

Beverley Anne Caska, 1943 – 1999

Beverley Anne Caska was born on 4 July 1943. Her father, Harold Snell and her mother, the late Nellie Snell, raised Beverley and her younger sister Mary in Strathfield and on the central coast of New South Wales.



Beverley Caska

During her school years she established a reputation as an athlete and sportsperson. She was the school champion on several occasions

After completion of her leaving certificate she commenced work as a library assistant with Gosford City Council. She moved back to Sydney where she commenced work at the library of Strathfield City Council and after that positions with International Computers Limited and the New Zealand Trade Commission.

She was married to Walter Schultz in 1968 but was widowed shortly after.

She completed a Diploma in Librarianship in 1968 and accepted a position at the Law School Library of the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney. She held a position there for about three years and then left to take up full time studies at the University of New South Wales, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1974. While undertaking these studies she worked part time at the law firm of Baker and Mackenzie and at the Woollahra Municipal Library

Her mother passed away in 1974 and shortly after that she married Michael Caska. They moved to Queensland about a year later and Michael studied medicine while Beverley worked at the Pine Rivers Shire Council Library Service, establishing that library's first mobile service.

In 1976 she returned to Sydney with Michael and a job at the Sydney University Law School's Library. She moved to the law firm of Stephen Jacques and Stephen in 1979 and then the Australian Law Reform Commission. After working there for six months she accepted then position of librarian at the New South Wales Law Reform Commission in September 1983 and remained there until her illness could not allow her to continue.

In 1991 she became a visiting lecturer in legal research and writing in the Faculty of Law at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Beverley's mother has been described as intelligent, truly beautiful in nature and appearance. She was compassionate, gracious and gentle towards others. Such qualities were inherited by Beverley and she did not allow them to remain dormant. She enjoyed being a woman and she liked to sparkle.

The combination of her professionalism and personal qualities is reflected in the tributes that have flooded in since Wednesday morning

Justice Mason, President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal gave this tribute.

Bev Caska was the Librarian at the New South Wales Law Reform Commission during the time I was Chairman in the mid to late 1980s. That was when I first met her. After that, our paths would cross from time to time at LRC functions or important events at the Attorney General's Department.

Knowing Bev was a privilege and a joy

She bubbled like a freshly opened bottle of Schweppes Mineral Water. No request for library assistance was too hard. She always apologised for not doing more than she was asked. Bev never complained, unless it was about her occasional fears that the Law Reform Commission would lose its exclusive librarian.

Bev was the official and unofficial chronicler and archivist at the Commission. The camera was always at the ready. And Bev had a wonderful memory for faces and names.

One of her beautiful characteristics was her genuine interest in people. Whenever we met, she would quiz me about my welfare and that of my family, whose names and histories she knew.

About eighteen months ago I met Bev at St Stephen's, Newtown. Bev was then receiving chemotherapy. She professed to being quite chipper about her new buzz cut hairdo. This was the type of person she was. Always self-effacing about her own needs and cares. Always positive in outlook. Bev's personal faith clearly sustained her. And this faith helped her to radiate light and warmth in her personal dealings.

We thank God for Bev. She will be missed by her many friends.

It was my fortune to work with Beverley at the New South Wales Law Reform Commission from 1985 to 1988. She defended the Commission's collection with great strength and tenacity and was successful in maintaining it as one of the better collections among the law libraries within government. I found her to be generous, giving in charity and always offering compassion to others. The standards she set herself were of the highest and she would never undertake a task which could not be completed to the utmost level. Such a quality which showed itself on the athletic track of her local high school never left her. She encouraged others to compete and achieve standards equal to her own.

In 1952 she wrote in her sister's autograph book:

Life is merely froth and bubble, two things stand like stone, kindness in another's trouble, courage in your own.

Beverley displayed courage and cheerfulness until the end. The staff at the rooms of her surgeon are impressed by this. At her visits, post operation, she was seen as a person who was positive, bright and cheerful.

It is the words of Josie Taylor formerly of the New South Wales Law Courts Library, written in a response to Lyn Pollock a fellow law librarian, that I believe states the person who Beverley was.

... Your message captured for everyone's memory the vivacity and courageous strength of Beverley. I will remember too the brightness, the professional enthusiasm, the style of a remarkable lady.

John McMillan

Member Residential Tribunal

Former Secretary, New South Wales Law Reform Commission (Jul 1985 - Sept 1988)



The news of Beverley's passing spread through cyberspace in an instant and numerous tributes have been flowing in from all over Australia and even New Zealand, the United States and Hong Kong. Many did not know that Beverley was so ill, and to them her all too early death came as an even greater shock than it did to those who had been visiting her or were anxious about her in recent weeks. Only a truly special person, as Beverley was, could warrant so many sincere and heart-felt tributes.

