

CHAPTER 17

PROFILE – PATRICK W. MEDWAY AM

‘Vincent wanted to nominate me for the position of President. I was very honoured, and felt that I could carry on his proud tradition of service to the Society and its vital mission to save our native wildlife.’

Patrick Medway

It would appear like a giant leap sideways, or perhaps a turn through one hundred and eighty degrees, for a man to change his career from traffic duty and chasing escaped murderers, to being a director of a bird sanctuary. Yet that is what Patrick Medway did, among many other things. However, such an apparent about-face is not inconsistent with early influences in his life and we could draw a parallel with a similar influence in the life of Thistle Harris. A teacher at Thistle’s school took the young girl to a meeting of the Naturalists’ Society and not only did she meet David Stead, but she entered into her life-long commitment to wildlife and the Australian environment.

Patrick’s earliest recollection and appreciation of the natural world was as a child attending the Merimbula Public School during the 1950s. The influence there was the Principal, Mr Jack Lynch, who was a keen member of the Gould League of Bird Lovers. Natural history classes were a joy for Patrick, and Lynch encouraged the children to plant native trees in the school grounds to feed the local birdlife. Bird baths were placed in the grounds and a bird’s nest was treated with respect – no eggs could be stolen.

When Patrick moved from primary school to Bega High School, he was still influenced by Jack Lynch. Patrick’s most vivid memory of this fine man was his astute step to encourage the local children to form a Bird Call Team to compete in the famous Bird Call Championships in Sydney. This was a challenge for a small group of country kids, but eventually they knew the calls of every bird in the area and practised every day. In 1954 the children travelled to Sydney where they won both team and individual championships against all other contestants.

EARLY FAMILY YEARS

Patrick Winston Medway was born in the Devonian Private Hospital in Yass, New South Wales on 19 October 1940 and was the first born in the family. It is said that he was a little spoilt by his grandparents on every occasion.

When Patrick was about three years old, the family, which then included sister Wendy Patricia, settled in Merimbula on the far south coast of New South Wales where his father became a professional fisherman working from a small open boat out of Lake Merimbula. All fish caught were sent to the fish factory at Eden or to the Melbourne fish markets for sale.

Another brother, Jack Allen, and two more sisters, Suzzette and Andrea, were later born at Pambula Hospital near Merimbula.

Patrick's early experience in sea faring was not very successful as he became violently sea-sick the moment the boat moved out past the bar and headed out to the deep water ocean. Despite many valiant attempts at part-time ocean fishing during his early school days, he decided that fishing and the ocean life were not for him.

Patrick's father, Jack, now lives in retirement in Merimbula and tends his garden every day. Unlike his father, Patrick wanted a land job with lots of adventure and an opportunity to study birds and nature.

CHURCH INFLUENCE

Being a member of the local Anglican Church, Patrick was also strongly influenced by the concept of caring for God's creation or the natural world and all the birds and animals contained therein. 'I guess the idea of living in harmony in a mystical Garden of Eden appealed to me! I have since learned that many of the founders of the Society had strong Christian beliefs and commitment to preserving the wildlife of the natural world,' he said.

Patrick has been involved in the Anglican church all his life and involves many of the church people in wildlife conservation projects such as tree plantings, Clean-up Australia programs and, of course, membership of the Society.

Patrick's other interest at the time was as a member of the 1st Merimbula Boy Scouts where bush-craft and survival in the bush and living off the land were all strong influences on his thinking. The Scouts spent much time wandering the hills, valleys and coastline around the township of Merimbula, bird watching and generally exploring the countryside. They all developed a great love of the bush and this was reflected into love of country as well.

STARTING A CAREER

Patrick was an ardent student of bird life in his youth, but the later appointment to Currumbin Bird Sanctuary was way off in the future. He left Bega High School in November 1957 and became a NSW Police Cadet, training at the NSW Police Training Centre at Redfern for two years to become a police officer. The Cadets spent two hours each day at the Police Training Centre and then travelled to special branches or metropolitan police stations to gain further practical experience. With an interest in the conservation of Australia's native wildlife already well developed, he now became more conscious of the actual laws, regulations and legislation designed to protect the Australian native fauna and flora.

