

Valete, Ken and Yasuko Myer

Warren Horton has written a moving appreciation of this much-loved couple

KENNETH Baillieu Myer, who died with his wife Yasuko in an aircraft accident in Alaska on 30 July was a key supporter of Australian libraries through much of his life.

Ken Myer served on the National Library of Australia Council for 21 years from October 1960, an unparalleled record of public service to the Library. He was Chairman of the Council from August 1974 until he retired from it in March 1982. He was closely involved in the planning for the National Library building and a strong champion of the Library's role in science and technology, and in the Asian region. He gave the Library very significant financial support, not only through major donations to its General



Ken and Yasuko Myer at the Towards Federation 2001 Conference in March

Trust Fund which was established on his initiative but by two capital donations to fund the Australian Libraries Summit of 1988 and the *Towards Federation 2001* Conference in March 1992. The Friends of the National Library of Australia in 1990 established the annual Kenneth Myer Lecture in his honour.

He also had a wider interest in broader Australian library matters, not only through funding support for some other libraries but also as an articulate and committed advocate on the profession's behalf. A major concern to him was the nation's need for dynamic scientific and technological information services, in the context of broad information planning and with

libraries as a major participant. Ken's appointment as a Companion in the Order of Australia in 1976 demonstrated his national standing as a man of affairs who led in a wide range of intellectual and cultural forums.

The Australian Library and Information Association recognised Ken's outstanding contribution to the profession in 1989, when it conferred on him the prestigious Redmond Barry Award. This award is for a lay person not employed in a library who has rendered outstanding service to the promotion of a library or libraries or to the practice of librarianship. It was presented to Ken by the then President at a most happy function at the National Library in November 1989.

Yasuko gave Ken a splendid 70th birthday party in Melbourne on 2 March 1991. The part libraries had played in his life was demonstrated by the large number of guests drawn from the profession or who had first met Ken in various library activities. They and all others with whom he dealt over the years will have the fondest memories of him and Yasuko. Ken had a giant-sized personality and sense of humour, and brought intense curiosity and infectious enthusiasm to all his interests. His breadth of interests was staggering.

My last meeting with Ken was on 10 June, when I visited him in Sydney to discuss some National Library matters. We finished these very quickly, and then over coffee he started talking about his past life. The passage of a RAN ship down the harbour led him to remember his World War II naval career, and his subsequent posting to Japan with the occupation forces that led to his lifelong interest in Asia. He ranged over varied topics including the importance of Yasuko in his life, the role he saw for Australia in training the Asian/Pacific library profession, and opportunities for Australian technological development in the next century. He outlined his thinking on adventurous plans, which sadly will not now be implemented, to further assist Australian libraries over the next decade.

The contribution of Ken Myer to our profession was towering. He and Yasuko will be very much missed by the many people in the profession whom they befriended, influenced and supported over the years. ■



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