

# Farewell, Bill Cook

*Words and pictures from the retiring Registrar's farewell dinner*

**GLEESON QC:** Bill Cook joined the Bar Association in 1965. At that time it had 423 members; its membership now numbers approximately 1000. I say approximately because the precise number of our members is a secret, we pay fees to the Law Society on a basis of capitation — the Law Council I should say — we don't yet pay fees to the Law Society.

The principal speaker this evening, by his own request, with the common and warm consent of the Bar Association, is the member of the Bar Council who probably had the closest association with Bill Cook in recent years. That is Wheelahan, who has been our Honorary (and extremely successful) secretary.

Before Wheelahan is given the opportunity to express his feelings, there is another ceremony that has to be performed. It is customary for people who take Silk in any given year to make a gift to the Bar Association. The people who took Silk in November 1984 had the inspired notion that they would make a gift to The New South Wales Bar Association of a portrait of Captain Cook . . . Lord QC, on behalf of those who took Silk in 1984, and who had this marvelous idea of making such a handsome gift, such an appropriate gift to the Bar Association, will now make the gift.

**LORD QC:** It is, you may agree, quite unfair that an ex-airman should be called upon to present a portrait of an ex-sailor.

As Gleeson has said, it was the practice for some years now, or has been the practice for some years now, for the Silks of a given year to mark their appointments with a gift to the Association. I have to tell you, because he has told me I have to tell you, that the idea of giving the portrait of Bill Cook came from Les Downs. A group of us met last year in the President's Court about to make our bows and obeisances and he propounded this idea which was enthusiastically received and indeed

unanimously adopted by us.

There are some who think that silver and tables are more appropriate, but I speak for those whom I represent and, of course, on instructions, and we felt that it would be the perfect union of our appointments and Bill Cook's retirement that we should do something by way of portrait so that he could bear us in mind and the members of the Association still to join could bear him in mind also and be grateful for what he has done.

Mr Barron is a portrait painter of great quality, capacity and reputation. He has been welcomed on more than one occasion into Buckingham Palace to paint portraits of the Sovereign, and indeed it is not inappropriate perhaps that he should paint the portrait of Bill Cook who has himself been rewarded by the Sovereign with the award of what used to be Membership of the Royal Victorian Order.

It is regrettable perhaps that owing to some administrative change the Captain has now been demoted to Lieutenant of that Order, but still that is a matter for those who have greater say in it than we have.

May I say this, those of us who have known Bill Cook, and we all have known him, will leave this dinner with the confident assurance that we will never forget him — and we trust that he will never forget us.

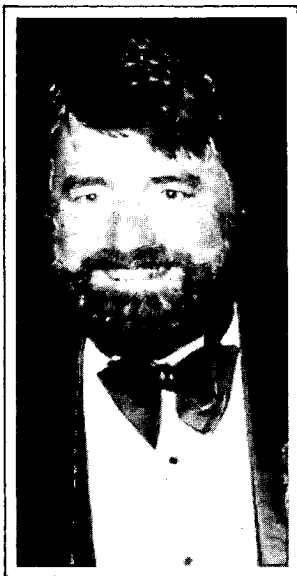
To Bill Cook we extend our thanks and to Mr Howard Barron, portraitist par excellence, we also extend our thanks for perpetuating him on what might be called "immortal canvas".

I now call on Wheelahan to propose the toast to Captain Cook.

**WHEELAHAN:** Your Excellency, Captain Cook, Mrs Cook, Judges, Knights of the Realm — there are no Peers here, we are waiting for Sir William Deane's next step on the judicial ladder. The President delivered one of his now customary opinions, it was delivered very



Sir Garfield Barwick PC, GCMG and P.J. Kenny QC. Right: Mr Justice Kirby and T.E.F. Hughes QC.



speedily, but like so many of them these days it was factually inaccurate and thoroughly useless. He has defamed me and has said very little about me you may have noticed. I have been dragged into this spot tonight and for him to suggest that I am here of my invitation is stressing it too far.

I heard Lord QC and I shed a tear as I am sure a lot of you did, it was a touching moment. But having heard him I can understand why the legislature of this great State made it obligatory

for the Crown to address first.

