

ANCIENT HISTORY IN A MODERN UNIVERSITY
CONFERENCE MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY 1993

MEMORIES OF EDWIN JUDGE

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My life and that of Edwin Judge become connected nearly 40 years ago. In fact, Edwin Judge had a profound impact on my life; for but for him I might have become a Professor of History - even better, a Professor of Ancient History.

I had spent my high school years at Sydney's Fort Street Boys' High School, the oldest public school in Australia. I had marvellous teachers, including in history. For the Leaving Certificate, I studied under Mr George Bohman and Mr L E Gent. I was their pride and joy. Ancient History was not available at Fort Street. So I had to take the next best thing - Modern European History after the French Revolution. For my History Honours course in the Leaving Certificate I studied the history of Europe between the Wars. I remember vividly one of the text books set for our study. It was written by G M Gathorne-Hardy. It gave me a glimpse into ancient times and the lessons which ancient times have for modern history. In the frontispiece of the text the author reproduced a poem, translated from one of the Odes of Horace:

"Of revolutions and intrigues,
 The War, its causes, course and crime,
 The ups and downs of pacts and leagues,
 And wounds as yet unhealed by time;
 Such are the themes you treat who dare
 (A risk which many a heart dismays)
 To stir hot ashes, which may flare,
 At any moment to a blaze."

Odes, II, 1.

It just goes to prove how little things have changed. There in the history of ancient Greece was instruction for the course of European history 1919-1939. And the historian found another extract, this time from Virgil's *Georgic* to open the last part of his history to give still greater emphasis to the lessons in Ancient History for our own times.

Gods of our land, and heroes of our race,
 Ye guardians of each dear remembered place,
 In this new reign vouchsafe us to assuage
 The maladies of our distracted age.
 Surely sufficient blood has long been spilt
 To wash our history clean from stains of guilt.
 Yet well may Heaven, in every of our state,
 Grudge us the leadership which made us great,
 When wrong replaces right: these latest times
 Have filled the world with nought but wars and
 crimes.
 Neglected in the field the plough stands still,
 And thistles thrive while conscript farmers drill.
 Swords from their crooked scythes are forged, to
 meet
 At once an eastern and a German threat.
 Neighbours, their treaties broken, arm once more,
 And cruel Mars runs wild from shore to shore.
 As when, in chariot races, from the start
 Out on the course the eater rivals dart,
 The beasts take charge, the driver tugs in vain,
 Whirled in a car ht answers not the rein!

Georgic I, 498-514.

So diligently did I study the subject assigned to me at school that I won First Class Honours in Modern History in the Leaving Certificate of 1955. The examiner was that fine University scholar, himself an Old Boy of Fort Street High, Professor John Ward. I trust that, with no undue affection for his old school, he awarded me first place in the State in Modern History. I went up to Sydney University convinced that history was tops. In fact, I was not sure at that time whether my life's journey would take me into law or into history.

In my first year at Sydney University, I had a choice. I could study Modern History or I could take the course in Ancient History. My memories of Ancient History went back to my very first days in primary school at North Strathfield Public School where I was taught by the redoubtable Miss Pontifex. Anyone with such a name was bound to have an ardent knowledge of, and love for, Ancient History. So indeed she did. I can still vividly recall her instruction about the lives of the Pharaohs and scribes of Ancient Egypt; the battles of Mesopotamia; the civilisation of Ancient Greece; and the lawmakers and empire builders of Ancient Rome.

These memories of Ancient History, and a somewhat arrogant view that I had nothing more to learn about modern history, propelled me into the Ancient History course at Sydney University. The lecturer, with a delightful Welsh accent, was the rather unforthcoming Mr D G Evans. But the examiner, hiding

like a grey eminence in his eerie hideout, was a new University don, lately recruited from New Zealand - Edwin Judge.

I pursued the course with diligence and devotion. Young Edwin was not my lecturer but he was biding his time. The end of the year came. The examinations were sat. I did well enough in the other subjects. My only slip in Philosophy I was the product of my misunderstanding of the Scottish accent of Professor John Anderson. For some reason I thought that his reference to the "thirty tyrants" of Ancient Athens was a reference to the "dirty tyrants". He was reputed to be an emotional man.

I topped the year in English I. I therefore awaited, with eager anticipation, my results in Ancient History. When they came out, it was shown that I had barely scraped a pass. My brush with the unknown young Edwin had brought me down, rather like the mighty statute of Ozymandias. The future Professor Judge did not think much of the examination essays of young Michael Kirby. My fate was sealed. Never was I to become a Professor of History, Ancient or Modern. Instead, chastened and melancholy, I departed the Faculty of Arts, an historical failure, only to embrace the rather more forgiving discipline of the law.

It took 30 years for the wheel to come full cycle. Then we met again at Macquarie University. I sat at the table of the Council with Professor Judge. In him I saw a scholar of great

ability and a University man, through and through. He was always principled; never self-serving; devoted to high standards; insistent that Macquarie University should be equal in its rigour and scholarship with the very best of universities in Australia and overseas. Sometimes he spoke alone in favour of, or in opposition to, a motion. This never troubled him. He was always guided by conscience and integrity. Truly his surname was well chosen.

Blessed with an intelligent and creative wife, Patricia, who displays the same sterling qualities of fearless independence and devotion to principle, Edwin Judge is a scholar who deserves our highest acknowledgment. I accept his examiner's rebuke of my paltry efforts in Ancient History in the year 1956. But I regret that my poor performance on that occasion robbed me of the chance of a life in history - working with a fine scholar like Edwin Judge.