

PREFACE

EMERITUS PROFESSOR ERIC J. EDWARDS

Professor Eric Edwards retired from the University of Western Australia Law School on 31 December 1980, after twenty-five years distinguished and loyal service. This volume of the *Law Review* is dedicated to him by his colleagues as a mark of profound respect and admiration.

Professor Edwards was born in Burma in 1915. He attended the University of Rangoon, graduating BA with a distinction in economics in 1936 and LL.B in 1939. With the outbreak of war, he volunteered for officer training; he then spent the duration of the war fighting with the British Army in the Burma and India theatres. This is a period of his life about which, being a gentle and modest man, he has always been reticent; suffice it to say that by the time he was discharged he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

For his return to civilian life he chose to be repatriated to Australia. Passing through Fremantle *en route* to Sydney in 1947, he came up to the University and met Professor Frank Beasley, foundation Professor and first Dean of the Law School. Beasley encouraged him to enrol here to recommence his legal career. Thus there began the long association with the Law School which was to culminate in his election to the Deanship and appointment to a Chair.

His period at the Law School was a vintage one; his contemporaries included such luminaries as Sir Ronald Wilson, Sir Billy Sneddon, Mr Bob Hawke, Mr Justice Bob Jones and Mr Justice John Toohey. By all account Edwards was in no way overshadowed, graduating in 1949 with First Class honours. Articles followed, then practice as an employed solicitor, then partnership in a city law firm. But teaching beckoned, and in 1955 Beasley was able to prevail upon him to take up a senior lectureship. From that time until Beasley's retirement he was the dominant influence in the Law School.

Edwards very much followed Beasley's general approach. In academic matters he tempered his concern for excellence with compassion and generosity towards students. In professional matters, he always strove to keep the direction of the Law School reasonably congruent with the concerns of practitioners, though never at the cost of academic perspectives. He offered his lawyerly skills and great common sense to the University generally, participating in an apparently unending suc-

cession of those committees without which University governance cannot proceed. He served a two-year term as Chairman of the Professorial Board in 1977/78.

In his area of academic expertise—criminal law, criminology and evidence—Edwards was a noted researcher (gaining his doctorate at Northwestern University in 1964), writer, teacher and practitioner. His 1969 Casebook on the Law of Evidence in Australia was the first—and remains the best—of its kind. A reviewer in the *Australian Law Journal* described it as “quite masterly”. Similarly, his Casebook on the Criminal Code broke new ground in Australia by highlighting that the Code was a subject fit for study on its own merits, not merely a footnote to common law concepts.

In pursuing all his interests, Eric Edwards retained his links with the outside community—for example convening, at a time when the various practitioners of the criminal justice system seemed barely aware of one another’s existence, let alone of the need for mutual communication, a Corrections Study Group. In another notably far-sighted initiative, he was largely responsible for setting up the Law Reform Committee, which ultimately evolved into the present-day Commission.

Since his retirement, Eric Edwards has remained active and productive—for example, conducting an Inquiry into modes of juvenile correction in the State and working on new editions of his books. His contribution to the Law School has been, and remains, unique.

RICHARD HARDING,
Dean