



THE KENNEDY AWARDS

VALE HARRY POTTER

May 9th, 2014

Harry Potter was a career crime reporter. In an era when the unfashionable police round can be regarded by many as a mere rite of passage Harry was conspicuous for his dedication to a vocation.

While others were “paying their dues”, and ‘earning their stripes” as they headed towards the creature newsroom comforts of autocue and climate control Harry was still wearing-out the shoe leather on the sunburnt streets.

He was committed to the long days and the unsavory challenge of landing on the doorstep of grief-stricken strangers. With his ethics never questioned, Harry would implore the victims of crime to help the police investigation with their emotional on-camera pleas. His sincerity, genuine care and resolve not to suddenly disappear from these wretched lives made for a formidable on-the-road opponent. He was a gentleman.

In a video tribute played at the 2013 Kennedy Awards for Excellence in NSW Journalism Harry’s son Tim spoke of his father’s devotion to the victims of crime, long after the final chapters of their stories had been written. Often ten, 15 and 20 years would pass and Harry would remain in contact with the relatives of those families still suffering from the loss of loved ones. This was the measure of the man – not the number of his exclusives, and there were plenty of those.

It was Harry’s love of his family, and the pride in his children that gave him such a tremendous empathy with those families that had been ripped apart. On those long days of stake-outs and waiting outside courts Harry would unfailingly update us on the progress of his kids at school and on the sporting fields. We would hear of his hopes and prayers for one of his sons to crack the big time in the AFL, his pride in seeing his other son follow so faithfully in his footsteps as a fine journalist, and of course his admiration for his beloved Kate.

You could not hope to meet a nicer bloke on the road. Forever humble and apparently oblivious to his genuine legend status Harry never hesitated to help a younger reporter and introduce his protégés to contacts. An up-and-coming crime journalist couldn’t wish to have a more impressive imprimatur. An introduction by Harry to a senior police officer would cement a relationship forever more. If you were good enough for Harry – you could be trusted and helped by hard-headed cops in an era when the police media unit was yet to produce its own arrest vision for general distribution. There was a time when the quality and number of your contacts provided the only hope of scooping the opposition and Harry’s network was second-to-none. Decades before Facebook Harry was knocking on doors to secure the photo of victim, in the hope it would capture public sympathy and increase the odds of early justice.

We will miss you H. But your example and spirit will remain with us until our final day.

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