

Stephen Murray-Smith - A Tribute

Good evening. On behalf of his family, I would like to thank all the friends of Stephen Murray-Smith who have come here tonight to celebrate his life and achievements. Grief is a private matter, and many of us have already expressed our sympathy to Nita and to his close family. On behalf of you all I repeat that sympathy. But tonight is a public occasion when we recall how much Stephen gave to this country and its people.

5.06

I am John McLaren, and I will chair the evening. During the evening we will hear from friends and colleagues of Stephen's, hear some of the music he loved, and watch some pictures of his life. The music we have just heard was by Jelly-Roll Morton. Nita tells me that Stephen had played this work so often he had just about worn out the record. On ~~this~~ ^{the} table ^{in front} you see some of the books he wrote, published and edited, and around us we see the covers of the 111 issues of Overland he produced. These come from the collection of just one of his friends, Max Marginson, whom we must thank for their loan and for his organisation of this evening. We must also thank Ken Gott, ^{for his assistance} Robert Newton for the technical work, and the Departments of History and Education at Melbourne University for sponsoring this occasion as a tribute to their colleague.

And now it gives me great pride and pleasure to be able to call ~~first~~ on Professor Manning Clark, who will speak of the man he knew.

Manning Clark.

5.05

Great believer, great lover

Geoffrey Blainey

historian, ~~broader~~

5.15

Geoff Serle

breadth, range
Australian

5.20

Gwynneth Dow

teacher, educator

5.25

For Stephen, a picture was never worth a thousand words so much as
an occasion for several thousand. Nevertheless, he was a skilled
and enthusiastic photographer. Others ^{also} ~~however~~ have taken pictures
of him, and we now look at a couple which remind us of aspects of
the man no words could capture.

5.30

Two slides.

Don Anderson, a colleague in education and a friend on Erith, is
in Europe, but he has written to say some of the things that
Stephen meant to him.

(Read start of letter.)

Video.

(complete letter)

But more than an academic, Stephen was an activist --
politician, man of causes, above all an editor. Dorothy Hewett
was to have spoken to us today, but has been stricken with
illness. She has sent us this poem to be read, and then her
husband Merv Lilley will read what she had hoped to say for

5.45

herself.

J. McL reads poem.

Dorothy Hewett

Poem

Winter Elegy

Six AM still dark rain
Whispering through the garden
The fire hissing through the night
Dawn sky -- whitening overhead
Clouds mass and losing height
Reform and pass the shake
Lifts her ponderous shadow
From the lawn

The black cat slips home
Through the wet grass
Lifting each paw up high
The first bird wakes and calls
Drops hang in diamond patterns
Splash and fall
The wind running along
The tea-tree hedge
Flashes with light
It shakes a head
Of golden needles
In the air

Carpets~~the~~ ground
And fills the bay
With sound and sigh
The dying fall
The beat of wings
Like an Aeolian harp
The sheeko sings
And clearly now
Under the rain
The cloud the whirling sky
I hear you cry out loudly

"How terrible to die
"Never to hear Mozart again."

Merv Lilley reads:

5.55

So much of my literary life was bound up and influenced in one way or another by Steve Murray-Smith, it is difficult to know where to begin. When I started writing again in 1958 after 8 years of writers' block Overland published many of those new poems and stories and in no small measure it was Stephen's enthusiasm that nurtured that work surfacing again.

In 1959 when I entered my first and only novel Bobbin' Up in the Mary Gilmore novel competition it was Bill Wannan and Stephen who rescued that dog-eared ill-shpaed manuscript from a reject cupboard, gave it special mention and sent it on its way.

My first book of poems, Windmill Country, was published by Overland in 1965.

When Katherine Prichard died Stephen wrote one of those characteristic little notes asking me to write a piece on KSP. I wired back, "Only if I could tell the truth." He wired back, "It's why I asked you." And an article or obituary eventuated titled "Too Great A Sacrifice", which caused considerable controversy in Overland's pages for several issues, but Stephen wouldn't budge an inch.

In 1968 just after I left the Communist Party I wrote a poem "Hidden Journey". More polemic and more ~~more~~ support from Stephen. It's as if I can chart the segments in my life through the various poems, stories and articles I published over the years in Overland, and of course Overland and Stephen were always synonymous. To have pioneered, produced, fought for and maintained a radical literary journal in Australia is an

achievement which cannot be matched by any other journal or editor. The number of new writers that Overland introduced, the number of well-known names that it published and supported through all those years is legion. And not least there were the polemic articles and creative journalism that gave Overland its own distinctive racy communicative style.

Stephen's death has left a great gap in all our lives. As for me, I have lost a friend and supporter and an editor -- a man who never shirked a struggle, a man of tremendous courage, energy and loyalty with a great gusto for life that was so endearing, a great gusto linked with an awe-inspiring capacity for hard work.

I have Steve at least partly to thank for the Emeritus Writer's Fellowship from the Literary Arts Board of the Australia Council that enables me to live and write today without financial hardship. It was Stephen too who put my name up for the Order of Australia -- an honour I never in my wildest dreams thought would be conferred on me.

In his last Swag in Overland Stephen referred to himself as a failed radical and suggested to me that this was a suitable tag for all old ex-communists. In a way I /guess he was right, but in another way wrong. Steve was never a failed radical. Until the day he died this Geelong Grammar school boy, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, was always a radical, even when, or maybe especially when, the cause was unpopular and the friend or colleague was in disfavour. □

Pause - other meetings. Memorial Trust

David Martin is another writer involved with Stephen and with Overland since the beginning.

6.00

David Martin

But Overland, for all its breadth, did not embrace all of Stephen's interests. Barry Jones will now speak about some of his other campaigns and passions.

Barry Jones

6.05

Many Sydney writers who could not be here in person wished nevertheless to pay their tribute to Stephen. Tom Shapcott, executive officer of the Literary Arts Board, but better known as a poet and novelist, will now speak for them.

Tom Shapcott -- speak and make presentation.

6.16

Max Harris has come from Adelaide to be here, and will now say a few words.

Max Harris (?)

Before I call on Ken Inglis to conclude the tributes, I have a couple of announcements. Stephen was Australia's authority on technical education, and amidst all his other activities he found time to interest himself practically in the development of education at the Footscray Institute of Technology. The Director of FIT has asked me to say that Footscray is establishing a

6.20

Stephen Murray-Smith scholarship which will be awarded each year to the student who produces the work displaying the most independent thinking.

The friends of Stephen wish to commemorate his memory in some permanent and public manner, and have decided to institute the Stephen Murray-Smith Memorial Trust for the support of Australian writers and writing. Any people who wish to donate to this trust may see one of the organisers tonight, or forward money care of Overland.

I will now call on Ken Inglis, and after that we will hear the March of Robert the Bruce. Everyone is then invited to join us here for drinks, but I must remind you that -- although Stephen I am sure would have voiced a protest, smoking is not allowed in this theatre.

Now, Ken Inglis.

*Mr Jackson
Bress
folio is
- fine artist's
- limited
- prints
5m-5 folio
- on sale
to benefit
OIL funds -
these interested
watch OIL*

6.25