



ON THE FRONT COVER

THOMAS S. WOODS

By Brian J. Wallace, Q.C. and D. Michael Bain

The appointment of the Honourable Judge Tom Woods to the Provincial Court last October, while no doubt a good thing, has regrettably brought to an end his 11 years as editor of the *Advocate*. In those years, and the six preceding them when Tom was assistant editor, he spent countless hours making this journal an exceptional resource for every lawyer in the province.

Imagine, if you will, that on top of your full-time legal practice you have another full-time job in which you choose who is going to be on the cover of the most widely distributed legal magazine in British Columbia. You devise a topic for, and then write an uncredited editorial for, each issue. You oversee a part-time staff of five: an assistant editor, a business manager, a proofreader, a typesetter and a cover artist. You review and edit (several times) almost every article, letter, report, summary, notice, biography and obituary that gets published. You personally check every single footnote and legal citation relied on by every contributor. You handle letters and grumbles to the editor (frequently responding in a very witty manner); you ensure the profession is updated on important substantive and procedural changes in the law; and you keep abreast of political, legal and societal changes affecting members of the profession. You keep track of appointments to the bench, retirements from the bench, people changing firms and positions; you arrange for obituaries and tributes for members past and present. And, somewhere along the way, you collect trivia and anecdotes to amuse and entertain your colleagues. Now imagine doing this for 17 years and, being Tom, using a lot of really big words.

Since 2003, Tom served as one of the judges assigned to evaluate entries in the legal journalism category for the Jack Webster Foundation Awards

for Excellence in British Columbia Journalism. In 2006, he received the UBC Law Alumni Association Award of distinction.

Among all of this Tom had a busy law practice, too. He was called to the bar on May 28, 1988, and practised civil litigation at Lawson Lundell LLP, where he headed its defamation and media law practice. In the 1990s, Tom was a member of the defence team for W.R. Grace in the mammoth *Privest* asbestos litigation, the first toxic tort action in Canada. After a 182-day trial, all claims were dismissed. Perhaps as a result, Judge Woods has a particular interest in expert witnesses, having co-edited and contributed chapters to *British Columbia Civil Trial Handbook* (Vancouver: CLE), and *Expert Evidence in British Columbia Civil Proceedings* (Vancouver: CLE, 2005), both now in second editions.

He is a member of the U.K. Academy of Experts, which has duly provided him with the excuse of “working” holidays in England, where he habitually indulges in the dark art of book collecting. It will come as no surprise that Tom is an inveterate bookworm. His home has bookshelves that house 107 linear feet of books (a feat carefully negotiated with and patiently tolerated by Lydia). When on holiday anywhere, Tom always makes a beeline for the nearest antiquarian bookshop. No wonder then that he is intimately familiar with every second-hand bookshop in Charing Cross Road, London.

But that’s not all. Outside of law, Tom has reviewed books for the *Globe and Mail* and the *Vancouver Sun*, edited William C. McConnell’s *Raise No Memorial: Selected Short Stories* (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1989) and contributed to the *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2000).

Tom achieved all this over the span of his legal career. It is a legal career shorter than most, for it was not his first career but his second. Tom holds a B.A. from the Department of Psychology at UBC and an M.A. from the Department of Educational Psychology/Special Education, UBC. He worked as a behaviour therapist, research and training coordinator and executive director of Laurel House, an agency treating persons with autism and severe developmental disabilities. Needing a doctorate that would have taken him across the country, he decided instead to switch careers and enrolled in the law school at UBC. In his previous professional incarnation, his literary leanings were also evident, as he wrote extensively in the field of behaviour therapy for publications in Canada, the United States and Europe.

In all that, Tom also found time to excel in at least two further respects. First, at the impressionable age of 11, he engineered his family’s emigration from the metropolis that was Terrace Bay, Ontario, to the west coast. His parents, Ernie and Phyllis, packed up Tom, his brother Murray and his

sister Barb, and left behind the cold Ontario winters. Today, Tom is the most easterly of all the Woods clan, with the other members now residing on Vancouver Island. Were she alive today, his mum would be rightly proud of Tom.

Second, together with his first wife, Vi, he finds time to be a patient and loving parent to his daughter Nicola and stepson Jesse. He also plays the role of the learned and metropolitan uncle to his Woods nephews, Simon and Ian, and his niece, Emily. But those are not his only nephews and nieces! He is also uncle to Alec and Isaac. Having met the approval of Laura, their mother, and Giorgio, their uncle, Tom was permitted to marry the effervescent Lydia. Not surprisingly, Lydia, the daughter of Giorgio and Carmen Lovison, enchanted Tom and engendered in him a love for all things Italian, including the language. Exemplary of the diligence he brings to most tasks, Tom has become fluent in Italian, though his use of big words in that tongue is probably not as prolific as in English. He also needs to work on his gesticulation. Nonetheless, he tackles the frequent Lovison gatherings with aplomb and in Italian.

Still, that is not all! And this is the best part, so I will leave it in the words of the address given by Tom's friend, Michael Bain, upon the occasion of Tom's welcome to the court:

I am perhaps better suited than most for revealing the real Tom Woods, having played loud and unrelenting rock and roll with him for the past six years in Vancouver's top legal band: Mr. Fancy Education.

Like all great rock guitarists, Tom Woods's story is legend. The legend of Woods started about six years ago, where for his mid-life crisis, instead of buying a red sports car, he bought a black Gibson SG electric guitar on ebay and had it delivered to the office. OK, not exactly rags to riches. I was there the day the guitar arrived, and I got to watch Tom open that case and pick the precious instrument up as gently as if it were a newborn infant. As soon as it was around his neck, the room darkened, a spotlight shone from nowhere, and Woods was poised in Rock God Pose #1—legs apart, head cocked back and right fist poised to slam out that first ear-splitting chord...

...But the managing partner soon came by, and we had to pretend we were discussing expert reports on product liability...

Within weeks, Tom and I had decided to form a band, and every time I would look over and see Tom Woods with the same SG that Pete Townshend had played at Woodstock slung round his neck, his sneer firmly in place, leaping in giant spreadeagle formation and arms flailing windmill-like, I would be instantly transported to Townshend's rock-opera masterpiece, *Tommy!*

This is where the relationship to *Tommy, The Rock Opera* ends, because Judge Thomas S. Woods is not Tommy. He is not deaf, dumb or blind, and as far as I know he doesn't play a mean pinball. I'd just like to state that I commend the Judicial Council for recognizing the absence of these traits in their recommendation to appoint Judge Woods.

Judge Woods, you bring a great deal of humanity to the bench which, coupled with your legal wisdom, your dedication to the law and your compassion for others, is going to mean a lot to the administration of justice in this province. On behalf of the Vancouver Bar Association, I sincerely congratulate you on the start of an epic rock opera.

Long live rock!

It seems to those of us who have worked with Judge Woods (or indeed ridden his coattails into the rock and roll limelight) that he has all the right attributes for a judge. He is bright, self-effacing, respectful and patient, with the bonus of having a great sense of humour. He will be missed at Lawson Lundell for all those fine attributes. No more will we see him (at all hours) seated behind his desk, in the glow of his one lamp, applying his talents to whatever was then on his desk.

We are absolutely certain that Tom will make a swell judge.



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