

**HIS  
SPIRIT  
LIVES ON**

**Memories and anecdotes around the time of  
the death of W.W. (Bill) Mitchell on 16th July 1996**



# DEATH IN THE STATE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

1	REGISTRATION NUMBER	1/ 3349/96/C IN THE DISTRICT OF PERTH		
2	(1) SURNAME (2) GIVEN NAMES (3) PLACE OF DEATH  (4) DATE OF DEATH (5) OCCUPATION AGE AND SEX (6) USUAL ADDRESS (7) PLACE OF BIRTH (8) YEARS LIVED IN EACH AUSTRALIAN STATE	Mitchell William Willaton Hollywood Private Hospital, Nedlands 16th July 1996 Public Relations Practitioner 73 years Male. 9 Elgon Hill, Willetton, Western Australia Tien-Tsin, China Victoria ( 19). Western Australia ( 49).		
3	(1) FATHER'S NAME (2) FATHER'S OCCUPATION (3) MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME (4) MOTHER'S OCCUPATION	Albert Ernest Mitchell Deputy Commissioner Chinese Maritime Customs Elsie Margaret Willaton Journalist		
4	(1) MARITAL STATUS  MARRIAGE PARTICULARS	Married (2) PLACE OF MARRIAGE Geelong, Victoria	(3) DATE OF MARRIAGE 20th October 1944	(4) TO WHOM MARRIED Haivis Eileen Alison Renshaw
5	NAMES AND AGES OF CHILDREN IN THEIR ORDER OF BIRTH	Helen M 51 years, Cynthia J 49 years, Beverly A 47 years, John W 45 years, Russell G 37 years		
6	CAUSE OF DEATH <i>(Approximate interval between onset of disease or condition and death shown in brackets)</i>	Renal failure (2 days), Prostate carcinoma (4 months), Sepsis (2 weeks), (Contributory Cause) Pulmonary embolism (2 weeks)		
7	(1) NAME OF DOCTOR (2) DATE LAST SEEN ALIVE	Dr S Vijayasekaran 15th July 1996		
8	(1) PLACE OF BURIAL OR CREMATION (2) DATE (3) PERSON CERTIFYING (4) CREMATION OFFICIAL (5) OFFICIATING MINISTER (6) RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION (7) WITNESSES	- 17th July 1996 D Kirk - - - M Peterson R Bonfour Delivered to the School of Anatomy, University of Western Australia, Crawley, Western Australia, and held there in the interests of science.		
9	(1) INFORMANT'S NAME (2) ADDRESS (3) DESCRIPTION	Darryl Kirk School of Anatomy, University of Western Australia, Crawley, WA 6907 Person Disposing of Body		
10	DATE OF REGISTRATION	30th July 1996	REGISTERED AT PERTH BY D G Stockins	

\*\*\* End of Record \*\*\*

I certify that the above is a true copy of the particulars recorded in a Register kept in the Office of the Registrar General, Perth, Western Australia.

DATE 31st July 1996

REGISTRATION OFFICER



*Song of Australia*

*We love this land  
Australians share together.  
Our hearts belong.  
The land and we are one.*

*From shore to shore  
Australians stand together.  
One hundred nations  
In this land are one.*

*From age to age  
Australians build together.  
The future calls.  
We answer one by one:*

*We love this land  
Australians share together.  
Our hearts belong.  
The land and we are one.*

WW MITCHELL    December 17, 1981.

*Memorial Service*

WILLIAM WILLATON MITCHELL  
OBE, FFRJA

October 15, 1922 - July 15, 1996

*Wylah Chapel  
Karrakatta Crematorium*

*Perth*

*Friday - July 19, 1996  
12.30 p.m.*

## **Eulogy by Sir Charles Court**

I was once talking to Bill Mitchell and I told him of my feelings when Alfred Sandover, of Sandover Medal Fame, died many years ago. One newspaper remarked : "The only shady thing Alfred Sandover ever did was to advocate shade trees in St George's Terrace."

Bill's immediate reaction was, "I like that. I only wish someone would say that about me when I pass on."

Well Bill, I've said it! You've earned it.

William Willaton Mitchell, OBE, FPRIA, was born in China, October 15, 1922.

He died Perth, Western Australia, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1996.

### **SPECIAL**

He was a very special person.

He had a remarkable career.

He sought no fame, but he set very high standards for himself. He achieved much and influenced great numbers of people and causes including many of us here today.

The fact that he was born in China gave him a different background to most. When you realise his father was in Customs in China for the British government, it immediately makes him something special and in an era which seems so long ago in the history of the British Empire as it then was.

We always regarded Bill as a "died in the wool" Western Australian. In fact, he came here after being educated at the Ballarat Church of England Grammar School 1929-39. After this he started his career in journalism at "The Courier", Ballarat, Victoria. Like so many regional papers of those times, they trained their staff well.

By 1941, he had commenced four and a half years war service with the AIF. Typical of Bill Mitchell, he became self trained in electronics during his service in signals. Also typical of Bill, in clerical mode, he designed the ordinance stock records system.

After service in Australia, Port Morseby, Lae and Morotai, he returned to "The Courier".

### **ABC NEWS SERVICE IN WA**

His service as a journalist resulted in his being sent to Perth with a small team of journalists by the Australian Broadcasting Commission to start the ABC News Service in WA in 1947 where he served seven important years as a reporter, roundsman, sub-editor and regional journalist.

In 1954 he joined "The West Australian" where he served 3 years as shipping roundsman during turbulent years of waterfront unrest.

His service also included covering the establishment of the Kwinana industrial area and the Monte Bello atomic tests. These tests he covered both for "The West Australian" and "The Times", London.

For two years he was chief political roundsman where he distinguished himself by his ability, his integrity and his fairness.

### **FIRST ACQUAINTANCE**

It was during this period that I first got to know and admire Bill Mitchell's stand on matters of principle and his insistence on the media doing its job with straightforwardness and integrity.

As a comparatively new member of the parliament in opposition, I had the temerity to introduce a bill to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act. I put a lot of work into this bill and was still brash, inexperienced enough to assume that it would be considered on its merit by the then government of the day under the Premiership of A.R.G. (Bert) Hawke - uncle of Bob Hawke.

I should have known better. Anything to do with the Industrial Arbitration Act in those days was considered to be the exclusive

preserve of the Labour Party and Trades Hall under the powerful F.E.(Joe) Chamberlain.

Naturally, it had to be introduced as a private members bill and on a private members day (Wednesday).

I duly introduced the bill to quickly find out that I had touched a raw nerve with the then government which promptly adjourned the bill to be debated on a later private members day - if and when its turn ever arrived!

The day duly arrived however, much to the surprise of my colleagues. The government used the opportunity to attempt to maximise political embarrassment to Charles Court.

Bill Mitchell, being a very faithful, conscientious, capable and experienced journalist was aware of the government's tactics. Quite apart from the rather unkind things they were going to say about me when their nominated speakers spoke on the bill, it was to be to a very heavily packed gallery full of vocal and well rehearsed trade union supporters.

Bill Mitchell came to me well before the session started and said, "Have you got any prepared text for when you get to the time to reply to your bill?"

"I have the notes I have prepared on the bill generally, but not specifically for the reply", I said. "I'm assuming I will have to think on my feet and reply to whatever unkind things they have said about my bill in the course of their remarks."

He said :

"It will not be like that. If you know this place, when a bill like yours is introduced by a Liberal, the scene when you respond will be so explosive it will be well nigh impossible for anybody to report what you have to say.

"It is not my business, but I think somebody should tell you that you should have some well prepared notes that you can make available beforehand to give to Hansard and to the media. Stick strictly to those

notes through hell and high water, otherwise there will be nothing to record with any confidence."

By this time I had got to know Bill Mitchell as a courteous and respectful journalist who seemed to be genuine with any approaches he made to you for answers to questions and the like, so I thought it wise to take him seriously.

I duly prepared some notes on what the Labour Party had said publicly about the bill and, of course, more particularly what had come from Trades Hall from whence would come the greatest influence on the debate.

What resulted made Bill's rather frightening advice seem like an understatement of the day. All one could do was to press manfully onward, doing nothing more than to mouth in as bold and loud a way as one could the words that were recorded in my statement in the hope the press and the Hansard would be able to get something intelligible out of them.

It worked!

