

George William Sargeant *PPrJGD*

50th celebration in the Craft

Brother inner guard, will you please admit the tyler.

Good evening, brethren, and welcome to this very special meeting of Wyre Lodge No 7704. Today, of course, we are here to join with George (Bill) Sargeant, Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon of the Province of West Lancashire, or "Our Bill" as you know him, in celebrating the magnificent achievement of 50 years a Mason.

No matter what organisation, or what age you are when you join, I don't think anyone ever expects to achieve 50 years' service, but fortunately, many brethren are now living longer lives enabling them to reach that goal, Bill being an example of that at the age of 89, and tonight he joins that select band of brothers in the 50s Club.

Brethren, as I have said before, the privilege of leading the celebration of a brothers' jubilee is always the most enjoyable occasion an Assistant Provincial Grand Master could wish for, and I am grateful for the opportunity. Bill, it gives me the greatest of pleasure to be here at Wyre Lodge this evening, and to be able to join you and all your members and guests in celebrating this memorable achievement, and I hope you enjoy your evening. Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies, will you please place our Celebrant before me so that I may address him.

Early life and work

Bill, you were born in January 1936, in Fleetwood, the day the Battle of Ganale Doria started which was a significant military engagement on the Ethiopian southern front during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. You were born under the star sign Capricorn and the Chinese year of the Pig (or Rat, it depends on the source). Apparently, Capricorn is a sign that represents time and responsibility, and its representatives are traditional and often very serious by nature. These individuals possess an inner state of independence that enables significant progress both in their personal and professional lives. They are masters of self-control and can lead the way and make solid and realistic plans. They will learn from their mistakes and get to the top based solely on their experience and expertise. Just how well this fits your personality Bill, I will let the brethren judge.

You share your birthday with author Jack London, the guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, entertainers Des O'Connor and Michael Aspel, singer 'Long' John Baldry, boxer Joe Frazier, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Mel C of the Spice Girls, so good company there. We won't mention Hermann Goering.

Your father was William (Bill) Sargeant and your mother, Edith (Edie) Mary Hampson. You were only just 2 years old when you father was lost with all hands on the Fleetwood steam trawler 'Bostonian'. She was built as the Admiralty 'Strath' class trawler 'Samuel Hampton', subsequently with French owners as 'Dragon Rouge' and then onto Boston Deep Sea Fishing & Ice Co Ltd, Boston as BOSTONIAN. 1929 Registered at Fleetwood when Boston DSF relocated. She was the top Fleetwood trawler in 1934 with 10,546 boxes of fish. The vessel was lost on 14 January 1938 with all hands. She disappeared in a severe storm and the wreck was located south of Barra Head. Unfortunately, being so young, you don't remember your father. However soon after your mother remarried to George Burrows, a trawler skipper, who you came to think of as your father. I will refer to him as your father from here.

You started school at Manor Road Primary School in Fleetwood at five, staying until you were seven, then you moved to Chaucer Road School for a further year before moving to St Joseph's College in Blackpool. The school had been run by the Christian Brothers since 1923 and you recalled the brothers favoured those who had high career prospects, but it was a harsh regime for those of you from Fleetwood whose ambitions centred around going on the trawlers. The use of the strap was widespread, with punishment handed out for the slightest misdemeanour. I think it is safe to say that the only thing you really liked about school was the sports, at which you excelled, especially the rugby and cricket.

Eventually it was this overzealous punishment that led to you finishing your education as having retaliated to a blow to the face from the strap you left school never to return. It was about this time that you took up ballroom dancing and you used to dance with the sister of your dancing teacher, Zonia Bird, who you say is still alive. You won many medals with Zonia and got through the area Grand Finals of the Ballroom Queen in Manchester.

Soon after your 15th birthday, you had obtained a position as an apprentice butcher as the Co-op on Poulton Road in Fleetwood, a job you enjoyed for three years until you were 18 and were called up for National Service.

You went to Preston for the Medical and were asked if you had a family history in the services, so you explained that your brother Brian who was two years older than you had joined the Fleet Air Arm at 16 and your father, George Burrows, had been a Sub-Lieutenant, R N VR on minesweepers from 1943, so naturally they put you in the Catering Corps. I assumed they had looked at your background as a butcher, but as you pointed out butchery was done by RASC.

You were posted to Aldershot, Ramillies Barracks for basic training. You recall having your head of curly hair reduced to just about nothing and your injections which left you in agony for three days, followed by a fortnight of square bashing. You expected to move to St Omer Barracks a week later to start catering training but instead you were bussed to Woolwich Arsenal. You recall starting the march up the hill to the barracks but the next thing you remember is waking up in hospital.