MILITARY SERVICE

In 1958 at the age of eighteen years Patrick joined the Citizens Military Forces or Army Reserve and trained as a Commando in the 1st Battalion City of Sydney's Own Regiment at George's Heights, Mosman. As a commando it was all about physical

fitness and survival under a wide range of conditions, including bush-craft, navigating, swimming, camouflage and concealment.

Coming from the country with a great interest in bush-craft, independence and the natural environment, the training and discipline all seemed to be very natural to him. While the training was hard, the sense of purpose of being physically fit and adventurous was enjoyable, along with the challenges associated with the training program - rock climbing, canoeing the Hawkesbury, endurance marches, rifle shooting and survival in the bush, living off rations and surviving as a team and reaching your objective. This experience of moving around the countryside was all part of the great adventure.

POLICE SERVICE

After graduating from the NSW Police Training Centre as a Probationary Constable in November 1959, the Class was immediately dispatched to the Wyong area on the Central Coast to assist in tracking down two dangerous prison escapees. The two convicted murderers, Simmonds and Newcombe, escaped from Long Bay Gaol and went to Penrith Prison and murdered a warden coming off duty. It was a most horrible crime and the media were in full cry for the Police to catch the two escapees. The police were armed with side arms and rifles and worked in teams up to twelve hours each day from 7am to 7pm and then rotated to 7pm to 7am in the evenings along the Central Coast area. One escapee, Newcombe, was caught back in Sydney and Simmonds was finally arrested hiding under a building in the Wyong area. Bush craft, tracking skills and sense of adventure was certainly put to the test in this exercise!

After a period on inner city traffic duty, general duties at Newtown and the Police Prosecuting Branch, Patrick was transferred to the Communication Branch at NSW Police Headquarters and from there to the Public Relations Branch of the NSW Police Department. He then spent some seven years at Police Headquarters in Phillip and Hunter Streets in Sydney working as a Departmental Public Relations Officer. They later moved to the newly renovated Police Headquarters at 64 Bridge Street serving under Commissioner Norman Thomas William Allan through the 1960s.

This specialist experience gave Patrick a wider understanding of the role of the media, publications and print production, advertising and promotions and how the public service operated. He also undertook TAFE and then university studies during this time to further his career in the public service.

OVERSEAS SERVICE

While at Police Headquarters in April 1964 Patrick volunteered for service with the Commonwealth Police (now the Australian Federal Police). A civil war had broken out in the former British Colony of Cyprus in the Mediterranean after they gained their independence from Britain in 1960.

The Prime Minister of Australia, Hon. Robert Gordon Menzies, when asked by the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization for assistance, agreed to offer trained Australian police officers to serve as peacekeepers in another Commonwealth country to help restore law and order out of the civil war. As the Commonwealth Police Force was quite small at the time and did not have sufficient trained officers, the Prime Minister then asked the various state premiers and their state governments to second trained police officers from their police forces to make up the forty strong 1st Australian Police Contingent to serve with the United Nations Forces in Cyprus to help restore peace to that troubled land.

Ten police officers were chosen from New South Wales and Victoria. Five were chosen from Queensland and South Australia and three from Western Australia. Two were chosen from Tasmania and one from the Northern Territory and three from the Commonwealth Police Forces, including the Contingent Commander, Inspector James Hamilton. The selected police officers were then transferred to Canberra for further briefings and training for service with the United Nations Forces in Cyprus - UNFICYP. Some 5,000 troops from seven countries and 400 trained police officers from five countries - Australia, New Zealand, Austria, Denmark and Sweden - were selected and trained to handle the criminal investigations into the civil unrest resulting from the civil war. 'This was a great personal and professional experience for me and opened my eyes to a whole new world of adventure,' Patrick said.