The way the words came out in the printed versions in the media, spoken on the ABC and other radio, and in Hansard, you would have thought I had been in full command of the situation! I can tell you with complete conviction that, if I had not had the notes distributed before my response, the report in the media and in Hansard would have indicated that I had been completely frustrated in my effort to give an intelligent response to my bill.

Needless to say, the bill was defeated, as they say in the classics, "on party lines".

## **THE BRAND GOVERNMENT**

When the 1959 WA general election produced the Coalition Government under David Brand (later Sir David Brand), Bill Mitchell accepted an appointment as the Western Australian State Government's first Public Relations Director.

In this position, he was responsible directly to the Premier and was a tower of strength, not only to the Premier, but to any of his Ministers who had a particular need.

Bill travelled twice around the world with David Brand who had tremendous faith in Bill's integrity and his ability and dedication.

## **A CLEAR THINKER**

Bill was a clear thinker, unperturbed in a crisis and a master of strategies when it came to presenting a story to the cabinet or to the media or the public.

Bill was always opposed to taking petty, small time, unprincipled advantage of others, even if the going was tough.

By arrangement with the Premier, David Brand, Bill Mitchell was made available to me in my capacity as Minister for Industrial Development and the North West. There was good reason for this; the whole basis of our bold policy for the 1959 election and for the 1960's was to completely change the direction of Western Australia from a mendicant, claimant State to a State which was going to unlock its natural wealth and greatly expand its population from the virtual handful of people we had at that time to a great contributing State, both in our own and national interests.

Bill's talents and his energies seemed to be inexhaustible. Millions of words in speeches, media statements, film scripts, interstate, national and international submissions and other forms of communication followed.

Some very fine publications and films were produced as part of the overall strategy of selling and developing our State nationally and internationally to achieve a breakthrough and new standards within Western Australia.

It is significant that all of the state's policy speeches from 1962 to 1983 were written by Bill Mitchell.

Do not get me wrong, he did this in his proper capacity and with proper regard and respect for his official role, but I have to say that



there were more times when Bill was having to prompt and inspire some Ministers than the other way around.

They all learnt to respect and value his judgement.

## **NEW FIELDS TO CONQUER**

Knowing Bill Mitchell as most of us did, it was only natural that after a while he would want to seek new grounds to work.

In 1969 he left government service. With his typical thoroughness he visited 20 countries for more personal background, started a family home building company but very wisely made a strategic withdrawal when a prevailing boom collapsed.

It was in 1970 that he started W.W. Mitchell & Associates as a public relations and policy consultancy. In this capacity he gave advice and service, not only to the State Government, but to major firms operating locally and nationally.

He continued to write government documents. One major document of this kind was the 80,000 word work "Policy for the 80's", written under considerable pressure for the State Liberal Government in 1980.

## **HIS CONTRACT DURING MY PREMIERSHIP**

He came on contract as an adviser and consultant to me as Premier from 1974 to 1982. It was a very effective, smooth and harmonious arrangement, something you can only have when you have two people who respect one another and are prepared to freely and frankly volunteer and respond to situations.

It was one of my great joys to put forward to Her Majesty the Queen, the recommendation that William Willaton Mitchell be awarded THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE for services to the state over more than 20 years, including service, of course, on Royal Visits to Western Australia and service to Governors General and two State Governors.

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY**

When, in 1983, Bill Mitchell began to include in his consultancy works some participation in entrepreneurial activity, he had already withdrawn from direct service to governments to avoid any suggestion of conflict of interest.

Typical of Bill, he disassociated himself from a project which he had assisted to raise some \$50 million dollars for a major city development because he considered that undesirable elements had entered the company that was involved.

## **COLIN WALDON PRIA AWARD**

In 1984, Bill Mitchell received the Colin Waldon award from the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) in WA. This was a memorable award and given with a lot of sincerity and applause by the institute and its members "FOR AN OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA".

## **BILL MITCHELL THE EDUCATOR**

It is significant that in 1988, not for the sake of his own advancement or income, but because of an obligation he felt to the PRIA, he took over development of the public relations degree course in the Curtin Business School.

As it happened, through a set of unusual circumstances, this turned out to be something of a bonus to public relations students enrolled on Curtin campus when they had direct access to the outstanding brain and the great experience of Bill Mitchell in media, government and private enterprise.

It is significant that over six years involvement in public relations enrolments rose on Curtin campus from 80 per semester to 400, while overseas enrolments taught in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur rose to 120.

He retired as full time course controller in December 1993, but he continued some part time teaching the following year.

## **CITY OF CANNING**

An unusual but very effective appointment of Bill Mitchell was as one of ten honorary advisers to the City of Canning where a Commissioner had been appointed following the dismissal of the council. In this he served for one year, attending twice a month and with good effect.

## **"R.A.G.E."**

In 1993/94 Bill Mitchell joined with an associate firm to undertake a successful campaign known as "RAGE" (Retailers Against Government Enterprise) which achieved its objective even though it appeared as though the Federal Airports Corporation (FAC) had immunity from state control on the issue of rental shopping on Perth airport land.

I know Bill thoroughly enjoyed this little episode as it was the sort of challenge that he seemed to thrive on. It gave him a thrill to be notified that the RAGE campaign made he and his colleagues state finalists for the Australian Marketing Institute Awards for Excellence in the category of Marketing Communications.

## **PRINCIPLES**

Above all else, Bill Mitchell was a person of great Christian principles and a great patriot.

He had a great love of the Australian Flag and was prepared to do whatever he thought necessary to defend it against the threats of those who wanted to replace it.

It is fair to say that in these and other issues, Bill had something of a PASSION. It did you good to feel something of that PASSION and work closely with him.

In all of this he was blessed with a wonderful wife in Mavis. They were happily married for 52 years.

We always had a standing ritual when I phoned 457 2469 and a female voice would answer, "W.W. Mitchell and Associates". I would always respond and say "May I talk to Mrs Associate please"



They were a great team and they brought up a great family believing in responsibilities before rights and principles before expediency.

Our love goes out to Mavis and to the children : Helen, Cynthia, Beverly, John, Russell, and their spouses and to the grandchildren, together with Bill's brother, Jack and his wife, who are here today.

Bill's profession of journalism and public relations and associated writing and other activities are the better for his life and work.

His community, his state and his nation are better for his life and work.

Being a fanatic for having strategies to cope with every situation, I have no doubt our Bill is already preparing the first draft of his submission to present to the Almighty on Monday as to how we can achieve a better result on earth for those words of the Lord's Prayer :

Our Father in heaven  
Hallowed be Thy name  
Thy Kingdom come  
Thy will be done on earth  
As it is in heaven

He will be explaining that we are not doing well enough on earth and its about time we adopted a more aggressive strategy!

Farewell dear friend!

Thank you for what you did whilst amongst us.

..ooOOoo..

## **Homily** **by Rev Peter Gibbons** **of Willetton Anglican Church**

Today, in the midst of grief, we have recalled the life of Bill Mitchell - journalist, political advisor, lecturer, husband, father, brother, friend.

I didn't have the opportunity of knowing him as closely as many of you. I suspect he was not a man about whom one could easily remain neutral - no colourless man.

Even as he battled cancer in hospital his strength of will, and intellectual grasp on things, remained to me quite awesome.

Just before he died, I told him how I respected him for his courage and determination and added, "Now I think it's time to rest". For there is a place where the strongest wills and most profound intellects come to the end of themselves. So I reminded Bill to never forget, "Jesus loves you!"

That other man of determination and strength about whom one cannot be neutral, of whom we have just read - Jesus of Nazareth, who, in the face of death spoke those words that quiver with life and hope : "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms, if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."

There is something so simple and yet profoundly certain about it! The God Jesus knew and showed is such a homely God; there is so much room in his heart for us.

And Jesus himself promises to give us a personal entree. This is indeed a friend at court - a friend in high places - the highest place! "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me, that you also may be where I am."

And yet doubts and fears troubled the disciples - grieved at the imminent loss of their flesh and blood companion, fearful of the unknown.

These same doubts, fears and griefs assail us when we are in such close proximity to our human frailty and vulnerability - at the end we are stripped - and we know it.

"Lord, we don't know when you are going, how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the father except through me". Like many of us, the Jews thought of the 'way' as a life of good deeds, striving to keep all the demands of the law. But Jesus tells us the answer lies not in trusting our own efforts but Jesus himself - for he is a person, vibrant with the life of God, one who both challenges and comforts - at the last he says : "You will need to let go of yourself - become like a little child and put yourself in my hands. Come, follow me!"

