

## **W Bro R J Senior PPrJGW (East Lancashire)**

### **50 Years in Freemasonry Celebration**

**September 2021**

#### **The early years**

Ronald Senior was born in 1931 in Failsworth, Manchester, that Ronald James Senior was born as an only child to his proud parents May and Joe Senior.

His father Joe, was a top-class rubber spreader and was renowned in his discipline as being the one capable spreader of indian silk. It was this specialist skill that exempted Joe from the military conscription. Ron's mother May worked for Edwin Alliott Verdon-Roe, otherwise known as the Avro Aircraft Factory.

Ron, your first school was located in Alkington Manchester where you learned life's basic skills until the age of 11 when you attended Secondary School in Middleton.

Our early school years can be full of many trials and tribulations but none more so than yours when, aged just nine years old, you became the only son of a single parent family after your father left the family home. You were to become the man and future breadwinner of the house.

If that wasn't enough to deal with, as the Christmas of 1940 approached, German bombs rained down on Manchester city centre, killing 100s of people and causing widespread destruction and devastation.

The so-called Christmas Blitz on the evening of 22 December of the same year reduced shops and buildings in central Manchester to ruins. Again, you were aged just nine years old.

The sky glowed orange as huge clouds of smoke billowed and thickened the air with dust. The pungent whiff of burning wood and the smell of powdered brick and plaster lingered. Living less than only five miles to the east and unknown to you, Joyce, later to become your life long friend and wife, reflected on those times telling me that she used to skip down the road, hand in hand with her mum, excited at what Joyce perceived as a fantastic firework display. Little did that innocent child realise that the experience for both your mothers was significantly different and frightening as they hurried to air raid shelters to protect their young ones who were oblivious to the urgency of the situation!

Your personal reflection of a time you took refuge in one of your local air raid shelters was when a loud bang and crash of thunder accompanied by severe earth tremors left the shelter's occupants in fear of just how close the offending bomb had landed – a warden rushed in and pulled the gas blanketed entrance to one side and announced; "that's Mitchell Street gone"..... the street where you and your mother lived. You were full of an innocent and pensive excitement - your Mum fainted! Understandable, but the situation was to improve very quickly when the warden declared he was only joking!!!! I guess Brits are renowned for their sense of humour!!! Fortunately for you and your Mum, Mitchell Street remained intact. Not so fortunate for surrounding areas and victims!

Two waves of bombs pounded the city from 20:00 GMT on 22 December, only ending at 06:00 the next day. In total, the Christmas Blitz claimed the lives of 684 people and a further 2,300 were wounded with districts to the north and east of the city where you lived being badly affected. At least 8,000 families were made homeless.

During the war as a whole, 1,400 civilians died in Manchester, so the raid represents almost half those killed. One in 10 of whom was under the age of 13! You were aged just nine years old.

#### **The later years**

Upon leaving school your first experience as a young working man was in the joinery trade, not compatible with your preferred trade, you soon boxed up your tools and secured a seven year apprenticeship as a painter and decorator with Norman F Hawton. This apprenticeship formally delayed your UK Military conscription.

Once the paint dried on your apprenticeship in 1952, and at the age of 21, you entered in to a two-year government-mandated National Service. It was during these two years that your strength of character was to be tested after being diagnosed with pneumonia. This debilitating condition was believed to be the result of the harsh weather in Cornwall where you served the local community in battling with the flood defences of the day to protect properties and essential community support services.

You were offered without condition or shame, a medical discharge from the army where you could have left and enjoyed civilian life. Instead, you rejected the offer and insisted on completing your National Service to your Sovereign and Country.

We mentioned 1952 was the year you celebrated the completion of your bounded apprenticeship and departed to serve your Queen and Country; two key milestones. However, 1952 held other special memories during regular leave from your army duties when you met with friends at the Middleton Palace Arcade.

It was during these visits you met an attractive young lady named Joyce Mary. Your eye for quality held no bounds when you proposed to that young lady and the celebration of marriage to Joyce took place in September 1954 at Parkfield Church, Middleton. You honeymooned in Blackpool which was arguably the holiday metropolis of that era. Joyce has since been your rock, your friend and loyal wife since that day and..... those who are mathematically astute will have realised that Ron and Joyce have been married for an approximate three life sentences... err, sorry 67 years.

