



ON THE FRONT COVER

CHIEF JUDGE ROBERT METZGER

By Grant Burnyeat, Q.C.

I was delighted to be asked to write a few words about my classmate Robert Metzger, who assumed the position of Chief Judge of the Provincial Court on February 1, 1995.

As you may know, "*metzger*" means "butcher" in German. Despite this, the North American branch of the Metzgers and His Honour have absolutely no acquaintance with that particular occupation. In fact, His Honour showed an aversion to bovine by-products which are from time to time evident in his courtroom. Bob was born on January 8, 1941 in Port Arthur in -40°C weather. Local residents still speak about the birth and the warm spell in their reminiscences. During high school, Bob played alto saxophone and the piano and was part of the Colosimo Band, which he describes as a "60-piece accordion band". Luckily, no recordings have survived that experience. He completed his grade 12 in 1959 and went to work for a bank in Thunder Bay (as it had become) to earn enough money to be able to go further in his education. During high school, Bob had a number of part-time jobs and summer jobs as his predilection towards hard work and a number of jobs was formed early. He attended Ryerson Institute, where he graduated in 1963 with a diploma in business administration, an accounting major and a minor in pens and pencils. "Thunder Bay" became "Hudson's Bay" for Bob as he moved to Vancouver and spent five years in the executive programme of the Hudson's Bay Company — two years in merchandising and three years in personnel. When he resigned in 1968 to attend the regional college on Burnaby Mountain known by some as SFU, Bob was the manager of the training department at the Bay. It was at SFU that Bob developed his ability to perform academically while juggling two or three part-time jobs in order to finance both his studies and the expensive buying habits he had picked up when he had worked for the Bay. Bob commenced an honours psychology programme at a time when SFU was plagued by unrest (a former president of a U.S. college described teaching in the late 1960s as "casting imaginary pearls before real swine"). His choice of programmes was part of his continued interest in people and what motivates them, what "make them tick" and how to work well with everyone.

Bob entered law at UBC in 1970 and graduated in 1973. While there, he had part-time jobs as a Faculty of Commerce public speaking lecturer, the moot court registrar, an examination marker, a research assistant, and a bartender at Cecil Green Park. He also had summer jobs with the Office of the Public Trustee and as a prison guard. His other jobs over the years include stints as residence clerk, fire tower operator, shipping clerk, advertising salesperson, circulation manager, store clerk, mason's helper, general construction worker and truck driver. This diversity

has put him in the forefront of those who have been described as not being able to keep a steady job.

At law school, Bob was a delight. He didn't get the best marks, but he did keep the best notes. He was always prepared to assist those of us who were "technologically challenged" to explain the elaborate numbering system and five-colour highlighting system that he used to take the best notes in law school. Not surprisingly, his system has never been equalled or, oddly enough, repeated. Despite his three part-time jobs, he always found time for socializing at law school. He makes friends easily and those friendships are long-lasting.

Bob articulated at Lawrence & Shaw (as it then was) before moving to Prince George with Wilson King & Company, to Prince Rupert with classmate and now Provincial Court Judge Dave Smyth, to Victoria with Clay & Company and then to form his own firm in Victoria where he was joined by classmates Bruce Buckler and Trudi Brown and by non-classmate Judy Millikan.

Before being appointed to the Provincial Court on April 10, 1980, Bob practised in the areas of family, youth, Superintendent of Child Welfare, corporate/commercial, civil litigation and Crown and defence criminal law and in diverse areas of the province — Masset, Port Simpson, Queen Charlotte City, Terrace, Kitimat, Smithers, Williams Lake, Quesnel, Vancouver, Prince George and Victoria.

As a judge of Provincial Court, he sat in Courtenay, Duncan and Victoria. Even though he has had this considerable acquaintance with Vancouver Island, it is interesting to note that he has not, as yet, developed the English accent that is so often adopted by Island practitioners.

After serving as an administrative judge, he was appointed an Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court in 1989. He co-chaired the Courts Equality Committee (formerly the Gender Bias Committee) from 1990 to 1994 and was a member of the Provincial Judicial Council in 1992 and 1993. While a judge, he has continued his penchant for having part-time jobs. He has run an active used car business over the years as his buying whims get the better of him. He has also spent many years in the home improvement business. Luckily the latter has been limited to his efforts to add a family room and a dining room to his house and break into the *Guinness Book of Records* for "most time spent on kitchen remodelling" (10 years).

Bob has the largest collection of pens and pencils ever assembled in the free world. He is also working on his collection of art, jazz records, comedy albums and expensive bicycles. He has a photographic memory for old Monty Python skits and will launch into one at one drop of a lemming. Once he decides that he is going to do something, Bob attacks a project feverishly. At age 45, he decided to revive his interest in playing the piano and after considerable practice he successfully completed his Grade III examinations. He fishes, he runs, he bikes, he walks the dog and he moves quickly — Rapid Robert, Rocket Robert or just "Bob" will serve this province well as Chief Judge of the Provincial Court. His wife, Susan, and their children, William (6) and Katherine (4), are always a delight.

It is clear that Bob will lead the Provincial Court with the dedication, hard work and sense of humour that are always characteristic of the man.



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