..ooOOoo..

## **Jack's speech**

Jack spoke about their early years , when as two small boys their mother brought them from China to her home town of Ballarat in Victoria. Unfortunately, she became ill and the boys were placed as boarders in the Church of England Grammar school - then a small school of around 120 boys, mainly boarders.

Life was rather rigorous with daily cold showers being mandatory in both Summer and Winter and the food being adequate for health but not satisfying growing boys' appetites.

He remembered how Bill was always totally involved in everything. He not only wrote the play, but directed it and also took the lead part!

However, Jack felt that the school - together with the holidays spent on an Uncle's farm just out of Ballarat - gave them good foundations upon which to build their lives.

# WHAT MY FATHER MEANT TO ME

By Helen

Here are a few thoughts about my father and what he meant to me.

I think more than anything Dad taught us to think and to question to look at all sides of a problem and then, on deciding the right way to go, to then do something about it.

He also challenged us to greater heights. I remember when I was at University and I said to Dad, "You know I think I'm going to fail this year". He said, "You mean to say you haven't decided to pass?". I sought of mumbled trying to explain my difficulties. And he just repeated what he had just said. I did pass and obtained my degree.

He loved simplicity.

His only sandals were plastic ones he'd bought from Coles more than 30 years ago.

His glasses he'd bought for a few dollars from Red Dot Stores and loved to demonstrate their indestructibility and swears they were the best pair of glasses he'd ever had.

He never owned a new car except for two Zetas - small fibre-glass bubbles with motor-bike engines that he paid \$400 each for - one of which, much to the amusement of my friends I would drive to university.

He was overwhelmingly generous

I was once commenting on a particular calligraphy pen Dad was using so he picked up all the pens on his desk, including the one he was using and gave them all to me. He was equally generous to friends, family and strangers.

Dad loved gadgets.

Mum would despair as Dad would come home with another unwanted gadget that he'd become fascinated with.



He enjoyed fixing things

It was a common saying in our house, "Don't worry about it, Grandpa will fix it when he comes down". He would attempt to fix anything, from locks on the doors to leaking taps, from the sheer joy of problem-solving but also to make things last as long as possible. He would buy a tube of shoe repair and mend the cracked soul of his shoe rather than buy a new pair.

He was always thinking of several things at once and it was hard to get his attention.

When driving us to school on his way to work he would often drive straight past the school eventually screeching to halt as our pleas finally caught his attention.

He always forgot to put the money in the parking meters and Mum swore that they kept the Perth City Council going with Dad's parking fines.

He inspired us, challenged us and above all, he taught us to think for ourselves.

Dad's aim was to serve, in whatever way he could, his fellow man and his country. He put his heart and soul into everything he did - whether it was helping someone who's car had broken down on the freeway or writing an important speech. To me his life was prayer in action.

Six years ago, he wrote a poem called "The Prison of My Body" and he was crying out that he had so much he wanted to do but his continuous ill health prevented him from doing it.

I'm sure now he is free to do more than we will ever know and his spirit is still with us and he is at peace.

For those of you he has helped, make an effort to pass it on to someone else. In this way his wish that all people in this country will live in a just and harmonious way - feeling they are one people, in one country, will be fulfilled.

..ooOOoo..

# A PUBLIC RELATIONS HIGHLIGHT

## A story read by Don

I would like to relate a story which Dad told many times over the past few weeks and he referred to it as the highlight of his public relations career. It is disarmingly simple but he singled out this story from among all his grand achievements.

He told it like this.

*A rough looking fellow dressed in working clothes came into my office. Without introducing himself he just sat down and said, "Going broke! A friend said you could help me". I asked him to tell me about himself.*

*He was a self-employed roof repairer and every time he asked for payment people would give him less than he asked for. His utility was almost falling apart and he couldn't afford to employ a good offsider. He was very close to being forced to give up his business.*

*I said, "I think I can help you but I need to do something for a few minutes. Janet, my secretary, will make you a cup of tea. Just relax until I get back".*

*He looked anxiously at his watch and ask how much this was going to cost. I said, "Your mate is a friend of mine and so now you are a friend too. We're mates! No charge!" He relaxed and accepted the cup of tea.*

*I went to the graphics studio next door and asked them to draw a raindrop and next to it, the title "Raindrop Roof Repairs" with the man's name and address underneath as a letterhead. I asked them to print off 100 copies.*

*I returned to my office and chatted with him for a while. Soon the pile of letterheads arrived and I gave it to him explaining, "You have been acting like a tradesman instead of like a company. You need to make people realise that you are a business. Your company's name is now "Raindrop Roof Repairs". From now on you should not ask for the money verbally but send an account in a business-*

*like manner on the letterheaded paper. But it won't work unless you are committed to it".*

*He looked at the letterheads and thought for a moment. "Might work!", he said.*

*This all took just half an hour. He left my office and I never saw him again but a few months later I got a phone call and a voice started the conversation with, "Got a new 'ute!". For a moment I didn't know who was speaking as he hadn't mentioned his name. Then suddenly it dawned on me and I said, "Raindrop Roof Repairs?". "Yes", he said, "It worked!"*

This story reflects some aspects of Dad's character and how we came to know him, as his children.

Dad loved to seize hold of problems and come up with imaginative solutions. He always wanted to make a difference.

We couldn't ignore his advise even if we didn't like it. He taught us to question ourselves and challenged us to look at things in different ways.

..ooOOoo..

*My Grandpa.... My Star*

*You are my guiding light,  
Now as a star, you'll guide me.*

*You are my challenger,  
Now as thought, you continue to challenge me.*

*You are my inspiration,  
Now as spirit, you'll love me still.*

*For you are my grandfather,  
Now, death will not make us apart.*

*Love, Ruth*

# MY DAD BELIEVED IN SPEAKING OUT

By Beverly

My Dad believed in speaking out

He was fearless in speaking out about the things he believed were important

He believed in helping others to do the same

He believed in getting his facts right

He pulled no punches

My Dad was not perfect

He drove too fast

He was always late

He ate all the sultanas

He always laughed the loudest at his own jokes

My Dad loved life

He sometimes took us swimming in Winter when the wind was howling and the sea was foaming wildly. We would run down onto Ampol Beach with our bathers, towels, jumpers and blanket. Then a brief huddle under the blanket before we ripped off our jumpers, and ran into the surf like mad things. It was exhilarating and wonderful. We knew we were alive, and we loved it.

My Dad accepted me as I am

He held me when I was frightened

He made me feel special

He believed in me

My Dad was my best friend

Beverly Anne Mitchell.



## **Natasha's speech at the memorial service**

We all loved him.

I will miss him.

I will miss the way he laughed.

I will miss the way he talked to me.

I will miss the way he gave the kids finger punches.

I think he is better than being in pain.

..ooOOoo..

## EYES RIGHT

A poem by W.W. Mitchell, read by Cynthia

I do not care for "left" or "right",  
But call me out and I will fight  
To end a wrong, to put things right!  
No matter what some people say,  
I don't go in for shades of grey,  
From right or wrong you choose your way.

It's wrong to pull our land apart  
On grounds of race. I'd rather start  
By building bonds from heart to heart.

It's wrong to generate such hate  
Where work is done. It's not too late  
To build up teamwork, mate to mate.

It's wrong to get your way by force,  
Whatever viewpoint you endorse,  
Persuasion is the proper course.

It's right to have respect for law,  
Defence of freedom's what it's for,  
Destroy it and you're free no more.

To love our land is right by me -  
To serve it well, with loyalty,  
And fight to keep its people free.

..ooOOoo..

# **YOUR MY DAD WHEREVER YOU ARE**

**by Cynthia**

A few days after Dad died I had several phone calls from friends, some I had almost lost touch with, including a bridge friend, Mike who had apparently met Dad through his work. "My deepest sympathies", he said. "He was a real gentleman".

In an age where real gentlemen are becoming as uncommon as dodo eggs Dad stood out.

Where good samaritans gathered together, Dad stood out.

As a patron of unpopular causes Dad stood out. He stood on a mountain of courage and conviction.

Amongst loving fathers Dad stood out. How infinite that love was when we needed help and support. How much we came to rest on that rock of love in times of trouble.