The picture of Beverley that emerges from these tributes is one of a much loved person, a person who was always ready to help. "Beverley was one of those memorable Australian law librarians I was fortunate to make contact with early in my career (in the mid 70s) and she continued to help us whenever she could", writes Alan Edwards, Law Librarian at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Ingrid Zuesse from the South Australian Attorney General's Department writes: "I knew Beverley for almost 20 years. We only met in person a few times, mainly at conferences, but we often spoke on the phone – usually when I needed some assistance. Beverley always went out of her way to help and her knowledge was remarkably deep and wide-ranging and it was only surpassed by her richness and beauty as a human being. I always loved talking to her. The last time I saw her was two years ago. Until today I did not know that she had been ill for so long. I wish I had known, so that I could have told her how much she has enriched my own and so many other people's lives. I shall miss Beverley very much."

"Beverley was the thorough professional librarian, who never left a stone unturned to help someone with the correct information. Beverley never turned down a request for assistance," writes Louis Grosfeld, adding "and I will always remember her total cheerfulness." "She always had a bright smile and a cheery story" testifies an LBC representative, Diahanna Senko."

For many years Beverley assisted Robert Watt at UTS in the teaching of their legal research skills course. Those students will remember her as a conscientious and dedicated teacher. In everything she did she was the thorough professional, who would be anxious that her best might not have been good enough. Law Librarians also learned from her. "Bev taught me everything I know about law and law librarianship," wrote one colleague. "She loved to teach, and imparted her knowledge generously."

Many of us knew that even before her final illness Beverley's life had not always been a bed of roses. But she managed to hide her personal problems well to most of us. The High Court Librarian, Jacqui Elliott, recalls that Beverley "was always so cheerful on the outside when I saw her, and she did a sterling job".

Imelda Payne has sent us from Hong Kong a list of things she remembers about Beverley:

- Her eternal optimism.
- Her enthusiasm and the way she would go up to anyone and say the most outrageous things that only she could get away with.
- Beverley at conferences always sitting in the front row and absorbing every word.
- Beverley's plans for reform: 'this year I am not going to work back late, but leave at 5 o'clock each day' (this resolution wouldn't even last a day!), but it would be back on the list next year.
- Beverley always cutting a dash with expensive clothes (worn to great effect, I might add, so it was not a waste of money) – clothes before food seemed to be Beverley's motto
- Beverley livening up many a staff meeting and library function – but only flitting through – Beverley never liked to stay sitting in the one place too long
- Beverley, who seemed so knowledgeable, and was.

Many have commented on the way Beverley dressed. She always looked smart. Even when illness was taking its toll, for example at the Australian Law Librarians' Group Christmas Party last year, she looked like "a million bucks," as someone put it. "She showed such spirit," said another. Joanna Longley and Gayle Davies went to visit her last Saturday. "She looked so well," they said, "very elegant in cream silk pyjamas and her new chic haircut."

Many of us recall Beverley's sense of justice. She would go to the highest levels and plead for people whom she thought had been treated unjustly.

Others have commented on Beverley's huge circle of friends. "She loved people." Gayle Davies has "been impressed over the last year or so by the incredible range of friends – all interesting as one would expect – who visited her in hospital."

When I went to visit her two weeks ago there were two friends there already. I felt I was intruding and did not stay long, but everyone was made to feel welcome. Robert Watt from UTS Law School noted the "huge number of visitors" Beverley had in the hospice: "It indicates the affection people held her in." As Billie Vlies from UTS put it: "Beverley was a wonderful, lively, helpful person and will be sadly missed."

We shall remember her vivacity and courageous strength. We shall all miss her bright personality and her optimism, her lust for life, and her concern for others.

It appears that Beverley had a fondness for the poetry of Christina Georgina Rossetti. She also liked Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. It was only a few weeks ago that she was upset that she was not well enough to attend a friend's funeral. She talked about wanting to read a poem herself and the one she mentioned was Gray's *Elegy*. I do not intend to recite the 32 stanzas on this occasion. Let me recite instead one of Christina Rossetti's poems, that seems particularly apt:

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

And we might also take note of another Rossetti poem:

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget

Beverley and I never really had the opportunity to discuss one's religious beliefs. That is my loss. To have known Beverley – and so many of us have had that privilege – is to have known a special human being with a deep sense of spirit. This spirit of Beverley showed itself in practice. It is this spirit of hers which is encapsulated in the words of the Prophet Micah: "What the Lord requires of you is to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" [Micah, 6:8]. May she rest in peace!

Rob Brian

Parliamentary Librarian
New South Wales Parliament