

Mr John Ernest Fisher, OAM

In the recently published Queens Birthday Honours List, John Fisher, of Fire Mountain Alpacas, Cambewarra NSW, was awarded a Medal in the General Division (OAM) of the Order of Australia “for service to the community through youth, educational, and health organisations.”

Most alpaca breeders would know little of John Fisher, other than that he is a relatively recent addition to the community of Australian alpaca breeders. His is the least familiar face of Fire Mountain Alpacas, the others being his well-known wife Carolen, and beguiling daughter, Emmajane.

There are some who would remember him as the surprise purchaser of elite alpacas at two successive National auctions. Others may recognise his name as one of the founding directors of Australian Alpaca Fleece Ltd, of which he is a major shareholder, and a valued adviser and contributor. Some would recall his easily understood articles, *Taxing Tales*, published in *Alpacas Australia* and *Town and Country Farmer*, explaining the special implications of Australian tax law to alpaca breeders. Still others may know him through his involvement in, and commitment to, the SRS® Breeding System, and his contribution to the future progression and systemisation of that program in the Australian alpaca industry.

But there are few who would know of his diverse background, ranging from accountant to adventurer, author to adviser, and farmer to philanthropist. He was, until he became an alpaca farmer in 2003, a senior partner in Coopers Lybrand, in which capacity he was at various times adviser to a range of governments and to various United Nations agencies in Asia. He is the author of numerous articles, books, and papers on accounting issues. And he has been a taxation adviser to many major Australian companies. More intriguing is his feat of single-handedly flying his Tiger Moth from England to Australia in 1996, raising \$20,000 for CanTeen, the cancer support group for teenagers. Not content with having flown the journey, he did it overland in a Porsche as part of the 2000 London-Sydney Rally. He is yet to make the journey by sea, but did do a nine day raft trip down the Franklin in early 2006, in what one can only suspect was a familiarisation exercise for a sea journey.

But “services to the community through youth, educational, and health organisations”? Perhaps John’s least known interest is philanthropy. It began as a member of the Tasmanian Government Youth Finance Advisory Council in the early 1970’s, later President of the Tasmanian Youth Council, becoming Treasurer and Deputy President of the National body and Treasurer to the Asian Youth Council in 1976. He was founding member of Holmesglen College of TAFE, Victoria; and founder of the Financial Advisory Service to the North Richmond Community Health Centre. Still in Australia, he was Chairman of the Student Education Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Centre of Excellence of the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, and the National Taxation Advisory Panel. He was a member of the Board of Governors of the Tax Research Foundation. Whilst living and working in Asia, he became an inaugural member of the Singapore-Australia Business Alliance Forum, and Director of the Singapore-Australia Business Council.

That is all impressive enough, but his crowning accolade is as a founder, and now Deputy Chairman and Treasurer, of the Hoc Mai Foundation, a partnership between Sydney University and Royal North Shore Hospital, which exists to improve medical services and promote medical education for the 80 million people of Vietnam.

Not a bad call for an alpaca farmer from Cambewarra. Little wonder, then, that his is a face seen only rarely in the showing.

Congratulations, John, from all your friends in the Australian alpaca industry!



John Fisher, OAM, and wife, Carolen, at a “tails and tiaras” dinner to celebrate John’s award.