How hard it is to say goodbye. Dad I love you, wherever you are. When my time comes I know you'll be there to guide me through that last goodbye as the glory of this world passes away and I move on to the next.

Your loving daughter Cynthia.



## **John 14, verses 1 to 7**

### **Read by Russell**

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

And whither I go you know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

..ooOOoo..

## TO DAD - from John

- I see Dad as a man of influence.
- Not because he was famous or held important positions but because of the influence he had on everyone he met.
- Most of us spend a lifetime trying to attain personal goals.
- Dad's personal goal was an absolute commitment to people.
- No matter who dad met, important public figures, or the countless people he stopped on the freeway to help, Dad treated everyone with the same love and attention - as family.
- Dad's legacy is more lasting than money or property. It is the memories of the example he set.
- Memories of his love, trust, commitment, and dedication will live forever.
- I will always treasure dad's influence on my life.

..ooOOoo..

## **Luke's Story**

Maria didn't expect that Luke would really be able to take in the meaning of his grandpa's death so she was amazed by his reaction when she told him. He knew exactly what she was trying to say and became quite distraught. He then said, "But who will be grandma's friend? I've got to see her straight away."

## **Adam's Story**

During grandpa's illness, Maria wanted to prepare Adam for the worst. She explained that he was very ill. Adam came straight to the point and said, "Are you trying to say he will die?"

When grandpa died Marie was again hard pressed to find words to break the news to Adam but again he was managing it in his own way as he responded very philosophically, "Grandpa is still here. His spirit is watching us"

## **Natasha's Story**

Natasha overheard the adults discussing who should say what for the funeral service and she said, "I want to say something!" We were taken aback and asked her what she might say and she carefully wrote down on a small piece of paper thoughts that came from her heart. This was thoroughly rehearsed before the memorial service and on the day the same small piece of paper was unfolded before a large audience and she recited in a clear, confident voice that would have made her Grandpa proud.

## **John's story (John Mitchell)**

On the day after Dad died the family gathered at 9 Elgon Hill to decide about notices for the paper. When this was finalised John took the notices to lodge them at the local newsagency at Willetton Shopping Centre. When he handed the notices across the counter the woman immediately became distressed and asked, "Is this Bill Mitchell of

Elgon Hill?". "Yes", responded John. She said, "He was a special man!" and she rushed into the back room, upset and crying.

John did not know what was going on as he was not aware of any connection with this lady. In fact the lady, Sya, had become acquainted with Dad when he bought the paper and he had helped her in several ways. She was clearly moved by the news of his death and she hesitated to take payment for the notices.

There are many instances like this where Dad has touched so many people's lives in so many ways.

...ooOOoo..

## SARA AND MILES' STORY

Sara and Miles were privileged to say good bye to Grandpa the afternoon before his death.

We were all able to express our love to him at this time.

He was still quite bright and able to communicate his love to us. This was a blessing to us. The seriousness of his illness had been discussed with both Sara and Miles throughout his time in hospital.

After the visit on Tuesday afternoon Miles was unsettled and we often talked about Grandpa and how he was about to die.

When Russell and John went to the hospital late that night Miles was still awake and wanted to stay with Sharon until we heard how Grandpa was. Once Russell rang to tell us that Grandpa had died, Miles quietly cried and fell asleep in the bed with Sharon.

Sara knew the seriousness of Grandpa's illness. She was very disturbed and upset after she visited him, but when at the hospital she was very aware to make the most of the time together. She was her usual bubbly and demonstrable self. In their last conversation Grandpa asked to see her pins and plate from her arm. Unfortunately we didn't have them with us to show him and he was asleep the last time we visited the hospital a few days before.

Both children wished to be at the memorial service and hear all about his life history. They continue to talk about him and he will be in their memory for the rest of their lives.

## Notices in the paper

MITCHELL (William Willaton) (Bill) Much loved husband of Mavis and father of Helen, Cynthia, Beverley, John, Russell and Douglas (dec). Thanks for 52 wonderful years together dear. **Mavis**

For the love of our wonderful Dad. A loving memory with us all. **Helen, Cynthia, Beverley, John, Russell**

In loving memory of Dad and Grandpa. We will miss you your hugs and finger punches. **Russell, Sharon, Sara and Miles**

Your love and courage will always be an inspiration. **Cynthia, George and Natasha**

Dear Dad, you were my best friend. Love **Beverley**

"One must become part of the action and passion of one's times at the cost of having been thought never to have lived at all." A. C. Doyle  
Bill's life was an absolute commitment to that action and passion and those of us who had the privilege to know him will never forget the contribution he has made to us all. Our love and sympathy to his wife Mavis and family. **The Thornton Family, John, Bev, John, George, Chris, Tim and Betty**

As the Autumn of our lives comes upon us we others tend to forget the people most responsible for the success we eventually achieve. Thanks for helping us to make it all possible. You will be greatly missed. **Stan Bird and staff of the Regal Theatre and Interstar**

Warmly remembered by colleagues in the **School of Management, Curtin University**, for his generous spirit and unique contribution to the School and all of his students who were enriched by knowing him.

An important part of the State's postwar history passes away with Bill. Sadly missed. **Lance McMahon, Curtin University School of Marketing**

Bill was a valued colleague and mentor to staff and students alike. We will miss his unique contribution and extraordinary sense of

purpose. Our deepest sympathies to Mavis and the entire Mitchell family. **The School of Marketing, Curtin University**

Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family on the sad loss of Bill. He was a valued colleague and will be missed very much. From the **Deputy Vice-Chancellor and all staff of Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology**

Sympathy and love to Mavis and all family. From **Ann and Bob**

Will be sadly missed for both his friendship and his wonderful outlook on life. Deepest condolences to Mavis and family. Love **Viv and Mick Donnes**

It is with sincere regret that the **Willetton Elector's Association** learned of Bill's passing. A fine man in every respect. Condolences to his wife, Mavis and family.

To Mavis and family, our sincere sympathy and love at Bill's passing. A man of stature and supporter of too many. A true friend. **Betty and Stuart Clarke**

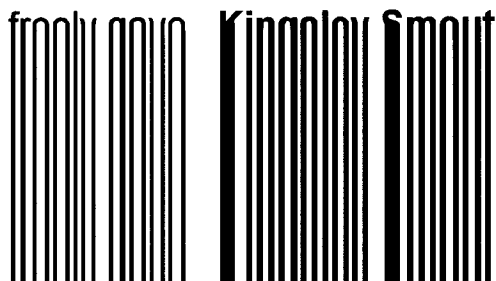
It was a privilege to have worked with Bill - an admired and talented journalist. Sympathy to Mavis and families **Derrick Flynn**

Bill was a valued colleague whose leadership and contribution to the industry will be sorely missed. Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family. From all staff, **The Rowland Company, Perth**

Leaving memories of our dear Bill. Deepest sympathy to Mavis, Helen, Cynthia, Beverley, John, Russell and families. We will miss him very much. **Gordon and Helen Wilkins and family**

Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family on your sad loss. From **Executive Committee and Management of the Western Australian Cricket Association**

A tribute to the fine Christian friend and advisor for 40 years. A man who made an enormous contribution to the life of the Then Methodist Church in South Perth in the 1950s and 60s. A gifted person who



A true professional and respected business colleague who will be sadly missed. Deepest sympathy to Mavis and all her family. From **Vince Acainovich**

To John and Maria and boys sincerest sympathy in the loss of your father (grandfather). Our thoughts and prayers and are with you and the Mitchell family. **Aiden and Julie , Stephen and Maria, Bernard and Janet.**

Saddened at the loss of this honourable and highly principled man. A great loss to the community. **Jan and Mick Tiler**

Deepest sympathy to the Mitchell family. Bill's wisdom and guidance will be sadly missed. **David Sweet, Marianne Shaddick, Anne-Marie Devereux, Bridget, Tighe, Monique Wilcock and Tracey Burns of Alinta Gas Public Affairs Branch.**

A friend and advisor whose assistance we greatly valued. Sincere condolences to Mavis and family. **Rex and Joanne Whittome**

My deepest condolences to Mavis and family at this time of sorrow. Bill 's enthusiasm, commitment and sincerity in wanting a better world for all will be sadly missed. **Ricky Anderson, MP, Member for Canning**

Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family. The community has lost a brilliant mind and a true gentleman. **Wally and Maureen Daly**

