

## **Acceptance Speech by Michael Graf on behalf of his late father, Ervin Graf OAM**

On behalf of the Graf family, it is a privilege and honour to accept this award for my late father, Ervin Graf.

Dad would be very honoured to join his fellow inductees, though to be honest he would probably have fiercely stated that he was not deserving, as he often fought against any form of recognition or award.

As with many recognised here, it is not just their actions alone that have allowed them to become successful. Many in Stockland also deserve thanks and recognition for their valuable contribution. My mother would have been very proud to see her partner in life inducted here tonight. Sadly, she passed away late last year and therefore I would also like to recognise her role in supporting dad through their almost 40 years of marriage.

To many, my father was certainly known as a fast talking and quick thinking person. He liked working at a very detailed level, but he always had an amazing ability to still see the big picture – and what that might mean. He had an exceptional mind that allowed him to quickly grasp and understand the many changes in business, planning requirements and finance. For example, from the moment a new tax or property law was announced, he was often asking complex questions that even those specialised in the area could not answer, and many would later come to seek his views on what might be the better response.

Dad also strongly believed in family, friends and community and he was always there for anyone. I cannot count the number of times people have come to me, since his passing in 2002, with stories of how they went to see him, in his office or at home, to get advice, his guidance or simply to chat. Many are the tales of glasses of whiskey and multiple cigarettes, as problems were discussed and worked through.

Simply put, he liked to build for the future – from his childhood days in Hungary playing with wooden blocks; to carving realistic snowmen with eyes, ears and often a stick cigarette for my sister and me; to the many large and complex projects built from Lego or K'nex for his 6 grandchildren.

To me, this epitomises dad's views on his industry – always focus on the people. As a qualified architect, his start with a small residential development project, with a loan from some like-minded communal associates, saw dad not only plan the development, but manage the construction, pick the materials, sell the homes, arrange financing and even lay the bricks in the driveway.

Whether building shopping centres or offices, he always worked to consider how the community would be impacted. Building for the future, ensuring it was sustainable and that it had a positive effect on people's lives was always at the forefront of his mind.

In fact, Stockland's vision continues to be to "not merely achieve growth and profits but to make a worthwhile contribution to the development of our cities and great country."

Dad rarely boasted of his achievements; however I know he was very proud of the work that Stocks & Holdings, and later the renamed Stockland, achieved. His intuition for trends and opportunities, responding to changing community needs, provided Stocks & Holdings with many other “firsts”. They built the first drive in shopping centre in NSW in 1961, the first underground interlink connection between two shopping arcades in the city. The Sydney skyline still features his Park Regis Tower, which was the tallest and the first residential building in the CBD at the time of its construction, defying the sceptics who said that inner-city living would never take off in Sydney.

On top of these, he pioneered a number of property innovations including the now standard raft slab construction, medium density town house development and the model of a stapled security property trust that is used by many leading corporations today.

Dad always had ideas and innovations that pushed the boundaries of what had been done before to new, smart and, simply put, sensible solutions. He was a very practical and conservative man that allowed him and the company, to avoid the pitfalls many succumbed to, and to build a legacy that continues today.

On behalf of the family, we are very proud of what Ervin Graf achieved and we thank you for honouring his memory here tonight.