

'Lifting the lid'

My great-great Grandfather, **James Long**, who arrived in **Australia** in 1851 from **Ireland**, was a prominent **Freemason**, officiating as Master of Lodges at **Ballarat East** and **Portland**. He was a confectioner and biscuit maker.

My maternal Grandfather, **Bert Lawrence**, and his son, **Jack**, were members of the **St Crispin's** Lodge in **Melbourne**, where many members of the leather industry met monthly.

My late father-in-law, **Bill Tunzi**, a fitter-and-turner who was born a **Catholic**, was a member of the **Masonic Lodge** at **Whittlesea**.

They joined with men of many backgrounds at their **Lodges**.

Peter Lazar's book, **It's No Secret**, explains "Over the past few centuries there have been tensions between the **Catholic Church** and **Freemasonry**."

"Early **Papal** decrees prohibited members of the **Catholic** faith joining **Freemasonry**, but were later countermanded."

"The historic tension no longer exists but nevertheless, there are writers and websites who disagree and continue to promote misunderstandings."

Lazar says that last year's release of **The Lost Symbol** by **Dan Brown**, provided an opportunity for **Lazar** to tell their story: "Let's tell **Australians** what it is really about."

His book acknowledges: "**Freemasonry** has lost the confidence of much of our community through secrecy. The **Craft** has become suspect because of our misguided caution."

"So tongue-tied have we become, that you ask 10 brethren to tell you why they are **Freemasons** and what it has done for them, you get 10 answers, eight of them not all all satisfying."

The **Freemasons Victoria** media release ahead of last Thursday's press conference promised to "lift the lid" on the **Craft**.

I suspect these words were crafted by a public relations agency rather than the **Masonic** hierarchy.

As a newsman, I would comment that last week's media function probably 'under-delivered' on that promise.

The PR agency invited television cameras to the media conference, but provided little in the way of show-and-tell. Older balding men stood still behind a lectern, to deliver a 21st century message. Not electrifying TV.

Just as there are photographs in the newly-released book, the event could have included demonstrations on what is inside a **Freemason's** bag (his apron).

It also provided an opportunity for members of many backgrounds and religions to be on show, dispelling the incorrect theory that the body is full of WASPs: White Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

One of the speakers admitted he had not seen the episode of **The Simpsons** where central character **Homer** joins '**The Stone Cutters**' - a parody on the **Masons**. Perhaps he should. In 30 minutes he would see the animated perception about **Masons** that is being broadcast worldwide to millions of younger people.

As a **Freemason** (and yes, one who is 'older and balding') with 32 years membership, I can understand the shyness.

For generations, the **Masons** have conducted themselves cautiously and with candour. Twenty-first century marketing often disregards both of these sound values.

- Ash Long

Melbourne Observer Magazine

SECRET MEN'S BUSINESS

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"We're not saying **Freemasonry** is for everyone," answered **Garry Sebo**.

Author **Peter Lazar** agrees: "**Freemasonry** is not a religion, nor a substitute for a religion. It accepts good men of all religions, and asks candidates only to declare their belief in a **Supreme Being** of some kind."

"After that, it discourages any further discussion of religion (or politics) at **Lodge**."