A fine man, a kind gentle, unselfish man with personal standards we looked up to the proudly promoted our great state and will be deeply missed. Condolences to Mavis and family. **Richard Court, Premier of Western Australia and Jo Court**

Bill Mitchell will be remembered by public relations people in WA as a leader in the profession, a respected and energetic mentor of young professionals and a first class practitioner. As a member of the College of Fellows he has made an enormous contribution to the advancement of the profession. We will seriously miss our well loved colleague. **Lesley Tannahill, on behalf of State Council and**





Sincere sympathy to Mavis and family. Thanks Bill, for your keen tactical mind and enthusiasm. The pleasure was ours working with you. **R.A.G.E.**

A crusader with high principles which he upheld with dedication, courage and rare ability to communicate. He was our friend and we are grateful. Love and sympathy to Mavis and family. **Jack and Thelma Bridge**

Truly a man for all seasons. His dedication, determination and commitment to others, his family and his country is an example that few could ever hope to achieve. To Mavis and her family our deepest sympathy, as we will all sincerely miss him. **Joy and Neil Carter**

Deepest sympathy to all the family on the loss of your loved one. **F & M Shaft, Thornlie**

Fond memories of a gentle man. Sincere sympathy to Mavis and family. **Marie and Mike**

Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family from **Mayor and Counsellors of the City of Canning**

A tribute to a highly regarded WA journalist. Bill will be remembered as a free-thinking loyal union member throughout his career. **Members and Committee, Australian Journalists Association Section, MEAA (WA Branch)**

A tribute to Bill, the personification of integrity and principle. Deepest sympathy to Mavis and all the family. **Patrick and Daphne Finn and family.**

Our sincere sympathies to Mavis, Helen, Cymi, Bev, John, Russ and family. It is a great privilege to have been able to share Bill's remarkable insight, wisdom and caring that he showed us all. **The Willock family**

To Mavis and the family, Bill's wisdom and friendship is of greater importance to me now than ever and I shan't forget aura of goodness



you all during those memorable moments. Thanks, with love, **Ken Spalding**

The public relations profession has lost a leader. Bill was fiercely true to his principles and inspired a new generation of young professionals. His wise counsel will be missed. Deepest sympathy to the Mitchell family. From **all staff Robertson-Hill and Knowlton**

I think of Bill as my colleague, my mentor, my mate. One cannot meet a person so selfless and generous of spirit as WW without having a profound effect on one's own life and values. This has been my experience. Our sympathies to you, Mavis. However, we all know the big man's spirit will continue to live within us all. **John, Shan and Tristan Alert**

A truly great person in principles ability and goodwill. Sincere sympathy to his family. My privilege to have worked with him. **George Cooper, Director Industrial Development (1964-1971)**

We say farewell to an outstanding member of Rostrum and contributor for over 30 years. His inspiration and impact was always of the highest order and influenced many both near and far. His example of a life filled to the brim lives on. **The President and Members of No 5 Rostrum Club**

**The Board of Management of Beehive Industries of WA (Inc)** extends to Mavis, our dedicated Past President, deepest sympathy on the passing of her Bill who served Beehive Industries as a respected Trustee.

A man of courage and principle who gave long, loyal and valued service to the Liberal Party and the Government of Western Australia. Deepest sympathy to his wife and family. **David Honey, State President, on behalf of the Members of the Liberal Party of WA**

A towering figure in journalism, politics and public relations in Western Australia's recent history, a lateral thinking and a warm hearted and stimulating mentor to the young and his not so young colleagues. Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family from **Rosemarie and Peter Ellery**

A tribute to the life of Bill, an inspirational man of perception, principle, commitment, purpose and courage. His passing leaves the world a poorer place. Deepest sympathy to Mavis and family from **Rob O'Connor**

Warmly remembered for his energy, knowledge and enthusiasm by **the College of Fellows of the Public Relations Institute of Australia**. Deepest sympathy to the Mitchell family.

An outstanding citizen of strong Christian, ethical and patriotic principles who contributed much. He was a good and loyal friend.  
**Charles Court**

Treasured memories of Victoria Avenue days, love **Jan**

..ooOOoo..

**Exerpts from the hundreds of  
cards received**

I considered it a privelege to have met such a great man as Bill.

**Don Randall**

We have very fond memories of Bill's visits which will remain with us forever. Our thoughts and love is with you and the family.

**Allan, Barbara, Ashley and Hailey**

I was very sorry to hear of Bill's passing. He really was a wonderful man and a great credit to his profession and community.

**Michell Leuri (former student)**

We have all been thinking of you. I can never imagine Uncle Bill any way but bursting with health and energy and enthusiasm. Although we never had the privilege of spending much time with Bill, our few sessions together were great fun and we always enjoyed a good argument. We will miss him very much.

**Rosemary, Guilio, Amanda, John-Paul, Lisa, Katie and Suzie.**

A trusty friend who gave so much of himself in guidance and support in time of need and will long be remembered for his kindness, integrity, courage and contribution to the state.

**John Hearman and family**

It is not often that a man of such stature as Bill touches whole townships and by his compassion and skill provides a fitting memorial for all time.

**President and members, Singleton Progress Association**

I have always been proud of the fact that I worked for Mr Mitchell when he first went to the Premier's Dept. He impressed me with his strong feelings for his family. You have my deepest sympathy.

**Rona Landquist**

Dear Grandma, I'm sorry that Grandpa passed away. I loved him. Love from Natasha. P.S. I love you too.

**Natasha**

He was such a fine man as are yourself and your children. God bless you during the years ahead.

**Robin and John De Laeter.**

Bill was a special person and an outstanding member of the Liberal Party in past years. His wisdom will be very much missed in Liberal Circles. **Barbara Scott. MLC**

I always remember him as a person with that rare quality - integrity.

**John Dallimore**

We have all lost a great man and friend. We have all learned great lessons from Bill who helped everybody in life.

**Muriel and Joe Reeves**

I know the lovely memories you have of the years you were together will always be with you.

**Thelma**

So many of us have been blessed through knowing him and how rich and fortunate you must feel to have spent your life with a man who was bigger than life itself.

**Kim Pentar**

A mind as clear and sparkling as a well-cut diamond;  
An integrity as solid as polished mahogany;  
A focus as intense as a burning ray from a magnifying glass;  
A wit as dry and pointed as a rapier;  
A compassion as comforting as a hot toddy on a winters' night.

**Colin and Wendy Evans**

Bill has touched so many lives with his ideals, beliefs and guidance. He has so enriched all our lives - a life that has been truly outstanding, supported by a partner who never wavered in her understanding, sympathy and tolerance - and love.

**Ellida Agrez**

# Notes in memory of Bill Mitchell

Written in a book after the funeral service

Bill inspired me and sometimes infuriated me but I learned  
so much from him. He was a dear and compassionate friend  
I will never forget. Christine Scott-Coutland

Bill was a wonderful friend  
& we were very lucky to have  
had him enter our lives.

Nin a Mick Donnes

Bill's clarity of thought was simply dazzling!  
John Roger WACB 1985

He was a wonderful colleague.  
Irene Todd  
Coker Business School.

"The greatest principle I learnt from Bill was to get the facts right then tell the story. May I never deviate from this principle!"  
Neil Olive

I first met Bill when I moved into academia at a "rival" university. With Bill there was no such thing as rivalry - in fact he bent over backwards to help me + spent many hours sharing ideas, resources + stories. Thanks!

Gae Synnott

Bill

You are no further from us than to God  
and God is very near.

You will always be in my thoughts

Sheela Eelish. SHURCOCKE.

Bill was always the kind of journalist who  
shone a bright light into darkness —  
and he kept doing it, to the benefit of  
many who were able to read his views.

— Dan O'Keefe

Bill, you'll travel with a clear  
conscience! Regis Allen

Bill "made the difference" he hoped for  
Leon Smith

A very old friend, I am still amazed at his qualities.  
Alan Wilson

Bill,

I KNEW YOU WHEN I WAS A YOUNG KID, AND YOU INTRODUCED ME  
TO MY FIRST COMPUTER, I HAVE THE UTMOST RESPECT FOR  
YOU.

Shelley Shercore

Bill was an inspiration to all who knew him. A great  
colleague, professional, mentor and friend. We will miss him.

