

Major-General Kevin Murray AO, OBE, RFD, ED, QC

The death of Kevin Murray on Easter Day deprived the Bar of a fearless fighter, the Army of a senior soldier and the community of a colourful member.

Whilst each of us is the poorer for his passing, each is richer for having known him and each should be buoyed up with the knowledge that he entered eternal life on the very day The Saviour rose in signification of our redemption.

The record books tell us the facts of his admission to the Bar on 29 November, 1957 - nearly 34 years ago; that he was appointed one of Her Majesty's Counsel in 1973; that he was one of the most senior members of the Bar and that he had been a Silk for longer than more than 80% of our Bar has been in practice.

They record his decorations and honours - his appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1971 and as an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1982. They tell of his high military rank but they do not tell us about the real man - barrister, soldier, husband and father. They are silent about his personal characteristics, characteristics which endeared him to so many, characteristics which we remember today.

Most who are present today to do him honour will have some vignette which we carry with us, a cameo of which Kevin Murray is a part, generally central - for he was a dominant character, a big man whose presence was always felt.

I first met Kevin Murray in 1954. We were in camp at Singleton. He was a Captain in the Sydney University Regiment, I a Corporal, his assistant. As he was then, so was he throughout his long and successful career at the Bar.

I found it easy to empathise with him for he had much about him that was Irish. A gift with words, a sense of fun, an ability to laugh at himself and the world. Like much which has an Irish background he was a paradox.

He was big and tough, yet at the same time gentle and soft hearted. In Court he could be a bruising cross-examiner, a Nemesis who would pursue a witness until he got the admission he was seeking. Yet he was gentle and generous to a fault even with those, perhaps especially with those, whom the world would judge as undeserving. Kevin never judged in that way. He merely responded to need.

He did cases that won the headlines and earned for him an enviable reputation and, dare I say in today's climate, even substantial fees. That was the public perception.

However, throughout his career he did many, many cases which attracted no publicity and for which he charged no fees. In the best traditions of the Bar, he did them out of a sense of duty and because he was always one who felt strongly for the underdog and who responded to a hard luck story.

He was exuberant, extroverted and gregarious. He shared the good times, his successes, with all. He loved the limelight. That again was public perception.

But, he was also a very private person. Family life was removed from the public arena and shielded from the glare of the arclights. When he had problems few were aware of them. He kept them very much to himself.

He was a proud man - proud of being a General Officer, proud of being a Queen's Counsel, a leader at the Bar. He loved his uniform. He loved the silken gown. He revelled in the trappings of the Mess and of the Court.

Yet, Kevin Murray never forgot that he was a country lad of humble origins. Although he had made good, as a person with talent and tenacity can in Australia, he always had time for people, however down on their luck they may have been.

He was unconventional, yet at the same time a traditionalist. In Court, he would do the unexpected. Yet the traditions of the profession were dear to him and respect for the law and its institutions always to the fore.

Kevin was a man with a big heart. He was a man who loved his work - work that he was good at. He was a good barrister. Not for him the shirk-

ing of the unpopular cause or the unattractive client. In the best traditions of the Bar he did the hardest cases and he did them well.

I last saw Kevin in Gloucester House some three weeks ago. We spoke of old times. Of the good times. Of the happy times. He was clearly dying and he knew it. But he faced death with that same fortitude, that same resolution, that same tenacity which he had displayed throughout his professional life.

In his last days he was as he had been when I first knew him, big hearted, soft and gentle, an emotional man. He was an adornment to the profession and to our community.

To his wife Lyn and to his children on behalf of the profession I extend sincere sympathy at his passing. The members of the profession hope that his achievements, which will live long after him, will be a source of comfort for them in this the time of their loss.

□ B.S.J. O'Keefe QC