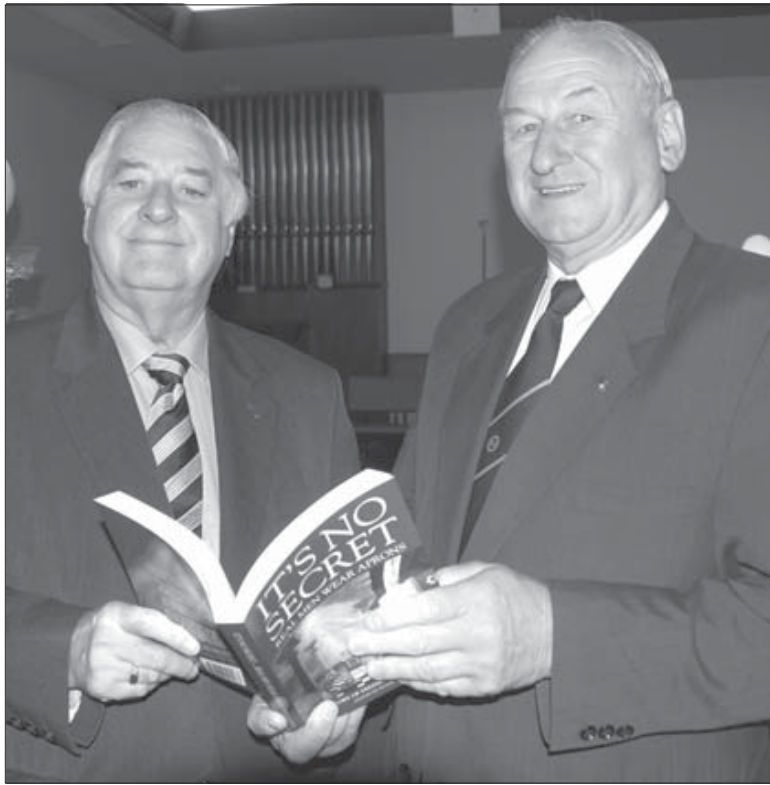
The movement's principles are based on tolerance, equality, charity, honour and morality and individual self development.

The **Victorian 'Grand Lodge'** body says: "The mission of **Freemasonry** is to promote a way of life that brings likeminded men together in a worldwide brotherhood that transcends all religious, ethnic, cultural, social and educational difficulties by teaching the principles of respect, tolerance and understanding."

"**Freemasons** demonstrate these principles by showing tolerance and respect for the opinions of others, behaving with kindness and understanding and practising charity and care for their community."

Lazar's book does get into some detail. He outlines the tools of an ancient craft that are used in the lessons.

The 24-inch gauge is used as a metaphor for the 24-hour day and the



● Barry Reaper, Freemasons Victoria 'Grand Secretary' with Grand Master-Elect Vaughan Werner, launching *It's No Secret*

need to apportion adequate time for reflection, family, work and rest.

The chisel reminds members that perseverance is a virtue which helps enlighten the mind and purify the soul.

The square is used by stonemasons to measure their progress. The plumb-rule is used to check that vertical lines are 'true'. The level demonstrates that all men are equal.



Other devices revealed are the skerrit, the pencil and the compasses.

Lazar explains the apron is derived from the stonemasons of the **Middle Ages**.

Inside the lodge room, the letter '**G**' takes a prominent position. For some it denotes '**God**'; for others '**Great Architect**'; others prefer it to symbolise '**Geometry**'.

Lazar's book includes sections of **Masonic** art and music, prominent **Australian** members. The 268-page book also includes impressive colour plates.

The book quotes **Dr Bob James**: "While a policy of strict secrecy may have served its purpose over the preceding three centuries, it is proving unsustainable at the beginning of the 21st."

The question is raised about how relevant **Freemasonry** will be in the 21st Century towards its aims of helping good men lead better lives, and to be happy.

Futurist **Jan-Lee Martin** (the author's wife) quotes **Charles Darwin**: "It is not the strongest species that will survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

MASONIC MYSTERIES REVEALED

■ A number of **Masonic** 'mysteries', long regarded as being held secret, are revealed in the new book, **It's No Secret: Real Men Wear Aprons**.

Author **Peter Lazar** says the central teachings are adherence to **Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude**. They are closely linked in moral teachings to **Faith, Hope and Charity**.

Lazar says there are three levels of teaching: **Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason**. Each has its own modes of recognition. These include handshakes and words that identify their level.

The tools of ancient stonemasons are used as symbols in ceremonies to help teach the lessons.

Modern day language includes **Masonic** terms as 'on the level' and 'on the square' (to treat people fairly).

The logo is the square and compass - used as a metaphor to help share and smooth a **Mason's** character to develop himself and society as a whole.

Members wear aprons, as did the ancient stonemasons. Funerals of **Masons** often include a brief ceremony where a white lambskin upon, the symbol of purity and innocence, and a sprig of evergreen leaves, a symbol of immortality, are placed on the casket.