Nigel de Bussy

Shirley Brown

Bill you were an inspiration - The Alceis never  
condemned and we love them Wally Daly





OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

197 ST GEORGE'S TERRACE, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6000  
TELEPHONE (09) 222 9888 TELEX 95078 FACSIMILE (09) 322 1213

Our Ref: 2207/KD

Mrs Mavis Mitchell  
9 Elgon Hill  
WILLETTON WA 6155

Dear Mrs Mitchell

On behalf of the Government and people of Western Australia I want to extend our sincere condolences at this time of your sad loss.

The period in which your husband served this State was marked by great developments and decisions which will affect the life of all Western Australians for generations to come.

The responsibility he had was great and the service he gave to Western Australia had the hallmarks of strength and integrity and was highly valued, especially by my father and the team of men and women with whom he worked.

I am sure you will be aware of the many people in politics and elsewhere who turned to him for assistance, especially in times of trouble. His help and guidance revealed a great depth of kindness and affection which tinged everything he did.

I hope that knowledge of the high regard and affection which so many of us had for Bill will help you and your family through this time of grief.

My personal condolences are joined with the assurance of the prayers of my family.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

RICHARD COURT MLA  
PREMIER



# CITY OF CANNING



1317 Albany Highway, Cannington 6107, WA  
Telephone: 231 0606  
Fax No. 458 2353

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Enquiries : Dr M S Lekias JP  
Telephone : 231 0630  
Our Ref : AP/1/2

16 July 1996

Mrs Mavis Mitchell  
9 Elgon Hill  
WILLETTON WA 6155

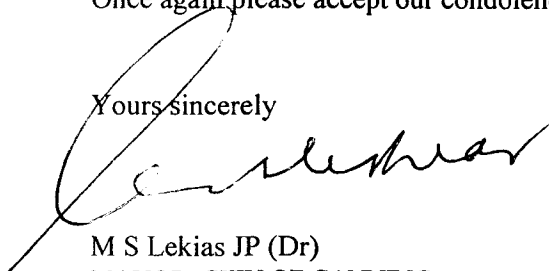
Dear Mrs Mitchell

On behalf of the City of Canning I would like to convey to you our deepest sympathy on the untimely passing away of your husband Bill.

Bill will be remembered as a very dedicated member of the Advisory Panel under the leadership of Commissioner Gregorini from April 1991 to May 1992. As I was also a member of the Advisory Panel during that time I remember the keenness with which Bill undertook those duties.

Once again please accept our condolences.

Yours sincerely



M S Lekias JP (Dr)  
MAYOR, CITY OF CANNING

11A Hawkestone St.  
Cottesloe  
Western Australia 6011  
August 19 1996

Dear Mavis,

Belatedly I learned from the Obituary in "The Australian" of the passing of Bill. Betty joins me in expressing sympathy to you and the family.

I had fairly frequent contact with Bill when I was member for Fremantle and he was political roundsman there. Without a shadow of a doubt he was the most courteous interviewer I ever met, scrupulously fair in his reporting, a penetrating questioner, firm, but not in the least self opinionated.

I remember those occasions with pleasure. I noted that he was gracious to everybody, including people with whom he could not possibly have agreed, like Paddy Troy.

Betty and I are saddened by his death, and can sense with pain the magnitude of your loss.



Personal from  
W. R. B. Hassell, LL.B., M.A., J.P.  
Agent General for Western Australia

European Office  
Western Australia House  
115 Strand  
London WC2R OAJ  
United Kingdom  
Tel: 0171-240 2881  
Fax: 0171-240 6637

Monday 22nd July, 1996.

Dear Mavis,

Aue and I were shocked and saddened to hear this morning that Bill died last week. We were not aware he had been ill, but it seems from what we have now heard that his suffering was great.

You have our very kindest regards and best wishes and trust that the concern and shared loss of your many friends, and others who admired Bill, will give you and the family some comfort at this awful time for you.

I loved working with Bill, as I did on several occasions. His active mind challenged every proposition until it was tried, tested and proven. He was also a good friend to many who needed his guidance and help.

As you know - better than any, I expect - Bill made tremendous sacrifices for his beliefs always, it seemed with



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PERSONAL

2 August 1996

Mrs Mavis Mitchell  
9 Elgon Hill  
WILLETTON WA 6155

My dear Mavis,

*Although the days have slipped by since you lost Bill, this note comes to you from Richard and Mavis Cleaver with a very real sense of fellowship and sympathy.*

*It was not possible for me to be with you at the funeral but I do want you to know I have held Bill in high esteem, for many years. His close association with Sir Charles Court, the Liberal Party, the Freedom League and other organisations I have admired.*

*It so happened that Bill and I were not exactly partners in any activity but each of us knew that we were available for comment and a sharing of views. You have lost, Mavis, a very wonderful husband and the community a popular and most effective worker.*

*We commend you to God's care and feel sure that all the family will thank our Heavenly Father for an outstanding husband and father in Bill.*

Our love.

Yours sincerely

Richard Cleaver CBE JP  
Founder/Chairman

18 Ridge St

39 Stawell Street,  
Kew, Victoria 3101  
(03)9853 5533

19 July 1996

Dear Mrs Mitchell

It was in Sydney, at the PRIA national convention a mere eight months ago, that I last saw Bill, and he looked then as strong and as healthy as when I first met him fourteen years earlier — and not a day older.

For people like me, then, it is very hard to believe that Bill is no longer with us, and even harder to accept.

"To leave the world a better place than when one came into it" is an objective which many might say they espouse, but which, in the judgment of their peers, I suspect relatively few attain. Of the hundreds, probably thousands, of people with whom Bill came in contact during his varied and interesting life, I cannot imagine one solitary person expressing doubt that Bill was one of those few.

It was impossible not to be touched by the essential goodness of the man, to be enthused by his realistic brand of optimism, to be jolted, even, by his creative thinking and energy. No wonder he was so deeply admired and fondly regarded by all the students who were lucky enough to come under his tutelage, however briefly, over the years.

For my part, I regard it as a privilege to have known him. Apart from anything else, Bill will be sorely missed on the Council of the College of Fellows of the Public Relations Institute. Our sense of loss would have been conveyed to you by the Officer of the College, Geoff Holden of Adelaide. Geoff and I were the two main beneficiaries of Bill's generosity and unfailing courtesy when the College met in Perth during the PRIA/IPRA Convention in 1994 — at a time when Bill's first priority was your comfort during what we guessed was a more difficult recuperation for you than he would have admitted.

Among my prized possessions is a lapel badge from the 1981 (Sydney) PRIA Convention: Bill used it to release me from Victoria and confer on me honorary citizenship of the Kingdom of WA — (*signed "Charles Court"*). From now on, while retaining its value as a memento of that occasion, it will never fail to remind me, as will other, less tangible things, of one of the finest men I have had the good fortune to know.

Please accept my sincere condolences.



TIME & TIDE

Obituaries

# harpest political gun in the west

ILL Mitchell was one of the most powerful figures in West Australian politics for several decades. As the State's first public relations adviser and a close friend and confidant of Sir Charles Court, he commanded a media machine that began to grow to a staff of just one and grew to a staff of journalists.

His disarming grin ameliorated the more likely to be inflicted on ministers than on his staff. He was a man of precise invective often to the point of being stunned, but the next day he would greet them with no apparent memory of the stormy scenes they had lived through.

His career in the traditional field of public relations — as a journalist and newspaper man in 1939. After he joined the ABC and finally became a relations director, he reported to the premier, David Brand, and the premier announced, with commendation, that his salary was \$100 a week. He served Court when he was premier and played a major role in the Liberal Party's victory in 1975.

**William Willaton Mitchell**

Public relations executive, political adviser. Born Tianjin, China, October 15, 1922. Died Perth, July 15, aged 73.

His loyalty to his leader led him into direct confrontation with journalists and media executives. Sir James Cruthers, then managing director of Perth's first commercial television station, Channel Seven, recalls heated arguments with Mitchell, although they were longstanding friends and colleagues, at a time when TV was having an increasing influence in politics and was often seen by State Liberals as unfair in its news coverage.

Cruthers also recalls Mitchell's deep sincerity, honesty and decisiveness.

This was demonstrated when he and the premier attended a meeting at the station to discuss a program on the Liberals' policy for a State election (there was a similar arrangement with Labor). After the production requirements were explained, Mitchell briskly wrote out the party policy at the table. With Court at his side he produced what was in effect a "story-line" with which the appropriate visual material could be prepared.

