY RIGHT WORSHIPFUL GARRY SEBO AM PGM

Introduction

Brethren who I know well, who have been fantastic contributors to the Craft in every sense of the word, and not only to the Craft but also to the Community as well. W. Bro. Roger Buick Wilson OAM well and truly fits into this second category.

Early Years

Roger is one of eight children. He was educated at Brighton Grammar and Monash University. While at Brighton Grammar he became school captain in 1962 and commenced his lifelong love affair with Brighton Grammar and the sport of rowing to which I will return later.

Work

Roger has been 'retired' since 2007, although even now 14 years later he still carries out consulting and mentorship roles, especially with the Victorian Small Business Mentoring Service. His last full-time role in employment was at the helm of Forty Winks Franchising for 21 years – a very well-known retail bedding chain which grew from 17 to 93 stores under Roger's stewardship. He has also been President of the Victorian Franchise Council and a director of the National Board of the Franchise Council of Australia.

Rowing

I briefly mentioned rowing earlier. Roger started rowing while he was a student at Brighton Grammar. He clearly had some talent as an oarsman, having won an Australian Rowing Championship at Ballarat in 1966.

He became involved with coaching very soon after he left school, and from 1964 to 1979 he coached rowing at Brighton Grammar, including five years as coach of the first eight and Roger Coached at Mercantile Rowing Club for several years and he has been Vice President of Mercantile Rowing Club for over 20 years

He is known in Australia as "The Voice of Rowing" and this is not surprising. He has:

- Commentated on course and ABC Grandstand Radio at 43 Kings Cups and National Rowing Championships from 1973 to 2016,

and 46 APS Head of the River events in Victoria from 1973 to 2021.

- Commented for the ABC at four Olympic Games and four World Rowing Championships plus all major rowing regattas in Victoria.
- Commented at the 1990 Rowing Championships at Lake Barrington Tasmania and the 2014 World Rowing Masters Championships at Lake Ballarat, where he was the main course commentator on both occasions.

Roger has been a journalist on rowing with the Melbourne Herald and Age, the Weekly Times and AAP for more than 30 years.

In 2000 he received the Australian Sports Medal for services to rowing, being one of 2000 in all sports throughout Australia and only one of two in Victoria for rowing. Roger, is also a Life Member of Rowing Victoria

Community

Roger has had numerous Community involvements.

He is a Past President of the Beaumaris Probus Club and is still very actively involved running the Wine Appreciation Group and organising the Probus Pub Lunches for that Club.

He attends Church and was Chairman of the Uniting Church in Beaumaris for five years.

He was Group Leader and District Commissioner for Scouting in the Mordialloc District for 13 years.

For seven years Roger has been the Patron of the Flying Doctor Rowathon which is rowed over 82 kms in a day on the Murray and Darling Rivers at Wentworth in NSW.

And for 43 years he has been the compere and convenor of the Beaumaris Community Christmas Eve Carols.

Sporting

Apart from his rowing exploits, Roger also found time to play 214 games of football with the Old Brighton Grammarians Football Club and he is a Life member of that Club. He still regularly attends their home matches, as a spectator of course!

He is a sports fanatic who is keen on horse racing, bike riding and swimming in the sea. He has been a member of the Kingston Heath Golf Club for 30 years and plays golf regularly.

Roger is proud of the fact that he has attended every VFL (now AFL) Grand Final since 1956, except for the 2020 GF, which was held in Brisbane because of Covid.

The only blot, and it is a significant blot, on his sporting interests is the fact that he is a passionate supporter of the Collingwood Football Club. I need say no more.

Freemasonry

Roger commenced his Masonic journey on 14 August 1970 when he was initiated in Lodge Henley which was, in those days, 'the rowing Lodge'. He affiliated with Brighton Grammarians' Lodge on 14 July 1976 and remained with that Lodge until the formation of United Schools' Lodge on 25 November 2017. He has been active with United Schools since its inception. While a member of Brighton Grammarians' he was WM in 1994, 1995, 2000 and 2004. He was also SW in 2013 and 2015, and JW in 1993 and 2014. He has also served terms as Chaplain and Almoner of that Lodge.

Roger joined the Sandringham Mark Lodge in February 2000, and he has been the Welfare Officer of that Lodge for very many years. He joined the Sandringham Royal Ark Mariner Lodge in October 2011, and has been the Treasurer of that Lodge, also for many years. He is also the Welfare Officer which is permitted by the Constitution in that degree. Finally, he joined the Sandringham (now Bayside) Chapter in September 2013, and he is the Welfare Officer of that Chapter. I would add that Roger is the most diligent Almoner/Welfare Officer that I have seen in my 57 years in Freemasonry.

OAM

In June 2009 Roger was awarded the Order of Australia Medal, primarily for services to the sport of rowing, but also for his services to business and to the community.

Halls of Fame

In 2006 Roger was inducted into the Franchise Council of Australia Hall of Fame, of which there are only 37 inductees.

He has also been inducted into the Brighton Grammar Hall of Fame and The Rowing Victoria Hall of Fame

These are great honours for Roger and, judging by the brief resumes I have given this evening, they are honours that he richly deserves.

Roger has been on the Selection Committees for each of these Halls of Fame.

Family

Roger has been happily married to Margaret for 51 years. They have three daughters, Andrea, Juli and Mardi and six grandchildren, all of whom he adores.