



## PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### **SPEECH BY PREMIER BOB CARR STATE FUNERAL FOR THE LATE SIR RODEN CUTLER THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2002**

At the time of the Federation of Australia, the *Sydney Bulletin*, the Bushmen's Bible, created a cartoon character to represent the nation as we began the great adventure.

Bright, confident, optimistic, not nearly as naïve as he seemed,  
- he was called "the little boy from Manly".

We celebrate today the life of Arthur Roden Cutler VC, a boy from Manly who grew to represent the best and brightest and bravest of a great Australian generation.

As we honour Sir Roden Cutler - holder of the Victoria Cross, a pioneer of Australia's diplomatic service, fifteen years Governor of New South Wales - we honour also the whole of that remarkable generation, our parents and grandparents for the most part, now passing from our midst.

Theirs was the world of the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the most dangerous years of the Cold War, with its ever-present threat of nuclear devastation.

Against the background of these grim challenges, the generation to which Roden Cutler belonged saved Australia in war and rebuilt Australia in peace.

It is to this generation that we owe by far the greater part of Australia's post-war transformation, and the achievement of a more open, tolerant and generous society.

In our tributes to Sir Roden, we have naturally dwelt much upon the deeds of bravery which won him the Victoria Cross in the Syrian campaign in 1941 ("his unparalleled courage", to quote from the official citation), and upon his service to the people of New South Wales during his record 15 year term as our Governor from 1966 to 1981.

Less has been said about the years between and the work he loved most in his chosen profession, diplomacy in Asia. His period as our High Commissioner in Ceylon, Sri Lanka, from 1953 to 1955 was especially important.

He consistently and forcefully alerted Canberra, in a series of unwelcome reports, to the self-inflicted damage of our White Australia policy.

He was assailed in the Australian press for the way in which his Commission in Colombo bent the rules for migrants from that country. But those people came to form one of the most successful and respected Australian communities.

Let him who dares, impugn the Australian patriotism of Arthur Roden Cutler.

A few years ago, Sir Roden agreed, with some reluctance, it would appear, to allow the distinguished Australian author, Colleen McCullough, to write his biography.

In *Roden Cutler VC* she writes how difficult it was to get him to speak of his war exploits.

"It's all in the official citation," he'd say.

"But what did you feel?"

"Too busy to remember."

"What did you think?"

"About what I was doing."

Colleen McCullough writes of Roden Cutler as he appeared to her in his eighties:

"It is all as distinct as it is true: the heroism, the almost limitless willpower, the degree of intelligence and common sense, the uncanny knowledge of people and events, the warmth, the humour, the fidelity and – most astonishing of all – the humility."

"I do not think", she writes, "that he has ever of his own choice let anyone down."

"And with all of it, such an essential simplicity."

Almost 200 years ago, another writer tried to analyse, with a poet's eye, the components of the character of the happy warrior - not of course, exclusively the military man, but all of us in the battle of life.

And William Wordsworth wrote:

Tis, finally, the Man, who lifted high,  
Conspicuous object in a Nation's eye,  
Or left unthought-of in obscurity – ...  
Plays in the many games of life, that one  
Where what he most doth value must be won: ...  
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,  
Looks forward, persevering to the last....  
This is the happy warrior; this is he  
That every man in arms should wish to be.

All honour to Arthur Roden Cutler

- happy warrior indeed.

All honour to the nation and the generation which made him.