

W.J. O'Reilly, *'Tiger': 60 Years of Cricket*. Collins, Sydney, 1985. Illus., pp.213. \$19.95.

Bill O'Reilly, at the age of 80, has produced a most entertaining book, full of interesting anecdotes along with perceptive and incisive comment, that any man 20 or 30 years younger would have been proud of. Perhaps it has been beneficial that O'Reilly has waited until now to write his autobiography, for it has given

him ample time to ruminate on the state of the game from outside the fence. Perhaps those that rush into print as soon as they retire from active participation cannot view their impact on the game in a detached and objective fashion. O'Reilly was born in 1905, retired in 1945-46 and wrote his book in 1985; almost perfect symmetry that has surely given him almost unsurpassed status as a critic. He entered the game when it was not uncommon to see a spin-bowler open the bowling, and has survived to witness what he considers to be the death-knell of spin-bowling through the increased incidence of limited-overs cricket. If present-day administrators were to seek advice from those not involved with the running of the game, they could do a lot worse than to put O'Reilly's name at the top of the list.

By waiting until 1985 to record his thoughts, O'Reilly has been able to reveal more of his antecedents. It was only since 1965 that he has become more familiar with his family history, and it is with obvious pride that he traces the paths of the O'Reillys in Australia from 1865. Considerable space is also set aside for his experiences as a student at a teachers' college, then as a teacher in Sydney and country New South Wales. Thus we learn not only of O'Reilly the cricketer, but more importantly, of O'Reilly the man; a well-rounded picture that makes the book so enjoyable.

There is still much, however, to sustain interest from a cricketing point of view. We are told honestly of a certain coolness in relations between O'Reilly and Bradman (despite both having country origins), and the perfectly plausible reasons for it. As the only surviving Australian who played in all five Tests of 1932-33, O'Reilly pens his thoughts on 'Bodyline', and a surprising sequel concerning the English captain in later years. His two tours of England are recounted. Interspersed between the chronological narrative are chapters on his thoughts about leg-spin bowling, liquid intake during matches and captaincy. He does not attempt to hide his admiration for his fellow Australian spin-bowler, Clarrie Grimmett, and nearly 50 years later is still weeping at the travesty that saw Grimmett excluded from the 1938 tour of England.

In all, this is a book that entertains and informs. The two dozen or so photographs add significantly to the story. But

regrettably there is no statistical section. O'Reilly's pronouncements are expressed forcibly and succinctly and despite the entertainment value, he has intended that the content of the book be taken seriously. Thus, the worth of the book is doubled, and in the reviewers opinion, rates as one of the most successful autobiographies in recent years.

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