



ON THE FRONT COVER

ROBERT C. BRUN,
CBABC PRESIDENT 2003-2004

This issue of the *Advocate* honours Robert Brun, who assumed the position of president of the B.C. Branch of the Canadian Bar Association in August 2003, for a one-year term.

Robert Charles Brun was born in 1952 to Mona and Paul. Many may recognize Mona Brun as a local media personality who hosted the Woodward's cooking show on BCTV for many years. Mona is now 83 years old, active and healthy. One of her earlier cookbooks has just been reprinted.

Robert graduated from high school at Prince of Wales in 1970. It was there that he met the love of his life, Pamela Clarke, whom he married August 9, 1975, while in law school. A recent display of Pam's and Robert's wedding pictures afforded guests a retrospective glance into the 1970s: one of the pictures shows the happy couple signing the register with the minister under a picture of Jesus: Pam is a young and refreshing flower-bride-child, and Robert's hair is longer than Jesus's.

The 1970s surely exerted a formative influence over all who grew up to maturity during that decade. Robert has said on more than one occasion that the movie *Easy Rider* changed his life. Nobody is quite sure what he meant by that remark.

Robert articulated with the Workers' Compensation Board in 1977-78 and then briefly left the WCB after his call to the bar to practise in association with Richard Chan and Doug McCrimmon. He then returned to the board's legal team until 1984. Most lawyers never get to the Supreme Court of Canada in their lifetimes: Robert got there after one year of call, when he successfully defended

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the appeal of *Gibb v. Schroeder* argued by the formidable Terry Robertson. That case involved an application of the "worker v. worker" bar in an auto accident case. Robert continues to be one of the leading experts in the application of the worker v. worker bar in British Columbia.

During his years as a member of the WCB legal team, he came under the tutelage of the late Bob Goseltine, who practised as a distinguished in-house counsel with ICBC and the WCB for over 30 years until his passing two years ago. Goseltine was a person of good sense who made a lasting impression on Robert with his practicality and humour. In one case, Robert sought out Goseltine's sense of what to do in a case where a particularly obnoxious individual litigant was trying to serve Robert personally with a Writ of Summons. Goseltine advised: "Remember, you're not glued to the floor."

Robert began in time to be known himself as a man of understated courtroom humour. In one case, against his soon-to-be partner, Lyle Harris, Robert was acting for a Mr. George, a truck driver who was injured when a cow, owned by the farmer Harris represented, broke through a fence and ran out onto Highway 1, colliding with George's vehicle and injuring George. When Robert found out that the neighbour's dog, who was in heat at the time, had actually chased the cow onto the road, Robert applied in chambers to add the dog owner to the action. Robert told the chambers judge: "This is the man/who owned the dog/that chased the cow/that broke the fence/and hit the truck/that George drove."

Robert and his law partner of 19 years, Lyle Harris, commenced practising together in 1984. Janet Atkinson, now a sole practitioner in Langley, was a partner in the firm from 1984 to 1993, and Jane Whiteley, who now practises in Sechelt with her husband, Hugh Jones, was a partner from 1986 to 1988. The firm has grown slowly but surely over the years to six lawyers, seven legal assistants, three secretaries, a receptionist/clerk and an office manager.

Unlike his more famous mother, Robert has always shunned the public spotlight; his formidable advocacy skills are known only to the clients he passionately represents, his close colleagues and the lawyers whom he has soundly whipped in court. Derek Cave, sometimes known for his not-so-politically-correct humour, dubiously honoured Robert at a Trial Lawyers Association Christmas dinner a few years ago with an award as "defence lawyer of the year": the award was a plastic rat. The rat now sits proudly, occasionally draped with a little rat Santa hat, on top of Robert's computer.

On one occasion, after a particularly stinging cross-examination on the sordid proclivities of an opposing litigant, the drawn-and-quartered adversary cornered Robert at the morning recess and stated: "You have a dirty mind, I kill you, you s***!!"—whereupon the court clerk ordered the courtroom cleared, and the trial proceeded under the watchful eye of a sheriff's officer. Robert continued with his calm, deliberate approach, and at the end of a week's trial, Mr. Justice B.D. MacDonald dismissed the opposing litigant's case with costs.

As Robert's practice flourished, so did his family life. James was born in 1981, Jenny in 1983 and Kent in 1986. Robert participated in the sporting activities of

his family: as James's soccer coach, as spectator at Jenny's softball and Kent's football games, and with the whole family in skiing and biking at their Whistler condominium. All the children are doing well: James is at SFU, Jenny at UBC and Kent is in Grade 12 at Windsor High School in North Vancouver. By an amazing coincidence the Harris children are the same ages as the Brun children, and together, the joint families' mixed softball team, with the help of some firm members, annually vanquishes the rival mixed softball team from ICBC Head Office Claims in a fun event. As Robert heads the post-game toast "to peace, order and good government" (Robert's favourite and *only* toast), nobody appears to notice that his physical contribution to the team's success diminishes steadily.

Robert's work for the service of the public and his profession includes pro bono work, work at Dugald Christie's Self-Help Legal Aid Clinic and work as panelist or speaker in many programs put on by the continuing Legal Education Society and Trial Lawyers Association. In 1997 Robert became an elected member of the Provincial Council of the Canadian Bar Association, vice-president for 2002-03 and now president for 2003-04.

We wish Robert all the best during his year as CBABC president, and in the years to come.





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