



ON THE FRONT COVER

ARTHUR L. CLOSE, Q.C.

By Thomas G. Anderson, Q.C.

For over 35 years, Arthur L. Close, Q.C., has been both the face and the heart of law reform in British Columbia. He retired as executive director of the B.C. Law Institute in March of this year, and this is a suitable time to look back and celebrate his remarkable accomplishments.

Alberta born, Arthur did not come to B.C. until he was age 25, to study at UBC's Faculty of Law. He was the gold medallist of the class of 1969. But law was not Arthur's first love, and before he settled on it he was torn between engineering and the possibility of a career in the theatre. (For a period he was a member of a repertory theatre company based in Lincoln, U.K.) This might explain, to those he has astonished with his encyclopedic memory of law, his equally amazing ability to warble (if not always on key) vast amounts of vintage Kern and Gershwin, as well as his regal presence and commanding voice.

The B.C. Law Reform Commission (the "BCLRC") became fully operational in 1970. It was an important time for law reform. The attention of a formal body to bring the law into the 20th century was desperately needed. Arthur joined this brain trust in 1972 and became its counsel in 1973, a full-time member in 1979 and vice-chair in 1983. In 1984, he succeeded Mr. Justice Aikins as chair, a position he held until the BCLRC was replaced by the British Columbia Law Institute in 1997. Under his watch, the BCLRC published numerous reports, sparking substantial legislative change.

In 1997, under Arthur's leadership, the British Columbia Law Institute (the "BCLI")—a private, non-profit agency that functions as a centre for legal policy development and law reform—was created as a successor to the BCLRC. It began as an orphan, sharing space with PLTC in the midst of

CLE's premises. In 10 short years, the BCLI has become a major player in the world of law reform, now generously housed through the Faculty of Law at UBC.

Arthur's central role in the work of the BCLRC and the BCLI are justly matters of which he can be proud, and for which B.C. owes him a major debt of gratitude. However, his contributions run much further than these.

In the early 1990s, Arthur was a board member of the Plain Language Institute. His efforts in this respect were long prefaced by the standards he insisted upon for the work of the BCLRC, whose reports were produced with the object of explaining the law, however complicated, in the clearest, simplest terms possible.

Arthur's involvement in law reform has also occupied the national stage. For over 28 years he has been a B.C. delegate to the Uniform Law Conference of Canada (the "ULCC"). Between 1998 and 2002, Arthur served in a number of leadership positions with the ULCC, culminating in a term as president in 2001–2002. During that period, the ULCC brought forward many uniform Acts and embarked on a commercial law strategy that would not only tackle commercial law topics comprehensively, but would at the same time take the crucial steps necessary to advocate for the recommended legal changes.

In the 1970s, Arthur was a member of the influential Model Uniform Personal Property Security Act Committee, chaired by Jacob Ziegel, which made a significant contribution to developing Canadian personal property security legislation. In 1991, he was a founding member of the Canadian Conference on Personal Property Security Law, and between 1992 and 1996 he was a member of the PPSA Consultative Committee to the B.C. Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations.

Arthur has also been instrumental in fostering bonds between law reformers in Canada and internationally. In 1990, he helped to create the Federation of Law Reform Agencies of Canada (the "FOLRA"), and he served as its chair from 1991 to 1995. One of FOLRA's key initiatives was the creation of a series of workshops held periodically to bring law reform staff together from across the country for education and networking. In 1996, Arthur arranged for a meeting of international law reformers under the auspices of FOLRA, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Law Conference taking place in Vancouver that year.

As chair of the BCLRC and executive director of the BCLI, Arthur has been an *ex officio* member of the CBA's Provincial Council (B.C.) for many years. Since 2001, he has been the B.C. regional editor of the *Canadian Business Law Journal*. In 2005 he became (and continues to be) the leader of the Canadian delegation on the Joint USA–Canada–Mexico Project on Devel-

oping a Harmonized Legal Framework for Unincorporated Non-profit Associations.

Arthur also has an unparalleled collection of legal art and memorabilia. Some think he was forced to create the BCLI because his home lacked the wall space to house the collection. It is an astonishing array of legal portraiture, courthouses, legal costumes, historical events, caricatures and ancient documents and a delight to all who visit the institute (not to mention the mainstay of a small framing business in New Westminster).

On the domestic front, Arthur and his wife, Lynne, recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. They live in a heritage home in New Westminster and, for many years, have been working, incrementally, to restore its former glory.

Arthur's engineering background has stood him in good stead in these technological years. His first personal computer was built from a kit before they were available for retail purchase, and in 1977 he helped found the West Coast Computer Society. Arthur also promoted the development of online legal research services. By 1976, the BCLRC was one of the first Quicklaw test sites. The BCLRC had computers for text processing by 1977, and by 1986 each staff lawyer had a computer and was expected to use it—a familiar idea today, but virtually unheard of then. At a time when much of the Web consisted of idle promises of information, Arthur recognized its value as a publishing alternative and placed all of the BCLRC work online. Arthur was also a pioneer in the development of online databases. The BCLI currently hosts the Law Reform Database (tracking all Canadian, Commonwealth and U.S. law reform publications), first developed under the sponsorship of the BCLRC in the 1980s.

A dinner to celebrate Arthur's career was held on March 29 and was well attended by B.C. luminaries of the bench and bar, all friends of law reform. The highlight was a fitting and eloquent review of Arthur's career by Mr. Justice MacKenzie. It was one of those rare evenings, marked by a great sense of friendship and warm reflection.

Arthur's retirement poses a challenge for the institute to see how well it can function without his daily guidance. Reflecting on Arthur's career and how much law reform and the BCLI have meant to him, one can only wonder how difficult it must be for him, too, to set down the reins. Fortunately for the BCLI, Arthur has a continuing role as a volunteer board member of the institute, a position which, one hopes, he will occupy for many years to come.

