

# An Aussie Nobody:

## the story of an ordinary man in extraordinary circumstances...

By Charlie Parrott 1997  
NTU Uniprint

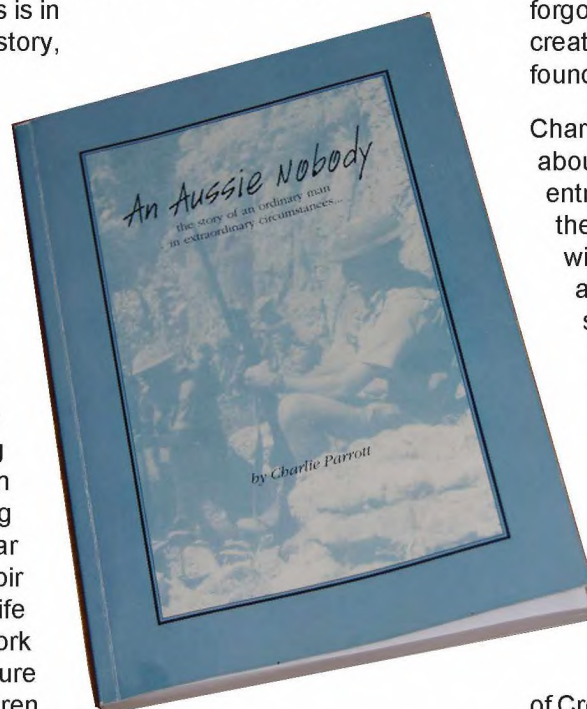
Megan Lawton,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Law Society Northern Territory

Charles Melrose Parrott's memoirs begin before his birth on 7 February 1920 in Albury Hospital and end in December 1990. Attendees at the Opening of the Legal Year celebrations will know that this is in no way the end of Charlie's story, and in 2013 he celebrates his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

Charlie's parents were living in Tangambalanga, about 25 kilometres from Albury. The memoir paints a picture of these early years that is reminiscent of A B Facey's *'A Fortunate Life.'* There is no need for the author to describe the hardship of the time; of a young family recently emigrated from England, the father returning to England to serve in the war against Germany. The memoir is a bare description of this life and people for whom hard work is a weapon for survival. Picture a mother and her older children milking 60 cows twice daily, 20 km from the nearest town, whilst father works carting cream or timber to the local factory. Milking by hand, travelling by horse and cart, no shoes for the children (only a 'best pair') who play about in the frost.

Cheeky Charlie, one of nine children, describes warming his

feet in cow pats, walking to school each day, a trip to the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, tennis tournaments and long bike rides. These days are recounted with a childish



innocence that brushes away the decades. The author does not offer excuses for his more creative pursuits, and still carries memories of his punishments for these 'offences.' This includes the time he was forgotten in detention after school and, breaking out of the locked school, he returns home only to

be punished for being late, his story not believed. These antics and resourcefulness are effective hooks, which ensnare the reader. His stories are heartfelt, stories our parents would have long ago forgotten. His resourceful and creative youth seem a necessary foundation for his later adventures.

Charlie recounts proudly of lying about his age in 1940 to achieve entry to the army. He describes the journey of his deployments with wonder, 'a fantastic adventure', shopping for souvenirs in Colombo (now Sri Lanka) and camping at the pyramids. Reports of official casualties for the battalion in each campaign (42 killed and 86 wounded), contrasts with this adventurous spirit, but this effect sparkles with a crisp truth. Charlie tells the story of missing the evacuation

of Crete because he was searching for his brother, with the same bare factual recount as his school day antics. His Battalion's losses in the Crete campaign were six killed, 22 wounded and 96 taken prisoner (of whom Charlie and his brother were two).

Charlie's antics continue as a prisoner of war. The hardship is lightened by his creativity and

resourcefulness and many lucky escapes. On 26 October 1945 he is discharged from the army having met his wife and spent 90% of his active service time as a prisoner of war.

From this point Charlie's life takes many more interesting turns that see him eventually arrive in Darwin. He recounts stories of a youthful territory with Charlie well placed to seize the abundant opportunities.

Charlie has for many years been a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Justice Council of the Northern Territory.

Maybe it is Charlie's cheeky outlook that has seen him through the years. Many will have their own family stories like Charlies and the achievement of this book is that it encourages our reflections on times past. For me the message of the book is summed up in one

simple story. Charlie manages to get on the wrong side of the CSM and later his leave is not approved. There is no reproach but a humble acceptance of this "bad luck" on Charlie's part, "this sort of thing could happen and one could do nothing about it." Charlie has in good humour accepted life's challenges and made the most of each turn of events well-armed with a capacity for hard work and resourcefulness. ●

## BOOK SHELF

The following publications are currently available to the Law Society to be reviewed by practitioners, for publication in *Balance*. Should you wish to review one of these books, please contact Suzie Simmons at [publicrelations@lawsocietynt.asn.au](mailto:publicrelations@lawsocietynt.asn.au), to arrange for it to be ordered.

	AUTHOR	TITLE	EDITION
1	Austin & Ramsey	Ford's Principles of Corporations Law	15 <sup>th</sup>
2	Clarke, Stellios & Keyzer	Hank's Aust Constitutional Law	9 <sup>th</sup>
3	Croft & Hay	Mortgagee's Power of Sale	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Dal Pont & Mackie	Law of Succession	1 <sup>st</sup>
5	Devereux & Blake	Kenny Criminal Law in Qld & WA	8 <sup>th</sup>
6	Donaghey	Termination of Employment	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7	Edgeworth, Rossiter etal	Sackville & Neave: Australian Property Law	9 <sup>th</sup>
8	Gilders, Taylor, Walpole etal	Understanding Taxation Law	2013
9	Heydon	Cross on Evidence	9 <sup>th</sup>
10	Howie & Johnson	LNA: Annotated Criminal Leg NSW	2012-2013
11	Kenny	Australian Tax	2013
12	Kenny	LN Concise Tax Legislation	2013
13	Legg	Future of Dispute Resolution	1 <sup>st</sup>
14	LexisNexis	Intellectual Property Collection	2013
15	LexisNexis	Annotated Federal Court Legislation & Rules	1 <sup>st</sup>
16	Mo	International Commercial Law	5 <sup>th</sup>
17	Rowland & Bailey	Testamentary Discretionary Trust: Precedents & Commentary	1 <sup>st</sup>
18	Shanahan, Ryan Rafter Costanzo and Hoare	Carter's Criminal Law of Queensland	19
19	Stickley	Australian Torts Law	3 <sup>rd</sup>
20	Taylor & Juchau	Financial Planning in Australia	5 <sup>th</sup>
21	Zimmermann	Western Legal Theory	1st