Our dear, much loved and admired, friend, colleague and exemplar, the late Graham Barry Hall QC passed away on 11 January 2009 after a thankfully short illness. Barry departed this life at home in Manly surrounded by those who loved him. He exhibited his characteristic humour and grace and his deep love for Margaret, his wife and constant companion and collaborator of over 50 years, and, enjoyed the company and deep affection of his family, to the very last, going quietly into the night.

Another great result.

On 16 January 2009, in the heat of a bright Sydney summer's morning we gathered and celebrated his life and mourned his passing at Barry's local, St Andrew's Cathedral. A day of pathos and pageant marked by the sense we had all been touched by a man of genuine, yet humble, greatness. Touched by a man who daily, quietly and sincerely lived his faith, sharing his practical and compassionate Christianity with all he met, a servant of all yet of none, a totally human being.

Barry's friends and family spoke of the man, Barry the older brother, the country boy, the father, the romantic, the paterfamilias, the soldier, the proto IT entrepreneur, the pilot and marathon runner, and, perhaps most improbably, Barry the bouncer, managing the miscreants and misbegotten at the Healing Ministry he led and chaired.

His life beyond the law was demonstrably full and complete. How many of his fellow daily toilers at the coalface of justice can say the same?

It fell to your correspondent to speak of Barry as a queen's counsel, to try to explain that the loving, rounded and grounded man, described by those who knew him best, was in fact that most resilient and groundless of optimists, that reckless gambler, the plaintiffs' senior counsel.

The facts speak for themselves, Barry was admitted to the Bar on 28 August 1959, taking silk on 2 September 1981, and thus serving the litigants of New South Wales for over 49 years. His career statistics fall just short of an arbitrary milestone but only a handful of counsel can lay claim to a longer career and an even smaller number can lay claim to a career as outstandingly generous, effective and successful.

Barry saw out the last weeks of 2008 appearing in the District Court where he had, as common lawyers will, a mixed time of it, even fretting over the provision of written submissions whilst undergoing radiotherapy!

Barry felt obliged to do them himself because the court he served had requested his assistance and because no-one took that case more seriously than Barry, not just because it might possibly be his last, not because there was, all going well, the prospect of a fee, but just because it was his. He accepted and honoured the trust placed in him by his clients. In my fifteen years of appearing with him, for all manner of clients, in triumph and in reluctantly, but ultimately, accepted defeat, no client ever left Barry with anything less than the certainty that he had done everything that could properly be done for them, that he had brought the best of his enormous experience and application to bear, and, that he had actually cared about them.

The point is Barry adhered to his retainer, forcefully but fairly advancing his client's interests, despite ultimately insurmountable difficulties. Where else but the Sydney Bar would anyone put in like that? Where else can clients rely on such commitment to their cause?

Unfashionably, Barry was holistic in his role as senior counsel. Having solved the legal issue du jour he would, at times, offer sage lifestyle advice. Surprisingly, his advice was accepted gladly by everyone, from strident sophisticates to tattooed truckies, with an appreciation of the genuine concern and goodwill with which it was offered.

Only Barry could do this and he could only do it because his own life, as evidenced by the beauty of his relationship with Margaret, with whom, remarkably, he worked daily, and on whom he relied in all aspects of everything, gave him that moral authority.

Barry left us at the peak of his game, his last outing before the full bench of the Court of Appeal was a typical tour de force. An arguable appeal on a narrow point was translated into a comprehensive victory on behalf of a plaintiff whom he had barely met, but who turned up at the Banco Court and saw her truly pedestrian case advocated by a master, who deftly turned defeat into victory before five justices of appeal, all before lunch.

As his casket was shouldered from the Cathedral those foregathered were struck by the incongruity of that small vessel transporting so immense a personality, and by a sense that we had collectively witnessed the closing of an era.

As a profession we can all be proud of Barry, but it was entirely mutual, Barry was proud of us.

Thank you Barry.

By David W Elliott