It appeared that on your march, you had managed to strangulate one of your testicles, (not a word I expected to use in a 50th and I can see you all squirming), which had left you in agony and caused you to black out. The doctors decided an operation was in order but as you were only 18, they had to get your mother's permission, which was complicated as they had to do the operation before her written permission arrived. You recall that all the nurses kept visiting to see how you were doing and to 'have a look' which was embarrassing.

You were in hospital for a long period followed by 3 weeks rehabilitation and fitness training at Netley Hospital on Southampton Water. Towards the end of your time there, your attention was drawn to a notice from a Colonel asking for a Batman. You applied and got the posting. You enjoyed the time with the Colonel and his wife and children living in a house on the grounds with your own room, however the Army eventually caught up with you and you were transferred back to St Omer Barracks Aldershot to do your catering course. That completed, you were posted to Catterick to be a cook in the Officer's Mess eventually becoming head cook and getting your Corporal's stripes. (Went from Private Sargeant to Corporal Sargeant never quite made Sargeant Sargeant!).

On being demobbed you returned to Cleveleys and the Co-op on Victoria Road, where you stayed for two years before returning to the Co-op on Poulton Road in Fleetwood. It was while you were at the Co-op that you had a run in with the law. You were going out with a girl; she was a seasonal worker who you met in Blackpool who went back to her home in Darlington after the season had finished. You used to go over and visit her every weekend and one weekend you went to a party at some friends of hers, a husband and wife who were moving to Canada. You remember they asked if you were interested in guns? You said yes and they brought out a Smith & Wesson 38 and a leather pouch with 100 bullets. He asked you if you wanted it as he couldn't take it back to Canada. You gladly took it but had to keep it in the glovebox of your car for safety because at that time you were living in Bispham with your uncle and auntie, your mother and father being away at sea (more later), and they had a four-year-old boy.

All was well until one night coming home from a night out in Blackpool, crossing the tram tracks at Anchorsholme, you were suddenly stopped by four police cars. The subsequent search revealed the gun and ammunition and were taken to Bispham Police Station and then onto Blackpool Police Station. You were searched, photographed, and booked in. On appearing before the magistrates, you were worried you may be in line for a custodial sentence, being a bit of a Teddy Boy, but luckily the Inspector who was with you advised you to be very apologetic which did the trick, and you were only fined £12 for not having a license and £4 for another offence. You paid up on the spot and the police escorted you back to your car and stopped traffic to let you out. Luckily, they never checked if the car was taxed or if you had a license.

After nearly a year at the Co-op, you left to join ICI, however that didn't start immediately so while you waited to join ICI, you got a job at Atomic Energy (BNFL) at Springfields, Salwick. Working on nuclear fuel for submarines, interesting work. You continued to work at ICI for 27 years until you retired early at 50 due to a serious back problem.

Marriage and home life

You met your wife Trudy (Gertrude Townsend then Wallwork) when you were working at the Co-op, she and her then husband had a confectioner (Wallworks) about five doors away and you supplied them with meat and pies. You started a clandestine relationship with her which resulted in her leaving her husband and eventually moving in with you. In the late 50s and early 60s this was scandalous and you had to leave Cleveleys, which I assume is why you moved to the Co-op in Fleetwood. You lived 'in sin' for 12 years and following a chance meeting with her husband they got divorced. You were finally married in 1972. She had a son John a retired Golf Professional

who still lives very close. During this time, you took up golf, yourself a member of Fleetwood Golf Club for over 50 years getting down a handicap of 5 which is very good.

You are also an active member of the congregation of St Andrew's Church in Cleveleys and have done much work in the local community. You were with Trudy for nearly 40 years until she sadly died of cancer just after Christmas in 1998. You and Trudy had been friends with Win and her husband for quite a while and had holidayed with them on the past. After Trudy's death and Win's separation, you found yourselves getting closer and when Win's arthritis became so bad that it seemed the only solution was for her to go into a home, you stepped in and moved in with Win and looked after her for 10 years until she too passed away. Win's daughter Janet who works at Grime's Butchers in Cleveleys and her son Andy who is a taxi driver have returned the favour and continue to support you.

Freemasonry

Your arrival in Freemasonry was born many miles away. Your stay with your aunt and uncle in Bispham was necessitated by your father and mother's absence in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Ceylon and East Pakistan as was. He had been employed to take a trawler, the Maple Leaf, formerly the Boston Attacker, to Ceylon as part of the Colombo Aid Plan. This was to demonstrate trawling methods to the Ceylon fishermen. While in Colombo your father was initiated into The Duke of Connaught Lodge No 2940, this is from a note in his UGLE file. He also joined a lodge in Chittagong, East Pakistan. He joined Wyre Lodge on 4 December 1969.

That was what led you, in 1975, to join Wyre.