Another journalist recalls attending an airport press conference from which Court was unexpectedly absent; Mitchell answered questions and issued press releases written on the spot and in the premier's name.

His zeal was demonstrated when he



Power: William Mitchell

acting chief-of-staff at The West Australian, he personally covered the grounding of a ferry — and stripped to swim out to interview the captain. His speed, honed to meet newspaper deadlines, astonished his government colleagues and they quote with awe his achievement in producing an 80,000-word book on government policies in three months for an imminent election.

He left his formal position with the government in 1969, but his influence on conservative politics continued for many years. He acted as a consultant to the

premier and ministers, was one-time president of the Liberal Party and unsuccessfully stood for State Parliament.

He resigned as a party member eight years ago, saying that the party he believed in "no longer existed" and its leaders seemed to have no idea what "Liberal" meant.

His sallies were aimed at Andrew Peacock ("a certain Toorak style, but no substance") and Malcolm Fraser ("the gutless wonder"). There was, however, grudging respect for John Howard (though he lacked "the projection of style vaunted by Canberra's rat pack press gallery and desired by a shallow electorate").

**M**ITCHELL was a vigorous supporter of many causes, including opposition to such issues as retrospective taxation.

In his later years he developed a public relations course at Curtin University and successfully extended this to Asian campuses.

Court said of him that he had the highest level of ability and integrity, and a genius for quickly cutting through verbiage and conflict to find a solution to a problem. He was a "practical Christian and a great patriot" and was not afraid to fight unpopular causes.

Mitchell died of prostate cancer after a short illness. He is survived by his wife, Mavis, five children and 13 grandchildren.

■ **John McIlwraith**

John McIlwraith is a freelance writer based in Perth.

## PASSING OF A NOTED ROSTRUMIAN

Bill Mitchell would have met Kipling's criterion.

(By Freeman Ted Joll and Neil Durston.)

When Kipling wrote his much-quoted poem 'If' he must have had in mind a person like William Willaton (Bill) Mitchell, who died on July 15, aged 73, after a notable career with Club No 5 — and an even more distinguished one as journalist, political adviser, public relations consultant and lecturer at Curtin University.

'If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two impostors just the same' wrote the poet. Bill proved that he could, particularly in 1966. That year he courageously faced a big audience in the Speaker of the Year final, giving no hint that his home had been burnt to the ground just days previously.

He was announced the winner, but nothing ever went to Bill's head. Whatever the circumstances, Bill remained his cheerful, friendly self, ever helpful to others and keeping his own troubles out of sight.

The year 1966 was not the only one in which he met disaster. While serving in World War II at Morotai, where big Allied forces were assembled for the assault on Borneo, he was one of many who contracted pulmonary tuberculosis and was flown to Heidelberg hospital in Melbourne where the disease was brought under control.

Bill resumed work with the Ballarat 'Courier' with which he had started work in 1939 and began a part-time degree with Melbourne University, but his health was not equal to the heavy work-load and he abandoned studies. Transferring to the ABC, he was sent to Perth in 1947 as part of a small team to begin the commission's independent news service when infection again broke out.

Haemorrhaging badly from the lungs, he was rushed to Hollywood Hospital, where he spent two years. His treatment involved the new drug streptomycin (he was said to be the first in WA to get it) and it proved to be the turning-point.

After his discharge, TB never again seriously troubled him. When taken to hospital for his final illness his death was due to prostate cancer.

With his customary public spirit, Bill

representatives from Rostrum, politics, journalism, churches and public relations. Former Premier Sir Charles Court gave the eulogy, in which he warmly praised Bill's service to his profession and the State, which had earned him fellowship of the Public Relations Institute of Australia and the OBE.

In his family misfortunes, Bill found the same support and friendship he had always given to others in difficulty. Mavis, his wife of more than 50 years, referred with deep appreciation to the 'wealth of friendship' revealed after the fire of 1966 — particularly the way Bill's Rostrum colleagues rallied round him.

Bill's life was one of colourful and varied experience. He was born in China on October 15, 1922, in the open treaty port of Tientsen (now Tianjin) where his father was a Maritime Customs official employed by the British Government, which like other European Powers had wrung concessions from a weak Chinese Government. Bill's parents were Australian. In 1929 his mother returned with him and his brother to Ballarat, their home town and when she became ill the boys were placed as boarders with the C of E Grammar School.

At 17 he began as a cadet journalist on the Ballarat 'Courier' — a career broken by four-and-a-half years in the AIF and a long hospitalisation.

Though his career with the ABC in Perth was even more seriously broken by ill-health, he nevertheless saw five years of strenuous activity as reporter and sub-editor.

Wedged into this busy life were whole-hearted participation in the cause of Moral Re-armament, weekend jaunts in his well-kept 1923 Buick and membership of No. 1 Rostrum Club, which he joined in 1949 for a short while just after its foundation. In 1954 he joined the 'West Australian' newspaper, rising to chief political reporter — a job that led, as it has with others, to a Government media post.

As the first State Public Relations Director, he was responsible to Premier (later Sir David) Brand, with whom he



media and public, film scripts and a stream of publications. He wrote every WA Government policy statement for a decade.

Meanwhile, in 1959, he rejoined Rostrum as a member of No. 5 Club and participated enthusiastically in club and wider Rostrum activities, including 'A' Grade debates and No. 5's achievements in Rottneest decathlon competition for more than 10 years. He designed the cover for 'Take the Chair', Rostrum's first and most successful publication.

After he left Government service in 1969, he travelled abroad. On his return, his many speeches on the world scene were everywhere well received — particularly one he gave at Forrest House to a big audience at the 500 Club (of senior Rostrum members).

**"...Rostrum colleagues rallied round him"**

For the last 25 years he has been in private practice, as a consultant, but tapering off his work-load more recently. His wide experience in public relations saw him appointed in 1988 to develop the Public Relations Course at Curtin University — posting that saw enrolment in PR units rise from 80 per semester to 400 over six years. He retired as full-time controller in 1993.

Bill might well have found a niche in academia earlier had not his bout with TB forced him to give up studies with Mel-



## WILLIAM WILLATON MITCHELL

*It is with the kind permission of Sir Charles Court KCMG OBE that a summary of his eulogy to our friend, mentor and colleague is reproduced.*

William Willaton Mitchell OBE, FPRIA was born in China, October 15, 1922. He died Perth, Western Australia 15th July 1996.

Bill was a very special person. His was a remarkable career. He sought no fame, but set very high standards for himself. He achieved much and influenced great numbers of people and causes, including many of us in public relations.

Most always regarded Bill as a 'Died in the Wool' Western Australian. In fact, he came here after being educated at the Ballarat Church of England Grammar School, 1929/39. After this he started his career in journalism at 'The Courier', Ballarat, Victoria.

By 1941 he had commenced four and a half years war service with the AIF. Typical of Bill Mitchell, he became self trained in electronics during his service in signals. Also typical of Bill, in clerical mode, he redesigned the ordinance stock records system. After service in Australia, Port Moresby, Lae and Morotai, he returned to 'The Courier'.

He was sent to Perth with a small team of journalists by the Australian Broadcasting Commission to start the ABC News Service in WA in 1947 where he served seven years as reporter, roundsman, sub-editor and regional journalist.

In 1954 he joined 'The West Australian' where he served 3 years as shipping roundsman during the turbulent years of waterfront unrest. His service also included covering the establishment of the Kwinana Industrial Area and Monte Bello Atomic Tests. He covered these tests in both 'The West Australian'

When the 1959 WA General Election produced the Coalition Government under Sir David Brand, Bill accepted an appointment as the Western Australian State Government's first Public Relations Director. In this position, he was responsible directly to the Premier and was a tower of strength, not only to the Premier, but to any of his Ministers who had a particular need.

Bill was a clear thinker, unperturbed in a crisis and a master of strategies when it came to presenting a story to the Cabinet, or to the media, or the public.

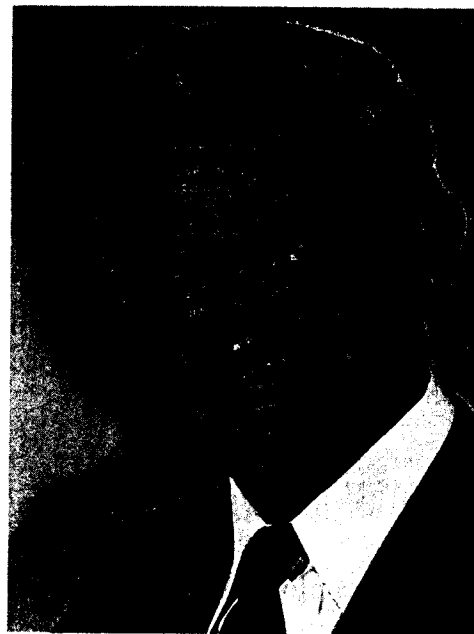
By arrangement with the Premier, David Brand, Bill was made available to Charles Court in his capacity as Minister for Industrial Development and the North West.

