

'He was a father figure to all of us' Mr Frank, legend of the courts



John Hamilton

IT seemed half of Melbourne had gathered yesterday to farewell one of its greatest legal characters and forceful advocates — Francis Eugene Joseph Galbally.

He was the man judges, policemen and criminals alike called Mr Frank. The man whose large and loving family called Foff.

They were all there at St Patrick's Cathedral yesterday morning to honour the man who was defence counsel in 300 murder trials and who died on October 12, just the day before his 83rd birthday.

Former Chief Justice John Harber Phillips delivered one of the eulogies and present and former judges of the Supreme and County Court were there, unrobed, just ordinary mourners on the pews to support him.

So were prominent criminal defence QC's, other silks and instructing solicitors.

But there were many more than lawyers who gathered to mourn as Mr Frank's eight children carried his pine casket with the plain wooden handles up the steps into the cathedral to lay it before the high altar.

Some among the mourners preferred to stay in the shadows behind dark glasses and left unrecognized.

The only adornment on Mr Frank's simple casket as his children carried him from the Tobin Bros silver hearse was his own small personal crucifix on top. When he left they added his Bible.

Norm Crewther, 86, was there to say goodbye to Mr Frank. Norm played full-back for Collingwood between 1938 and 1942. That was the year he played with Frank Galbally.

"I don't think he played many games but he was just such a terrific bloke," Mr Crewther said.

Paul Delianis was there, too. Once he was the chief of the homicide squad, retiring from the police force as deputy commissioner.

But he remembered the time when he was a police



Grandpa gone: Mr Galbally's grandchildren cry.



Goodbye to Foff: the coffin is carried from the cathedral.

courts, up against Mr Frank for the defence.

And he recalled the cunning and guile of the lawyer, how he had accused the police once of inventing a "magic key" in a case involving a robbery and a safe cracker.

Doreen Stockdale was there with nine other ladies.

They call themselves Gal's Girls and meet at least once a year for a reunion.

Yesterday was a sad one.

"We all worked at one time in his office," Doreen said.

"He gave me my first job when I was 16.

"He was a father figure to all of us. When somebody got engaged he'd throw a party for everyone. He was such a terrific boss."

Father Peter Norden, who celebrated the funeral mass

described Frank Galbally as "one of Australia's finest defence lawyers".

"As they said about Father John Brosnan (the former prison chaplain), he worked with a terrible lot of people.

"In the heydays of his murder trials, in the 1960s and 1970s, Frank Galbally still taught the catechism at his local school.

"He was a man able to abide by his own principles in word and deed."

Ten of Mr Frank's grandchildren read prayers in the cathedral before his son Simon gave the family eulogy.

"He was simply a beautiful man ... he was a man for others. He had a voice of liquid gold ... he saw the best in all, regardless of their background,



Leaving church: widow Bernadette Galbally with son Simon. Pictures: CRAIG BORROW

Legal giant who 'cast aside law'

MELBOURNE legal master Frank Galbally was farewelled yesterday in a simple, plantation pine coffin.

It was a fitting send off for a man born into a poor Irish family and who grew up as a child of the Great Depression.

Despite a glittering legal career that brought him wealth and the friendship of prime ministers and audiences with two Popes, Mr Galbally never forgot where he came from.

Mourners at St Patrick's Cathedral paid tribute to a man described as Australia's greatest criminal advocate and who became a legend for winning unwinnable cases.

Collingwood president Eddie McGuire represented the club so loved by Mr Galbally and to say goodbye to a man who was at the heart of the Magpie family.

Although the funeral was attended by the great and the good, also present were the not-so-good — a few old lags who had a win against the odds in some distant court case thanks to the man they called Mr Frank.

Mr Galbally insisted in his final, failing years that his funeral be simple, reflecting the values that shaped his unshakeable belief in justice in his working and family life.

The silver-haired, silver-tongued advocate died a day short of his 83rd birthday after years of crippling pain from arthritis and then a battle with Alzheimer's disease that robbed him of his magnificent mind and voice.

In tributes many people have described Mr Galbally as

Norrie Ross

man who could charm juries with his eloquence.

But Simon Galbally said his father was simply a "master of bulldust".

If the mass was a largely solemn affair, the wake at the Lexus Centre, home of Collingwood's rebirth, was a time to tell the legion of stories that made the Galbally myth.

Peter Ward, a partner at Galbally and O'Bryan, the firm Mr Galbally made great with his reputation, said he would be remembered as "the greatest advocate in criminal law Australia has ever seen".

Top Melbourne QC Terry Forrest, an article clerk with Mr Galbally, recalled being asked by him to bring six large law books into a Supreme Court murder trial.

Mr Forrest said he was puzzled because Mr Galbally rarely resorted to the law to win cases.

In his summing up to the jury Mr Galbally pleaded: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a case about the law. This is a case about love."

With a theatrical sweep he threw the law books on to the floor and thundered, "cast aside the law".

His client was acquitted.

And in the order-of-service booklet Mr Galbally's four-year-old grandson Finnbar wrote of visiting his beloved Foff's in a nursing home.

"He will like the place he is going. He will be happy. He will talk again and probably ride bikes," said Finnbar.