Patrick thoroughly enjoyed the travel to new countries and was always on the lookout for new birds and animals in his journeys. He was thrilled to see wild flamingos for the first time feeding in the salt lakes near Larnaka on the southern shores of Cyprus. Cyprus was on the flight path of a wide range of migratory birds that flew from North Africa to southern Europe each year. This experience exposed him to a wider range of birds and animals as well as the environmental issues of these areas, especially desertification and pollution.

During his service with the UN Forces in Cyprus and on further short terms of duty in the Middle East, he travelled extensively through Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Apart from his official duties, his other interest was always in the local fauna and flora, with a strong interest in the wider natural environment. The desert areas of the Middle East amazed him and clearly indicated the neglect of mankind in not caring for the natural environment properly. He was often told that thousands of years ago large forests covered all the mountain ranges throughout Turkey, Lebanon and through to the mountains of Israel, with many Holy Bible references mentioning the forests and its wildlife. The mountains of Lebanon were once covered with forests of fine cedar trees with many birds and animals inhabiting the area.

On completing his official United Nations Organization duties, Patrick travelled back to Australia the long way round - via Greece, Italy, Switzerland, France and the United Kingdom, before going through the United States of America. This afforded him a wonderful opportunity to visit many new and exciting special places of interest to him such as some of the notable zoological gardens, national parks and nature reserves of the world.

FURTHER STUDIES AND A CHANGE OF CAREER

On arriving back at Police Headquarters in Sydney Patrick undertook more university studies to further advance his career in the NSW Police Force.

After studying Criminology at the University of Sydney Law School and then gaining his Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from University of Technology Sydney and a Diploma in Public Relations with Credit, Patrick was interested in moving on further in his career. All this time he was still very interested in things environmental and wildlife in all its forms and built up a very large library of books and literature on birds, animals and the environment.

Later, on further promotion in the NSW Police Force, he was transferred to the Burwood Police Station to gain wider practical police leadership experience. Working at the 'front end' of community policing after years of administration at Police Headquarters was a challenge - arresting drunks, car thieves, breaking up fights, domestic brawls, supervising staff and administering a Police district on long shifts was demanding.

By this time Patrick was married with four children and this too placed extra demands on his time and career. As a family they travelled extensively throughout New South Wales, often visiting the many national parks, nature reserves, historic sites 'off the beaten track' sites for bird watching and camping.

With these extra professional university qualifications, Patrick was successful in gaining a promotional position in the NSW Department of Education, Head Office, at 35 Bridge Street, Sydney, as the Public Relations Officer for the Department. Later he was promoted to the role of Community Relations Manager for the Department with state-wide responsibilities for a community relations program, media advertising, events promotions and marketing, a wide range of community activities, including Education Week and Royal Tours to Sydney.

This was a busy and very rewarding time in his career and he was able to derive personal and professional satisfaction in this field. For his work, commitment and professional experience as a State Councillor of the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA), he was honoured with a Fellowship of the Institute on the 8 November 1995.

During this time he worked at 35 Bridge Street and lived through the industrial relations problems of the mid 1970s with teacher's strikes and street demonstrations against the government. This was also the time of the Vietnam War and the anti-war demonstrations which permeated into the school education system.

It was in the 1970s that the Department of Education moved towards a greater emphasis on teaching the natural sciences in schools, and environmental education studies were eventually added to the curriculum. During this time Patrick became more actively involved in environmental education, and wildlife preservation in particular. He arranged for each of the new field studies centres to have distinct logos and helped prepare information brochures for each centre.

The Department's recommendation was that this new discipline should not be a separate subject, but one aspect or component of all subjects in the curriculum. At the same time, in the late 1970s, field studies centres were opened at various sites all over Australia, such centres later to be known as environmental education centres. Experienced teachers were appointed to these centres, set up in various habitats and catering for visits of one day or several days.