Bill's talents and his energies seemed to be inexhaustible. Millions of words in speeches, media statements, film scripts, interstate, national and international submissions and other forms of communication followed.

It is significant that all of the State's policy speeches from 1962 to 1983 were written by Bill. He did this in his proper capacity and with proper regard and respect for his official role, but it must be said that there were more times when Bill was having to prompt and inspire some Ministers than the other way around. They all learnt to respect and value his judgement.

In 1969 he left Government service and it was in 1970 that he started WW Mitchell and Associates as a public relations and policy consultancy. In this capacity he gave advice and service, not only to State Government but to major firms operating locally and nationally.

Bill was employed on contract as an adviser and consultant to the Premier Charles Court from 1974 to 1982 - a very effective, smooth and harmonious



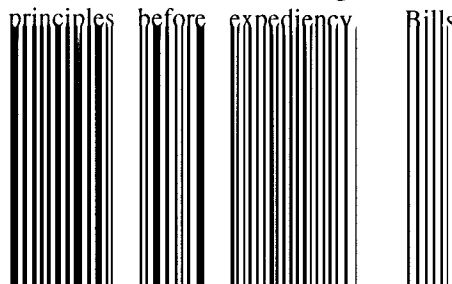
royal visits to Western Australia and service to Governors General and two State Governors.

In 1984, Bill received the Colin Waldon Award from the PRIA (WA). This was a memorable award, and given with a lot of sincerity and applause by the Institute and its members, "for an outstanding contribution to the field of Public Relations in Western Australia."

In 1988 Bill took over the development of the Public Relations degree course in the Curtin University Business School. He was instrumental in the development of public relations curricula and left his mark on many who have graduated and are working in the field.

In 1993/94 Bill joined with an associate firm to undertake a successful campaign known as "RAGE" (Retailers Against Government Enterprise) which was a State finalist in The Awards for Excellence by the PRIA (WA).

Above all else, Bill Mitchell was a person of great Christian principles and a great patriot. He was blessed with a wonderful wife, Mavis and together they brought up a loving family believing in responsibilities before rights and



# Media identity missed by many

ASM and community who knew William Mitchell better than anyone else. William Mitchell was born to his parents in Perth, Western Australia, on July 15, 1922. He was educated at the Anglican Church of England Grammar School in Perth. He started his career in journalism in 1939 when he joined the Perth Courier. He worked for the paper for many years. He was a man of perception, integrity and loyalty who, in spite of persistent ill health, never spared himself in assisting anyone who turned to him for help.

While serving overseas, William contracted TB and was repatriated to Australia for treatment. Several years later, when he arrived in Perth, William started working with the ABC independent news service and went on to spend five years with the West Australian newspaper. A return of the infection necessitated a further stay in hospital for more than two years.

When the Liberal government was returned to office in 1959, under the leadership of David Brand (later Sir David Brand), William was asked to set up the state government's first public relations office. At the time William had no party affiliations. He worked closely with former premier, Sir Charles Court, and other ministers, promoting the development of the state for more than ten years. In 1969 he left government service and, after a trip abroad, set up the public relations consultancy.



William Willaton Mitchell

William Mitchell and Associates provide advice and service to the state government when requested and also to major firms, operating locally, nationally and internationally. In 1988 he undertook the development of the public relations degree course at Curtin University's business school. William lectured at Curtin for more than six years. Following the sacking of the Canning City Council by the state govern-

ment, William was appointed one of the honorary 10 advisers, serving a term of one year. During his life, he was involved in many public and charitable organisations including the YMCA, WA Week Council and the Muscular Dystrophy Association. In 1981 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire. The Australian Institute of Public Relations also honoured William with a fellowship as public recognition of his enormous contribution to the

field of public relations. He was a man of perception, integrity and loyalty who, in spite of persistent ill health, never spared himself in assisting anyone who turned to him for help. His enthusiasm and compassion will continue to be an inspiration to everyone involved in his life. William is survived by his widow Mavis, his five children and 13 grandchildren. He will be sadly missed by the many people who knew him.

# Student PR award honours late lecturer

THE VOICE - 9/10/96

William Mitchell, or Bill as he liked to be known, is remembered as a dedicated and influential personality within Curtin's School of Public Relations. His passion for his subject was legendary amongst his colleagues and, indeed, the wider University.

Now sadly deceased, Curtin's PR School in conjunction with the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) has honoured Bill by announcing that the student award at PRIA's annual Golden Target Awards has been renamed the WW Mitchell Student of the Year.

This category is open to both Curtin and Edith Cowan University public relations students.

Fittingly, this year's winner was Curtin graduate Jo Ann Blizzard, who had Bill Mitchell as a mentor during her studies at Curtin.

"Bill Mitchell was an inspiration to anyone who took his classes," she said.

"He took me for my first year units and, later in my degree, marked my thesis.

"I remember him very fondly and I am extremely proud to win the inaugural award that honours him."

Proud also of the success of Curtin public relations lecturer

John Allert pointed out that, over the five years that the awards have been running, the student of the year award had always been given to a Curtin student.

"Curtin students have done themselves proud by winning it each year," he said.

"To win the award, Ms Blizzard had to have an outstanding academic history and make a presentation in front of PRIA members.

"To her credit, she excelled in all areas and we are extremely happy that, in the inaugural year of the WW Mitchell Award, it was Ms Blizzard who took the honours."

However, the award took its winner completely by surprise.

"I had no idea I would win - not even on the night," Blizzard said.

"I was so surprised, the competition was extremely tough and when they announced the award I just couldn't believe it."

Blizzard's advice to other budding PR students is to do internships at every available opportunity.

"I did an internship with a man named Bob Willoughby," she said.

"Now that I have graduated I am working with him at Assert Marketing and Public Relations, doing what I love to do."

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Telephone (09) 328 7299  
Facsimile 227 6469

25th September, 1996

Mrs Mavis Mitchell  
9 Elgon Hill  
WILLETTON WA 6155

Dear Mrs. Mitchell,

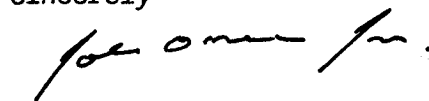
*On behalf of the Directors of the Company please accept our sympathy on your recent loss.*

*To celebrate the memory of this life, we have arranged for a tree to be planted as a living memorial. While we cannot tell you the exact position of the tree, be assured, that through the efforts of Men of The Trees W.A. Inc. it has been placed where the need is greatest.*

*One of the most fitting memories to the memory of a loved one is the planting of a tree and we trust you will share the satisfaction of knowing that for many years to come it will bring beauty to the countryside and, just as important, it is a visible ecological investment in the future.*

*Enclosed for your keeping is a Certificate which signifies fulfillment of your living memorial.*

Sincerely



J M O'Dea Jr  
Director.

# In Memory

of the life of

*William Willaton Mitchell*

Trees were planted at

IRISHTOWN

by Men of The Trees

Planting Co-ordinator

*F.N. Shelley*

President

*Thomas O'Connell*

Floreat in aeternum arbores  
(the forest is eternal)

When the University have completed their research his ashes will be buried in the Rose Garden at Karrakatta Cemetary as near as possible to those of his son Douglas Robert who died 21<sup>st</sup> July 1953 aged 6 months.

A simple plaque will commemorate the final resting place of William Willaton Mitchell.

*Mavis and family want you to know they greatly appreciated your expression of love and esteem for Bill.*

*The many tributes, letters, cards, flowers and telephone calls they have received from so many here and overseas as well as gifts and attendance at his memorial service has helped us in our sadness and grief and will continue to give us strength in the days ahead.*

*It was such a privilege to share, so closely, many years with such a wonderful person who inspired - and will continue to inspire - all who knew him.*

**WILLIAM WILLATON MITCHELL**

*Born October 15, 1922  
Died July 15, 1996*