Very soon after your wedding day – and for the purpose of clarity brethren, in excess of nine months after the wedding day, Ron and Joyce became the proud parents of Ian Senior, aka our late brother, Ian James Senior, Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon of the Province of East Lancashire: an only child and a respected son, father, grandfather and brother who sadly passed away in 2019. More of Ian a little later.

You are also the proud grandfather of two, Keith and Claire, who have blessed you and Joyce with six great grandchildren Ellie, Olivia, William, Edward, Arthur and Albert; their ages ranging from four to 14 years old. You must really look forward to Christmas shopping every year!

Its 1954, you are married and your National Service complete, you make a bold move to become an insurance agent. You took to being an agent like a duck takes to water and so continuing with the agency theme you decided to build, not one but two successful newsagents which prospered for a number of years prior to you eventually retiring from the equally successful business you built as a greengrocer.

Having spent the largest part of your life in Middleton, both you and Joyce made the joint decision to move to the brighter, quieter and picturesque village of Great Ecclestone. The move was influenced by your aspirations to support both your son Ian and grandson Keith in their pursuits as the very popular landlords of the White Bull. At the time, if Carlsberg made village pubs, they couldn't have made anything better than the White Bull! It was the epitome of the perfect village pub.

You took up a busy schedule of hobbies including crown green bowling and golf, in which you held a five handicap. These days at a more leisurely pace you continue to enjoy your Freemasonry and can often be spotted sampling the beverages served in the village hostelrys and of course, the Great Ecclestone Bowling Club where you can often be spotted carrying off the local bowling trophies (whether you have won them or not, you can be seen carrying them off in celebration or dismay) - the perfect way for a retired gentleman to pass his time! But your successes were not just in serving your country and building successful businesses. You have also enjoyed an impressive career in Freemasonry.

## **Freemasonry**

Ron, cast your memory back to November 1970 when you were initiated into Alkrington Lodge No 6102, proposed and seconded by Bill Holt and Bert Briggs. Ron we could not obtain the summons to that meeting but we can replicate a key charge from that evening.

Having spent the next nine years working through the progressive offices you first occupied the chair of King Solomon in the year 1979.

You experienced many highlights during your membership at Alkrington Lodge but none more delightful than initiating your own son in to your mother lodge in your year as the WM. You supported Ian in his 10-year journey to the chair of King Solomon in 1989. Your support to Ian didn't stop in Craft, you once again led your son in to a successful tenure in Service Chapter where you again coached him to becoming first principal in 1997.

Ron, with respect to the brethren here tonight, I am not aware of any brother present who can understand the heartache both you and Joyce suffered when your only son passed away on 17 October 2019. I am sure this is one subject you do not wish me to dwell upon but in like manner to the support you gave to Ian, you now stand proud, shoulder to shoulder and fully supportive of your grandson Keith. Both you and Ian initiated Keith in to this fine Lodge in 2017 when you led this the Wayfarers Lodge in your second tenure as WM.

Support to all of your Lodges over the past 50+ years has taken many forms and to place some context around this, with four craft and three Royal Arch promotions here are just some of the offices you have filled in that time and since your first time as WM:

L6102 Chaplain	seven years
L6102 District Representative	15 years
L6102 Royal Arch Representative	11 years
C5412 1 <sup>st</sup> Principle Royal Arch	five years
C5412 Director of Ceremonies	24 years

We are now proud of and delighted for your company among us as our Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden of the Province of East Lancashire, an honorary rank you have held for 19 years.

### **In Summary**

Brethren, the brother and gentleman we are celebrating this evening has endured life as a young child through WW2 with challenges that many of us will find difficult to imagine.

He has served his Queen and his Country, built and established three successful businesses, enjoyed success in his sporting pursuits, supported his family and continues to provide words of wisdom and support to his two grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Brethren, add to the aforementioned and Ron Senior after 50 years continues to support his Freemasonry. The members of Wayfarers Lodge should be extremely proud that he has chosen to continue that support of our happy lodge. Now, after 50 years, we must stand and support Ron with our thanks on behalf of all those Masonic members he has supported and engaged with for over half a century. But before we do, our WM has a pleasant duty to conduct.