STUDY TOURS

In early 1985 Patrick organised an extensive five month's study tour of northern Australia and spent some three months in and around the Kakadu National Park studying native bird life. He travelled in a convoy of other bird enthusiasts from Sydney to Darwin via Adelaide and through the Red Centre, visiting many rare and unusual bird locations found only in the outback of Australia. These included Lake Eyre, Ayer's Rock, the Olga's and Kings Canyon, Katherine Gorge, Mataranka Springs, Borroloola and the Gulf of Carpentaria, Macarthur River and finally Kakadu National Park.

Over the years he has taken a number of study tours both throughout Australia and overseas to investigate environmental educational facilities and institutions to learn more about how others are protecting and preserving their natural environment.

One such tour was to the United Kingdom to visit Slimbridge in 1987. On the way over Patrick and Suzanne visited many zoological parks and gardens and famous bird parks in Singapore, Thailand, New Delhi, the Bharatpur Wildlife Sanctuary near Agra in India, then Cairo and its zoological gardens, through Israel and Cyprus and on to Athens, Belgrave, Zagreb, Weiss, Hamburg, Copenhagen and finally on to London Zoo and the London Zoological Institute.

In Slimbridge Patrick met with a number of people who had visited Australia and were now working at Slimbridge centres. Joseph Blossom was a Director at Slimbridge and, while in Australia in 1986, visited Patrick at the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary and invited him back to see Sir Peter Scott's famous wildfowl and wetland centres in the United Kingdom.

While Slimbridge is the main headquarters for the program, seven other centres are spread around the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, all open to the public with a special emphasis on school children visitation.

Here he was able to meet with the Founder of the Wildfowl Trust, Sir Peter Scott, who was also a friend of Vincent Serventy. The two men were able to discuss at length wildlife conservation issues.

During the study tour of the United Kingdom Patrick and Suzanne were able to visit many zoological gardens and wildlife parks and gardens to observe and learn how other authorities conducted their business. During this tour they also visited many other establishments, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds facilities and grounds throughout the United Kingdom. Bird observing is a major pastime in the United Kingdom and they have wonderful facilities for observers.

CURRUMBIN BIRD SANCTUARY APPOINTMENT

In late 1985 Patrick was successful in gaining a temporary appointment to the National Trust of Queensland as the Director of the famous Currumbin Bird Sanctuary on the Gold Coast of Queensland. This new position was advertised nationally and he applied and sought approval for a secondment from his department to the National Trust of Queensland for the two year appointment to upgrade and modernise the wildlife sanctuary, which had been experiencing a downturn in business for some time. The Sanctuary was founded by Alex Griffiths as a backyard garden in 1947 and grew into a world famous bird and wildlife park on Australia's major tourist coastline. Visitors from all over the world come to the Currumbin Sanctuary every day to witness the 'wild bird feeding' each morning and afternoon when the wild rainbow lorikeets fly in to feed on the honey mixture set up in the grounds by the staff.

This was again a very professionally rewarding experience for Patrick and he was able to put into practice many of the business and management practices that enabled the re-development of this wildlife sanctuary to be upgraded and modernised for a growing clientele. His emphasis was again towards creating an environmental education program and facility. This was coupled with sound business practices in line with the National Trust policy of making the facility pay its way in a local commercial environment.

This ideal was readily achieved after some six months of hard work when they were able to start turning the attendance figures around and making some major renovations. They developed a forward planning program, environmental education programs run by professionally trained teachers and generally smartened up the whole place. The school attendance figures grew remarkably and helped create a recovery of attendance to the Currumbin Sanctuary.

Quality staff training programs managed to bring the workforce in line with the high expectations of the Gold Coast tourist industry and business started to grow dramatically. Patrick became active in the local Chamber of Commerce and this networking helped business to flourish among the local tourist attractions.