The **Lodge** rooms include black-and-white tiled floors, to represent the dark and light passages that we each endure during life.

Lodge rooms include illustrated

'tracing boards'

There is no world headquarters for **Freemasonry**. There is no single international authority that governs the movement, and there is no single **Masonic** leader.

Each region is able to meet its own needs.

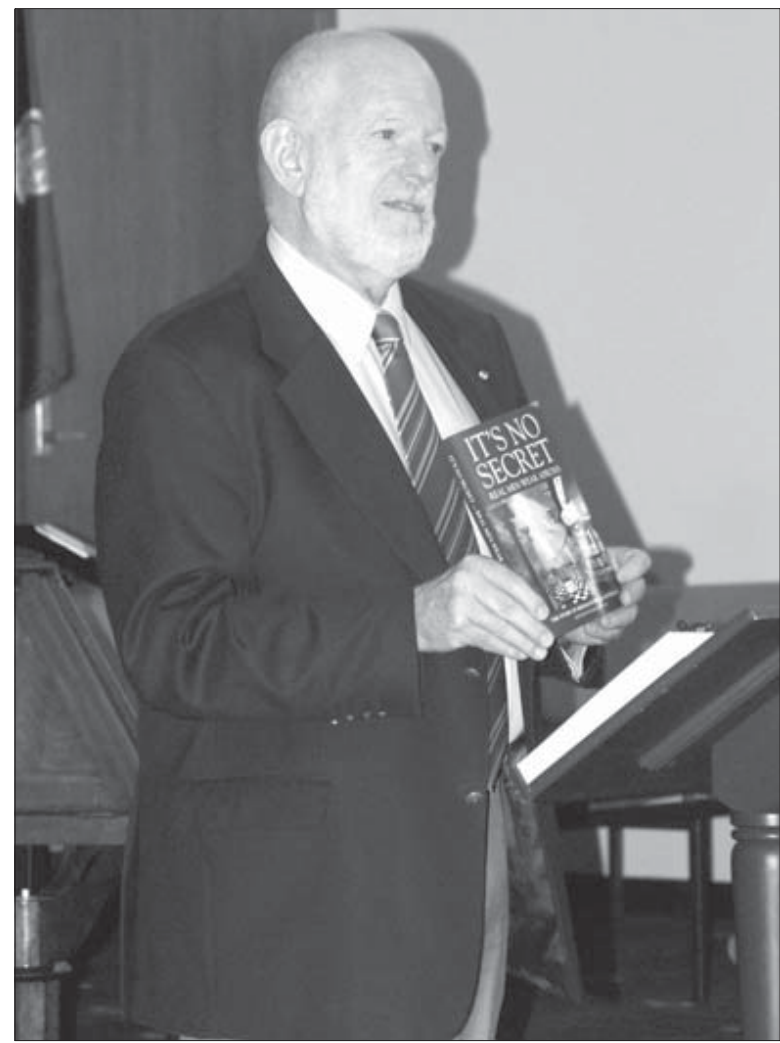
Freemasonry is not a religion nor is it to be a substitute for religion. All intending candidates are required to express their belief in a higher power or **Supreme Being**.

Each **Lodge** displays a book of Sacred Law relevant to its members, and in many cases, two or three, such as the **Torah (Old Testament)**, the **New Testament** and the **Koran**, where a **Lodge** includes individuals from these groups. One **Melbourne** Lodge has seven such volumes, such is the mix of its membership.

Any discussion on religion or politics is banned. Probably the origin of the caution that is used in modern days: "Never talk about religion or politics."

Candidates must be over the age of 18. Voting takes place among members using black and white balls. "Two black balls, and the candidate is rejected". Hence the common day expression of being "black balled".

And, no, there is no goat. **Freemasons** do not ride goats at **Lodge** or anywhere else. **Lazar** suggests that "some early **Masonic** texts referred to the **Supreme Being** as being '**God Of All Things**'. It was quickly changed to '**Great Architect of the Universe**'.



● Author Peter Lazar