A quick overview of the world back in 1975:

- Petrol is 16p a litre
- Bitter is 20p a Pint
- Cigarettes are 20p for 20
- The average house price is nearly £17,000
- Fawlty Towers is first broadcast.
- The National Railway Museum opens in York – the first national museum in the country outside London.
- British punk rockers The Sex Pistols make their first public performance.
- The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Monty Python and the Holy Grail and Return of the Pink Panther all debut in cinemas.
- Bill Gates co-founds Microsoft at the age of 19.
- Climbers Dougal Haston and Doug Scott are the first British climbers to summit Mount Everest.
- Manchester United are promoted back to the First Division just one season after being relegated.
- Derby County wins the Football League First Division title for the second time in four seasons.
- American tennis player Arthur Ashe wins Wimbledon, making history as the first black player ever to win the title.

Your father proposed you into Wyre Lodge on 7 November 1974 while he was senior deacon, and you were seconded by Alf Blackshaw who was the senior warden.

You were initiated into Wyre Lodge on 2 January 1975 in a ceremony conducted by W Leigh. The Charge after Initiation was given by your father and the working tools were presented by Peter Horsley, a steward of the lodge.

Brother secretary, will you please read a précis of the minutes of the meeting held on that date.

You were passed to the second degree on 1 May 1975 by John Mottram and the working tools were presented by Bro. Lamb. You were raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason in a ceremony conducted by William Horsley on 4 December 1975, with the working tools presented by Bob Taylor.

Although have not served as master of his Lodge, you have given long and dedicated service to it. Between 1999 and 2020 you were almoner of the lodge and made sure that all the brethren who required your assistance, were looked after and all their needs, especially those of the widows were equally looked after.

In Provincial Grand Lodge, you were appointed to the acting rank of Provincial Assistant Grand Pursuivant on 21 May 2007 and promoted to Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon on 3 April 2019. You joined Pro Patria Lodge No 9952 on 31 August 2018 but resigned on 2 July 2023.

You did join the Royal Arch in Fleetwood Chapter No 3711 on 8 October 1996 but after two years decided it wasn't for you and resigned on 6 October 1998. I won't try to persuade you to re-join.

Bill, you have had a very busy and interesting life and your service to Freemasonry is an example to us all. Brethren, this evening he celebrates his golden jubilee in Freemasonry, and I am sure that we all wish him the very best of health and happiness for many years to come.

At this point may thank your secretary for Danny Whalley for the research he did into the minutes, the brief history of Bill's life and his organisation this evening.

May I now call upon your group chairman John Cross to read out the scroll from our Provincial Grand Master Mark Matthews.

(From the floor) "Bill, may I conclude the proceedings here in the lodge room by offering you my warmest personal congratulations on achieving this wonderful milestone in your Masonic career. I consider it both a privilege and a pleasure to be here this evening and to have been able to take part in such a happy and enjoyable occasion."

Produced by WBro Dr David F. Barr **PAGDC**, Assistant Provincial Grand Master.

Bostonian



Item details

Base ID	260332
Vessel name	Bostonian
Fishing number	FD41
Type of vessel	ST
Official number	148233
Previous names	Samuel Hampton; Dragon Rouge
Year constructed	1916
Constructed by	Smith's Dock Co Ltd
Constructed at	Middlesbrough
Gross tons	289
Length	130.7 ft
Beam	23.6 ft
Depth	13 ft
Owner/Manager	Boston DSF
Date sunk	14/01/1938
Place sunk	Barra Head
Casualties	14/01/1938 - Herbert Atkinson (skipper), W Wright (mate), James Bird (bosun), John Farrell (chief engineer), W Sergeant (2nd engineer), J. Wood (deckhand), John Irvin (deckhand), A Gates (fireman), J Gibbons (fireman), John Cooper (deckhand), John Miller (deckhand), Frank Hall (cook), Leon Irvin, John Wright
General notes	Built as the Admiralty 'Strath' class trawler SAMUEL HAMPTON. Subsequently with French owners as DRAGON ROUGE. Then to Boston Deep Sea Fishing & Ice Co Ltd, Boston as BOSTONIAN. 1929 Registered at Fleetwood when Boston DSF relocated. She was the top Fleetwood trawler in 1934 with 10,546 boxes of fish. The vessel was lost on 14th January 1938 with all hands. She disappeared in a severe storm and the wreck was located south of Barra Head.

Comments (0)

Trawler Specifications

(a) "Maple Leaf". This oil-fired, steam trawler built in 1946, originally owned and operated under the name "Boston Attacker" by the Boston Deep Sea Fishing and Ice Company of the United Kingdom, was purchased by the Canadian Government in 1953. After refitting her for tropical fishing she was renamed "Maple Leaf" and presented to Ceylon under Colombo Plan aid.