

OBITUARY

RADCLIFFE GRACE - A TRIBUTE

by Chris Harte

Only a few short months ago, I climbed those forty-four steps inside the members pavilion at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. At the top of the stairs facing me was a bust of Lord Sheffield. I turned right and walked into the Long Room. Half way along, I stopped, proceeded to give the royal bow and remarked "Good morning Your Grace".

Radcliffe Grace thought it most amusing, although his companion said, "And quite right too". For Rad was a man whose stature (6'4") and presence made one feel that there really could have been no other proper greeting. So it was with great regret that I heard Edmund William Radcliffe Grace had died on 10 April, 1985 at St. Vincents Hospital in Melbourne. He had suffered a stroke earlier in the month, with the second one proving to be fatal. He was 67.

Rad died in the hospital that he had served so well for 40 years, retiring as Chief Executive only two years previously. But it was as Rad Grace, the cricket lover, that I had come to know this most knowledgeable of men.

With a group of friends, Rad had, in November 1967, formed the first branch of the Australian Cricket Society. He had been unanimously elected as the foundation chairman, a position he held for four years. He saw the ACS grow into an Australia-wide body which now has six branches and a membership of 1700.

Rad was instrumental in guiding the fledgling Society through rough waters. He initiated the annual dinners, various publications and close contact with cricket administrators. But it was as the Society's 'father figure' that he had played such a significant role, never being too busy to help those who needed words of maturity and guidance. He was president of Melbourne sub-district club Camberwell for many years, and in 1970 wrote a history to celebrate the club's centenary. It retailed for 60 cents then: it retails for between \$50 and \$60 now!

Radcliffe Grace had a hero. Warwick Armstrong was the man, and in 1975 Rad wrote a most readable biography of the man. Published as a limited edition of 350 copies it is now very scarce to find one copy available - at a sensible price.

The 'History of Sporting Traditions' conference held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in August 1983 had had Grace as the first speaker. His paper, 'The Rise and Fall of the Australasian Cricket Council 1892-1900' was meticulously researched and well presented. Questions put to Rad after his paper showed how much he knew of his subject. I feel grateful that I was given his permission to reprint in full, the whole of that excellent fifty minutes, in 'Cathedral End' (Vol. 4, No. 4 June 1984).

But now Rad is gone, and tragically the same week another ACS foundation member from 1967, Mervyn Shaw died in the same way. The loss of these two cricket historians - experts especially on Victorian cricket - leaves a terrible gap.

It was my pleasure to know Radcliffe Grace, and I am sure that many will mourn his passing.