The man left so much unsaid, he left so many old wounds unopened. So many scandals unrevived. So many libels unpublished. My Latin embrocation for this evening is "furiosi non voluntus est", which Gleeson will tell you later means roughly "the mad are not responsible for their acts". Hence my appearance here.

Bill Cook joined us in 1964. The President in that year was Kerr QC (as he then was) — the most junior Silk was Laurence Street QC, the most junior barrister was Rod Craigie. There were 400 odd (or certainly very peculiar) members of the Bar, five of whom were female. These latter class of members of the Bar were designated with very helpful and instructive titles such as Miss or Mrs, and it was most helpful in those days because a chap had a rough idea where he stood — it is not so now of course, we are lucky to get their initials in.

In those days the Chairman of Quarter Sessions was His Honour Judge Monaghan. He was described by one of his sibling Judges in those days as "our non-playing Captain". The Judges then were colourful, multifaceted, three-dimensional chaps, nicknames were ubiquitous, and some bordered on being onomatopoeic — there was for example "The Hisser", "The Boy Wonder", "The Tired Lion", "Carter Brown", "The Black Prince", "The Funnel Web" and "The Red Nosed Reindeer". There will be a prize in the next *Bar News* for those who get them all right.

Well what do we have today. We have such inelegant appellations as "Knuckles", "The Crusher", and worst of all — what have we done to deserve this? — we have got "The Ringbarker". The Registrar has seen many of these Judges, at close quarters, but more importantly he saw with great regularity the Presidents; and haven't we had some Presidents ... The Registrar, or the not-so-retiring Registrar, who we are honouring tonight, has manfully and cheerfully shouldered the burden of being Registrar for over two decades under such benevolent regimes as that of "Admiral" Glass, "Chancellor" Samuels, "The Ayatollah" McGregor and Trevor "I've never seen a cheque so small" Morling.

He was able to struggle on, but under Gleeson's regime he has had to muster what little dignity was left to him and retire.

Long ago when the Bar was in its egalitarian mode, and that's a long time ago you will appreciate, the Bar played cricket against the articulated clerks. Hiatt QC failed to attract the gimlet eye of the selector, none other than that outgoing bon vivant and raconteur Roger (Harbour Bottoms) Gyles. Hiatt petulantly elected to play with the articulated clerks, proclaiming with uncharacteristic candour that he had once been an articulated clerk as he had once been a barrister.

Well in order to redress this imbalance, the Registrar invited the then President of Silk to play for the Bar. The President who had just successfully prevented newsmen from breaking and entering his home — one T.E.F. Hughes — said he would play but on three conditions. They were that he would be permitted to arrive after the morning tea adjournment at Central Court; that he be Captain; and that he could bring his own bat which was then, and for all we know still, bearing an exhibit stamp.

Of course Bill, when he was but a humble Assistant Registrar, was the Registrar to the very elegant, gentle, philanthropic Bernard Riley. One of the later Presidents who is neither gentle, elegant or philanthropic was Meagher.

Meagher became President in 1979. It was a turbulent, indeed nervous period for the Bar. On one occasion Meagher left Sydney to attend a convention in Hong Kong and, as he left, he could not but help deliver a backhanded and gratuitous swipe at the Law Reform Commission wherein he described the then formidable Professor Sackville and his Commissioners as being "the gang of four". He then left the shores.

It appears, on reflection, that Professor Sackville was to Roddy Meagher what Bishop Tutu is to P.W. Botha. The Registrar was understandably relieved to see Meagher out of town, but barely had his plane touched down in Kaitak when this wonderful little message came down from the Crown colony.

It was Meagher on academics. He said this: "One finds a number of Universities without a single member of staff capable of teaching Equity. There are to be sure multitudes of academic homunculi who scribble and

Mr Justice McHugh  
and K.R. Handley QC



prattle relentlessly about the non-subjects of consumerism, bail, poverty, computers and racism"; and added: "They may be dismissed from calculation. They possess neither practical skills nor legal training. They are failed sociologists".

Well after the publication of this conscientiously held opinion, the Registrar began a workmanlike impersonation of Mafeking repelling the enraged dervishes of academia. Meanwhile in Hong Kong, Meagher ordered another Chivas Regal.