When his contract expired in 1987, Patrick and his wife Suzanne decided to travel to the United Kingdom on an environmental educational study tour before returning home to Sydney and back to the NSW Department of Education. The experience of travelling through Europe and the United Kingdom and then working for some time in the Education and Interpretation section in Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetland Centre, added to Patrick's professional understanding of wildlife management issues at an international level.

On their return to Sydney, Patrick was appointed to the Curriculum and Educational Programs Directorate of the Department of School Education at Smalls Road, Ryde, and later as Manager of the Schools VIP Business Programs at North Sydney.

After gaining his Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of New South Wales in 1991, he was appointed as Manager, Education and Business Program for the Metropolitan East Region at Hurstville with some sixty local high schools to work with. This was a challenging but rewarding experience in education and afforded him many opportunities for contacts throughout the southern regions of Sydney.

FREEMASONRY

After an extensive career in the military and police, including overseas service, and working with police colleagues, Patrick was drawn to the all male organisation of Freemasonry. He was initiated into Lodge Malvern No. 609 in October 1966 in the Croydon Masonic Temple at Croydon, Sydney. He has remained an active member ever since, taking the Chair of the Lodge in 1971 and later serving as the District Grand Inspector of Workings for District 35A with some twelve hundred masons in fifteen Masonic Lodges meeting regularly at Croydon. He was promoted to Past Junior Grand Warden in 1985 and on the closure of Lodge Malvern, he joined Rockdale United No. 574 meeting in the Rockdale Masonic Hall in Bay Street, Rockdale.

His continued active involvement in the charity and community service ideals of Freemasonry saw him promoted to the rank of Past Assistant Grand Master in 2005. He is still active in developing a new St George Regional Masonic Centre. Today he is an active member of The St George Lodge No 328 meeting at Bexley Masonic Hall and Lodge St Andrew No. 7 meeting at Hurstville.

BRIGHTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

With a strong commitment to community service, Patrick and Suzanne have been members of the Brighton Chamber of Commerce for some years. They are also very conscious that in order to maintain an active community involvement for the Society there is a need to gain support among the local community where the Society has been working to establish the Ecoworld Gardens project.

Patrick was elected President of the Chamber in 2007 and is very active in local community and business affairs in the St George area as its President today.

CHANGE OF PACE

In 1993, after several major reshuffles as a result of the Scott Review into the NSW Education Department, Patrick decided to retire and go into private practice in environmental education. Working as a private consultant gave him more time and an opportunity to do more for the Society and his ongoing interest in wildlife preservation and habitat protection.

The new working arrangement gave Vincent and Patrick the opportunity to spend long hours discussing and planning out how the Society might be able to perform better and achieve more for wildlife conservation.

After initiating the upgrade of the *Australian Wildlife* magazine to communicate with Society members across Australia, it became obvious that the Society had to raise funds to do more for wildlife conservation in Australia.

Patrick drafted a proposal to brighten up the public image of the Society by trying to promote the aims and objectives to a wider cross section of the community and the media with wildlife information leaflets, a membership brochure and a revised letterhead with the new echidna logo. This was adopted by the Council and used widely by Vincent and Patrick in their outreach program to promote the conservation work of the Society.

Vincent and his family moved from Hunters Hill to his dream place at Pearl Beach on the Central Coast where he continued his hard work for the Society. He came down for the regular Council meetings of the Society every month and during the time between meetings the two men talked on the telephone often.

By 2000 Vincent was starting to feel his age and Patrick was encouraged to take over more of the administration work involved in running the Society. His wife, Suzanne, who retired from the workforce in 1999, joined him in the office, taking over much of the administration and membership records of the Society, as well as updating the publications. After a short time Suzanne became Editor of *Australian Wildlife* and took over production of the magazine.

A wonderful birthday party was organised by Patrick and Suzanne in the Memorial Hall at Pearl Beach in 2006 to mark Vincent's 91st birthday and a very large crowd of Councillors from the Society, family and friends gathered to celebrate the occasion with him.

