

## Chapter 2

### Speech in Honour of JRF Lehane\*

Warden, ladies and gentlemen:

The most striking point about John Lehane was that though he was born with numerous gifts, and later came to enjoy further advantages, he selflessly returned them many times over to other people all his life.

His father was a gentleman of the utmost courtesy and geniality. His mother was a gracious and kind woman. They were able to provide a comfortable, happy and civilised home for him and his brother. His family brought him, a future lawyer, one other great advantage. Seven years before he was born, one of the sisters of his mother had married a barrister—nearly briefless, as all barristers were during the depression, but a man of immense learning and intense patriotism—Victor Windeyer. John was profoundly influenced by his characteristics. Indeed, though the particular combination of his uncle's qualities was unique, the nephew developed similar qualities in a special conjunction of his own.

At the age of 18 John came to these beautiful buildings to spend four years pursuing an Honours Degree in Latin. He wrote a thesis on Lactantius, the man who gave the Emperor Diocletian a verbal battering from which that grim ruler's reputation has never recovered. He must have been for a time, and perhaps for a long time, the leading Australian authority on Lactantius. He held various offices as an undergraduate, following them in later years with service as Senior Tutor, Fellow of the Council and Chairman of the Council.

After a year abroad, he graduated in law with the University Medal, and began speedily to obtain the reputation for skilful legal analysis which spread steadily and widely through his life.

At this point fortune gave him her finest gift—30 years of marriage to Rosalind and an intensely happy family life with their four children.

Apart from his labours for this College, on the Council of Pymble Ladies College, and in many professional activities above and beyond the call of duty within and outside his firm, he taught equity part-time at the University of Sydney Law School for 28 years. No-one who has not done it can fully understand the dedication called for in carrying out little recognised and scarcely remunerated work of this type for three or four hours per week—whatever the weather, whatever his health, whatever the clamant needs of his clients, whatever the intense pressure of other demands on his time and energy.

Throughout his professional career he earned a national reputation in numerous fields of commercial law, particularly banking law. One source of this reputation was his extraordinary skill in lucidly and dispassionately setting out the elements of a problem

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\* St Paul's College, University of Sydney, 24 September 2002.

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.