

## FAREWELL RAY TYSON

On Monday 30th May, I attended a special funeral. It was a full NSW Police Funeral for Mr Ray Tyson. This funeral was special because of the calibre of the man being remembered.

Ray Tyson was a part of Sydney history who moved on to become part of the fabric of NSW. Ray was one of the founding Police Officers of the NSW Police Rescue Squad. It is hard to believe that as late as World War II there was no dedicated, skilled rescue squad for the people of NSW. A rigger from the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Harry Ware, was asked to join the NSW Police as the rescue officer for the NSW Police Cliff Rescue Squad.

In 1943, Constable Ray Tyson was selected to train with Harry Ware in cliff rescue. In this far smaller Sydney city and less populous NSW Sgt. Harry Ware and Constables Bill Fahey and Ray Tyson performed many rescues throughout Sydney, the Blue Mountains and beyond.

"The Gap" at South Head became known as 'the suicide spot' for Sydney. Body retrieval was real hero stuff. Many memorable press photos were taken of Ray as he descended the cliffs seated on the wooden plank of the boson's chair (no safety harness around the body) within the cumbersome cliff rescue machine.

Modern materials have made rescue equipment comparatively light and compact. Far stronger nylon Kermantle rope has replaced the thicker, heavier manilla rope that teams of Policemen would hold. Modern climbing ascenders (Jumars etc) and descenders (Whaletails, Racks etc) were yet to be invented so brute force was used to control ascent and descend of the boson's chair. More manilla ropes would control the heavy three metre high "A" frame of steel poles as it was made to lean out over the cliff so as to get the boson's chair clear of the rock face.

Police Rescue was not just cliff rescue but included rescue of persons trapped in motor vehicles, trains, industrial and domestic situations. On many occasions, bushwalkers from the Search and Rescue of the Federation (now Confederation) of Bushwalking Clubs were utilised by Ray Tyson of the NSW Police Rescue Squad.

In 1960, Sgt. Ray Tyson became Officer in Charge of the NSW Police Rescue Squad, and his name became synonymous with rescue. Around this time concerned citizens in some NSW country towns sought to establish volunteer rescue squads. The State Emergency Services (SES) was yet to exist. NSW was still in the era of "Civil Defence". Sgt. Tyson was called upon to help train these volunteer rescue squads. Ray saw that some formal organisation of these volunteer rescue squads really was required to standardise training and provide a representative voice to the NSW Government.

In 1969, he played a major role in assisting four country volunteer rescue squads (Albury, Dubbo, Parkes and Wagga Wagga) to establish the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA). Ray liaised with the NSW Police Commissioner to arrange for the first VRA Annual Conference to be held in the NSW Police Training Academy at

Redfern. In May 1970, the Search and Rescue Section of Federation (now known as Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad - BWRS) joined the VRA. The VRA now represents 74 volunteer rescue squads and is presently the second largest provider of primary rescue in NSW!

In 1976 Ray retired from the NSW Police and was appointed the honorary Director of Training and Patron for the VRA. He shared his vast rescue experience with VRA Squads all over NSW via his "TTT" (Tyson's Terrific Tours). Ray's TTTs continued for seventeen (17) years during which time he typically would drive 70,000 or more kilometres per year as helped nurture the VRA. "Father" was the nickname he acquired and answered to. The current VRA Director of Training, Harvey Black was guided and nurtured by Ray to a standard he could not have envisioned. It was my pleasure in the early days of NavShield to introduce Ray Tyson each year to present the major awards. Ray remained a proud Patron of the VRA up to his death.

The NSW Police Commissioner, Ken Moroney and the foundation President of the VRA, Max Walters, both spoke with feeling at Ray's funeral. Traffic was halted outside the church for the guard of honour of NSW Police and VRA personnel. Two VIP Police motor cyclists lead the hearse. It was a privilege to represent BWRS in this guard of honour.

Ray TYSON OAM, ESM, KPFSM, BEM; 19 / 02 / 1916 - 25 / 05 / 2005.

Keith Maxwell, President BWRS.