

Eric May - Abingdons Transport Equipment Ltd

For this life member profile, we journey back to the earliest days of our federation, to the very first meeting of the TTMF and to the election of its first president.

It occurred in Wellington on a cloudless St Valentine's Day, 1957.

The man who chaired that meeting and would subsequently be elected the TTMF's first president was F.W.J. (Eric) May.

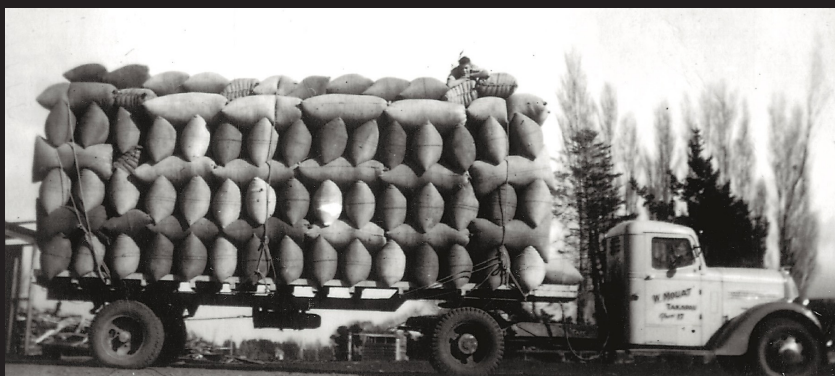
Unlike many other members, the May name does not live on our industry, but the foresight and vision Eric May exhibited back in 1957 remain instrumental to who and what we are today.

That first meeting, attended by some of the biggest and influential trailer builders of the era, was formed for the sole purpose of protecting our industry from the introduction of a new import tariff emanating out of the U.K. and putting our local industry at risk.

It was also arguably the first time this group of fiercely competitive trailer builders had presented a cohesive and united "face" in advocating for the industry as a whole.

And that remains the cornerstone of the Federation.

Eric May was an interesting character and so was the company he owned. Eric, who was the son of the founder of Abingdon Trailers, always argued that his father's company was the first commercial trailer builder in New Zealand. That is disputed. As our federation history, *Ridin' the Rainbow*, reveals that honour goes to Inglis Bros who predate Abingdon by several years.



Nevertheless, Abingdon produced some ground-breaking work, particularly in the field of semi-trailers and they did at least outlast Inglis Bros by several decades.

Although F.W.J. May is today largely forgotten, he was in his day a fierce advocate for our industry and deeply passionate about it. It is testimony to the respect in which he was held that he beat out such luminaries and industry legends as the indomitable Dave Domett and Rod Steel for the sort-after role as our first president. He served in that capacity for a year before being replaced by Domett—it would be 1961 before Rod Steel would become President.

M. E. TRAILER MANUFACTURERS' FEDERATION		
Minutes of Meeting of representatives of the manufacturers of trailers in New Zealand, held in the office of McMahon Motor Supplies Ltd., 29 Harris Street, Wellington, on Thursday, 14th February, 1957 at 10-15 a.m.		
PRESENT:	Representatives of the following:	
<u>Name of Manufacturer</u>		<u>Represented By</u>
Abingdons Ltd.		F.W.J. May
H. Denton & Co. Ltd.		Edwin T. Tidd
Freighter Trailers Ltd.		(L.A. Ross J.V. Stevens)
Highway Transport Engineering Ltd.		D. P. Domett
Steel Bros. (Addington) Ltd.		R. D. H. Steel
Steel Tanks & Structures Ltd.		S. G. Horner
Tepper Transport Engineering Ltd.		F. P. Tepper
Trailer Manufacturing Co. Ltd.		G. J. Busfield
W. P. Walker Ltd.		W. P. Walker
Jack Tidd & Co. Ltd.		Edwin T. Tidd
By invitation Mr. D. M. Wilson		
ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN: Mr. F.W.J. May was elected Chairman of the meeting.		

Somewhat ironically, it was Rod Steel who orchestrated the demise of Abingdon Transport Equipment when he bought all of Eric's shares, primarily to gain the company's valuable import licence. Details of the deal are unknown, but we can hope Eric May retired a wealthy man.

F.W.J. (Eric) May was our president in 1957 and made a Life Member in 1964—the first to receive that honour.