

## **Leslie (Les) Maurice Youie OAM - Background**

Les was born in 1924 in Hamilton, Victoria. In 1929 his parents took the family to Hong Kong and Canton. When the Japanese marched into Manchuria in the far north of China in 1932 they returned to Hamilton but soon moved to Melbourne due to economic circumstances. They stayed in Little Bourke Street for a short period before moving from suburb to suburb over the next five years: Fitzroy, Brunswick, Hawthorn and Footscray.

In 1936, Les' father took over a Chinese Herbalist practice in Ballarat. Les attended Ballarat High School and after completing his Year 10 Intermediate certificate, he commenced work in mid July 1941 as a trainee with the Postmaster Generals Department (PMG) in South Melbourne. He passed all his exams, was promoted to Technician and on his twenty-first birthday, started work as a Technician on Country Installations, travelling all around Victoria, and even to Mt Gambier in South Australia. He went on to become a Chartered Engineer after studying Communications Engineering at RMIT and obtained a Diploma of Public Administration in 1971. Finally, after 47 years of service in the PMG and Telecom Australia, Les retired in 1988.

Prior to marriage, Les had a busy life outside work. He was active in the Methodist church and Volunteer Defence Corps. He was an avid ballroom dancer in the 1940s, gaining Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates, and in 1947 he received the Silver Star, which was the highest amateur ballroom dancing award at that time. He even started a dancing class at the Young Chinese League (YCL), and many years later in 2010, joined ballroom dancing with the University of the Third Age (U3A).

Les started the YCL Tennis Club with Mervyn Limon and Russell Moy in 1951 and was an umpire with the Victorian Lawn Tennis Association. He was an active member of the YCL, being secretary, treasurer, vice-president, Dragon Committee member and newsletter editor for many years. He was made a Life Member of the YCL in 1965.

At one point, Les had to put a hold on all his social activities for 3 years while he helped his mother run her business at the Bluebird Milk Bar in Koornang Rd, Carnegie.

In 1961, Les met Joanna and they were married on 9 June, 1962. They had 2 children, Ralph and Ellen, and in 1966, the family went to Hong Kong, where Les worked for the Hong Kong Telephone Company. But after 6 months, the family returned to Melbourne where Les recommenced work at the PMG/Telecom.

Les and Joanna travelled extensively, as most of Joanna's family lived overseas. There were many other activities that kept Les busy in between travelling.

- Les was a Freemason for almost 68 years.
- Les belonged to Probus clubs first in Oakleigh and then in Doncaster, joining the committee and then becoming president in 2001.
- Les and Joanna played badminton socially until Les was 82!
- Les was founding president of the Moomba Youth Band Association, later to be named the Australian Youth Band Association, and he was made a Patron of the Band in 2014, alongside John Morrison and Rhonda Burchmore. There is also a Les Youie 10 year Long Service Award given to band members who play in the band for 10 years. (His daughter Ellen was an original member of the Band.)
- Les enjoyed playing golf and won the Doncaster Men's Probus Club Ken Hovenden Trophy four times in seven years and in 2007, the Honda Classic Team Event. He only stopped playing at age 91 when wrist pain prevented him from swinging his clubs.
- In retirement, Les studied financial planning to become an Australian Certified Investment Planner and Certified Investment and Financial Advisor. He also studied tax preparation to work with H&R Block.

But it's probably Les' volunteer activities that are most noteworthy. He was:

- a Patron – Australian Youth Band
- a Life Member - Australian Youth Band Association, Young Chinese League
- a President, Vice President
- a Secretary and Assistant Secretary
- a Treasurer, Auditor
- a Public Officer
- a Committee Member and Newsletter Editor

It's no wonder that Les was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the 2007 Australia Day Honours list. His citation reads "For service to the community, particularly through a range of youth, service and Chinese cultural organisations".

Les passed away at home due to renal failure on 4 September 2018, aged 94. A life well lived.



Les after receiving his OAM in 2007



Les at Government House with his wife Joanna, son Ralph and daughter Ellen. May 2007

Ellen Lew  
14 January 2025