CHAIRING TOWRA POINT STEERING COMMITTEE

In 1999, Patrick took over as Chairman of the Towra Point Steering Committee to rehabilitate the beach area of Towra Point Nature Reserve. At the time he was also President of Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve, which was set up to support the rehabilitation work on the reserve.

Under his chairmanship, the Towra Point Nature Reserve Plan of Management was adopted, funds were raised through the NSW Environmental Trust Fund and the project was successfully completed in December 2004.

The Society received a certificate of commendation in 2005 from the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation in recognition of the significant contribution made by the Society to this major project.

CHANGE OVER OF EXECUTIVE

By 2001 Vincent advised Patrick that he was ready to step down as President and wanted to nominate him for this position. 'I was very honoured and felt that I could carry on his proud tradition of service to the Society and its vital mission to save our native wildlife', Patrick said.

In taking up the office of National President in 2002, he was very fortunate to have his wife Suzanne agreed to take on the role of Honorary Secretary of the Society. With her professional business and administration background, her skills proved invaluable to the work of the Society. She set about reorganising the filing and office systems, took over as Publications Officer and introduced modern business practice for the Society's operation. Suzanne also created a new website for the Society.

The upgrading of the *Australian Wildlife* magazine to a full colour edition for the Centenary was one of Suzanne's crowning achievements. The new coloured magazine was very well received by Society members and it has now acted as a major recruitment publication because of its high quality presentation. At the start of the Centenary year in 2009, Suzanne launched a fortnightly email newsletter to the members across Australia who are on the internet. This is proving a faster means of communication and includes coloured pictures of wildlife issues.

NSW NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL

After Vin Serventy's retirement as President in 2002, Patrick replaced him on the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) where he had been serving the Society for many years. Patrick served for some five years on the Council of the NCC and helped raise the profile of the wildlife conservation work of the Society among members of this Council. The NCC was formed in 1957 to represent all conservation and environmental groups in a wide range of conservation issues and to liaise with government. 'Our involvement with the Council is important as we can influence the council members and its wider membership in taking a more active role in wildlife preservation issues. While most issues are of a conservation nature, some do not always have a wildlife focus. We regularly attend the annual meetings and conferences of the Nature Conservation Council and make submissions where it is considered necessary. At the last NCC Annual Conference we had three important conservation issues on the agenda for consideration.'

The Society also maintains contact with the other state conservation bodies such as the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, the Western Australia Nature Conservation Council and the Natural History Society of South Australia.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA AWARD

In 2003 Patrick was honoured with the appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia - AM - for his contribution to environmental education and leadership to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia. 'This was a thrilling experience for me

personally and a great tribute to the members of the Society as a whole for their incredible commitment to wildlife preservation and habitat protection’, Patrick said.

MODERNISING THE WORK OF THE SOCIETY

The Society’s office has now structured the administration work of the Society on a seven days per week basis, available twenty four hours a day, with modern telephone and computerised systems to take calls at all times. Suzanne and Patrick are able to achieve this by working together and with the added aid of mobile phones and remote computer access.

In 2008 the Society engaged a part time office assistant for the first time to help take some of the hard work off the volunteers who have always carried the load to date. Pam Parsons was appointed to assist the office work of the Society. Pam had a strong accounting and record keeping background and provided the office structure with invaluable assistance.

CURRENT VISION

Patrick’s current vision is to put the wildlife conservation work of the Society on a sound and sustainable financial basis and to establish a permanent home or headquarters for the Society in Sydney. He has been working with the Rockdale City Council since 1994 to bring the Ecoworld Gardens Project into reality as a National Headquarters for the ongoing conservation work of the Society as an environmental education centre set in a delightful botanic garden for all visitors to enjoy.

‘The future of the Society looks exciting and positive as we move into the second century since the founding of the Society in Sydney back in May 1909,’ the confident words of National President Medway in 2009.