

Tribute

Alice Springs practitioner Stephen Winter - among other things a former CAALAS solicitor and Deputy Coroner died tragically in a motor vehicle accident during the Christmas period. His friends and colleagues gathered for a memorial service at the Supreme Court in Alice Springs to farewell him.

The service was led by John Birch of the Alice Springs DPP and a number of Steve's colleagues shared their memories of him. Excerpts of the transcript follow.

Mr Warren Donald, SM

"When asked recently whether I would deliver a eulogy for Steve, I hastily referred, as most lawyers do, to the Concise Oxford Dictionary so that I might have some better idea as to the limitations I should place on the words that I should say. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines 'eulogy' as a speech in praise of a person.

I immediately foresaw that knowing Steve and some of his exploits, I might be limited in what I could say. But with further thought, I realised that any story concerning Steve's exploits was really in praise of him because he was a person who lived life to the full, a person who fully enjoyed life. And as I've already noticed from the people gathered here, there aren't too many really sad faces because Steve wasn't that sort of person. This is indeed a celebration of Steve's life

[...] After admission in 1980 Steve worked as a solicitor in the Victorian firm of Oakley Thompson and Co. before joining the army as a legal officer in 1982. It was during his time in the Army that Steve developed his passion for 4-wheel driving. After leaving the Army in the late 1980s, Steve worked for the Legal Aid Commission of Victoria as it was then known. His great delight was always his court work, despite occasional reservations about his clients.

I am informed that he once showed great patience when taking instructions from a client accused of theft of a motor vehicle. The client revealed a *modus operandi* extraordinarily similar to that which had resulted in the treasured Falcon from Glenroy Legal Aid several weeks beforehand, and after Steve had spent a wholly unjustifiable amount of money restoring it to mint condition. Through gritted teeth Steve won the case. He then suggested to the jubilant youth in terms that could not possibly be misunderstood, that his future field of operations should not include the Legal

Aid Commission of Victoria car park.

[...] It took me only a short period of time to discern his roguish sense of humour. In his appearances before me, this first manifested itself in his trademark grin at appropriate times in the course of proceedings. It then progressed as we came to know each other to comments made in the course of proceedings which often had double meanings and finally manifested itself in exchanges that we would often have across the Bar table. His presence in the

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court room often added a relief to the sombre nature of very serious but seemingly never ending hearings.

Geoff Provis [of the Law Institute of Australia] described him well in these terms, and I quote: 'Stephen was probably the most liked person I've ever met. His ready humour, charm, and incisive talent endeared him to many. Whilst he held views which were often unpopular he stuck to them with a resolute will of iron. He was the truest friend that many of us will ever know. His utter loyalty and dependability were absolutes in a world where values and friendships are often transient.'

Steve's death was a tragedy. He died, however, in the company of his faithful dogs. They apparently continued to protect him in the same way that they had done in Melbourne. He was a big man who touched us all. He's left a big impression on all with whom he had

contact. Steve is survived by his father, his sister, three nieces, a multitude of friends and two very grumpy dogs."

Max Horton of Martin & Partners, Steve's former employers

"Attributes which I particularly noted from our brief encounter included the following. Firstly, his phlegmatic common sense and professionalism. Secondly, his special sense of humour. I, unfortunately only got to the stage where it was the receptive side. It was a quiet, knowing sense of humour that was in his eyes. Perhaps a little example, that number plate 'Go Dons'. If I'd said to Steve, was that an example of his humour, that's something he's appreciate. And the third thing was his attraction of seemingly universal regard and affection.

So I'm pleased to have this opportunity to tender this short tribute in triplicate for the Law Society, for Martin & Partners and on my own part. Steve Winter was a special individual."

John Stirk, McBride & Stirk

"I had the opportunity in the last year to be involved in some of those coronial cases that Warren Donald's spoken about and suppose it's in the course of those that I got an appreciation of the man. I certainly spoke with him and he was, as always, as others have said, a larger than life character, a person who always had that flippancy sense of humour. And in the course of long and tortuous coronials, the odd crack at someone or something that was said always lightened the load and made the doing of the job a little bit easier.

He died on the way to doing that which he loved most, as far as I was concerned and that was really out bush, going around I think he was at his happiest when he was on his bush circuits or doing his bush trips.[...] So in that regard I suppose he was luckier than most of us, that his death was untimely but when he died he was doing what he loved most."

- Alice Springs, January 16, 1998