It would be inappropriate to give this gathering a glossary of the Presidents that have been serviced and assisted by the Registrar without mentioning the Presidency of the now Mr Justice McHugh. There was a slight, barely perceptible shift in approach when Meagher moved out of the Chair and the Judge moved in. We moved from the indigo of Meagher's Tory philosophy to the pinkish-tinged policies of the Gucci Bolshevik. This smoked salmon socialist espousing deep waterfront socialism, brought to the Bar a new love of horse racing.

But as I say, Bill was able to weather all of these storms until the arrival of Gleeson.

It is with great regret that the New South Wales Bar loses a man with Bill's knowledge of the Bar and of barristers. Every Judge sitting in New South Wales who was appointed from the ranks of barristers was appointed after Captain Cook came to the Bar as Assistant Registrar and then as Registrar.

He has maintained the Association on a steady course during some particularly troubled times, and it is with great regret that I see him go. He has been a great assistance to all members of the Bar, particularly young barristers, and he is a most highly regarded and most highly respected man.

**CAPTAIN W.F. COOK:** Thank you for that painting, what can I say about having my portrait painted other than to thank, most profusely, the Silks of 1984; and in particular Les Downs.

I did give him the Cromwellian instruction that it was to be "warts and all", but Mr Barron, whom the donors were so lucky to be able to commission — almost as you might say in between visits to Buckingham Palace to paint Her Majesty — has over complimented a somewhat more humble subject. I am thrilled with it and I do hope the Bar approves also.

Unlike Sir Laurence, who hangs outside Banco in what is now known as Five Ways (Paddington barristers will recognise of course that that is where all the Streets meet) I will probably finish up hanging around David Martin's bar.

However, wherever I am hung I will, in the words of the Prayer Book, "Be amongst you and remain with you always". And I am now able to say — proudly — that I did *not* leave the Bar Association "unwept, unhonoured and unhung".



*"Sunset and evening Star  
and one clear Call for me  
And may there be no  
moaning of the BAR  
When I put out to Sea".*

The Chief Justice, Sir Laurence Street, Mr Justice Cantor, Kevin Murray QC and Cecily Backhouse

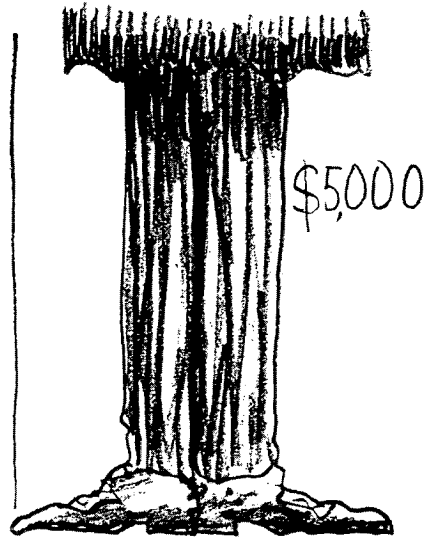
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R.P. Meagher QC



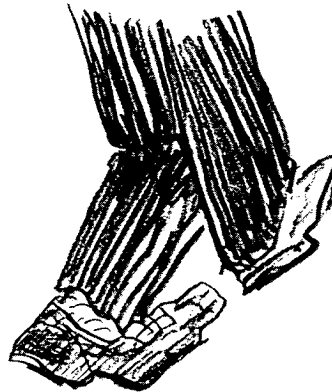
# A day out in the Compensation Court

with  
Kirkham  
and  
Poulos

\$30,000!

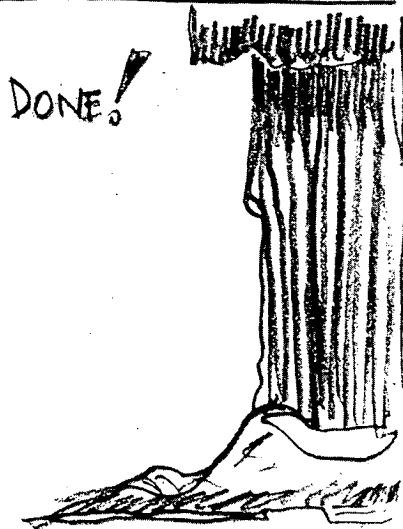


TAKE YOUR  
\$5000 AND....



YES, I KNOW

LATER...  
\$12,500!



LATER... MUCH LATER

HE WOULD'VE TAKEN  
\$5000  
HA HA



THEY WOULD'VE  
PAID \$25,000

