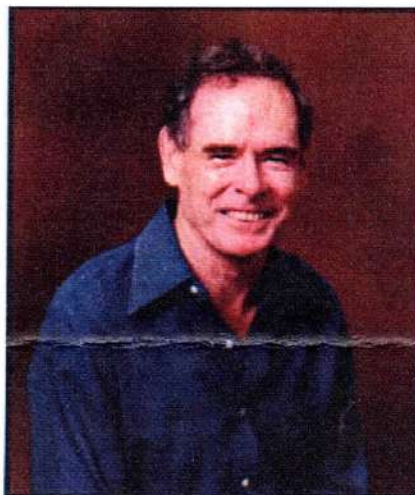


Robert Scott Murray
9 September 1932 – 13 May 2015
“Scott”

A Memoir¹ by *Alan Ebert*



In 1944 Scott and I were in first year at Newcastle Boys’ High School. We knew one another but not well. I do recall his winning the under-12 fifty yard race at the School athletics carnival. My parents moved from Newcastle after that one year.

In 1950 Scott and I crossed paths again, this time at New England University College in Armidale where we were both starting courses on Teaching Scholarships: a three year degree course followed by a Diploma in Education, teacher training. We played in the same teams, had similar interests, thought along the same lines and belonged to the same club groups. As a result we palled up and this was the start of a very strong friendship which has been continuous for over 65 years. We both were attentive to academic studies, Scott possibly more conscientiously than I, but we had heaps of time for sport and recreational activities. It really was a very pleasant life.

There were no student cars at the university at this time and we thought having a car would be great. We found a car on sale in Armidale for £87. It had been a painter’s work vehicle, and to our inexperienced eyes seemed to be in sound condition, but we couldn’t raise the necessary. This was solved by bringing in a third partner and so for £29 each we were owners of a 1927 *Oldsmobile*. Scott named the car “The Mayflower” – what the Puritans came across in. Typical undergraduate humour suggesting possible wish fulfilment, but to the best of my knowledge the New England lady puritans remained pure. We had great fun with this car, adventures and misadventures galore. I still have a clear vision of the Mayflower on the way to football training with a full football team on board, crammed in the seats and standing on the running boards.

In our same year there was a young lady student from Inverell, name Noreen Dwyer. She was doing a Science degree as was Scott, and they were in a number of lectures

¹ An extended version of the Eulogy delivered by Alan Ebert at the funeral service on 21 May 2015 at James Murray Funeral Chapel, Broadmeadow (Newcastle).

together. In our third year they became friendly, this progressed to going out together and romance flourished. So it was that one year after starting teaching they were married in Newcastle in January 1955. I was best man at the wedding and Scott was to return the favour and was best man when my wife Lyn and I were married some years later. During Scott's wedding reception, Noreen's mother, Mrs Dwyer, who was a formidable lady cornered me and said "Tell me this, is Scott going to care for my daughter and really look after her in the way that he should since I have the impression that he's a lazy little bugger?" I came to Scott's defence and assured her that she really had nothing to worry about. In this past January Scott and Noreen achieved 60 years of marriage during which he has proved to be a most caring and loving husband. As an indication, over the past three months or so when Scott has been in hospital on a number of occasions his concern has not been so much for himself, but that Noreen at home by herself was getting the necessary support and care. Regarding Mrs Dwyer's comments, as you would expect, it didn't take Scott long to win his mother-in-law over. I hadn't ever mentioned to Scott her comments, not wanting to stir the pot, but about five weeks ago I told Scott and Noreen the story, they were highly amused.

Scott and Noreen had three sons, Scott Jnr, Jason and Robert and they were brought up in most supportive and loving environment. The parents were determined the boys would get the very best education they could provide. As teachers they were able to assist with lesson content, homework etc. and they advised and guided the boys through their schooling. When the HSC came around, each in turn achieved outstanding results. They all proceeded to Sydney University, to College residence, again with parental support, and once again all achieved highly. They are now all highly successful in their different occupations. Their success has been due to their ability, their application and their character, but I'm sure that the home environment in which they grew up, and the parental support were major contributing factors.

The friendship between the Ebert and the Murray families has continued over the years. In early days we had parties and dinner parties in our homes, went to each others' special events such as 21st's, marriages, special celebrations and so on. We've had family holidays together, and in recent years we have regularly gone out for meals together.

Scott was a very humble man. It would have been the last thing in the world for him to skite about his own achievements, or those of his sons. But I can assure you Scott, Jason and Rob that your father was very proud of you all, and of your achievements.

Apart from education, Scott cared for the boys in many areas. He helped them with many of their sports and he was ever ready to provide assistance when sought. One incident of his help has always amused me.

When the boys were quite young Scott decided to install a swimming pool, not a large pool, but rather what was a wading pool, and it was to be in-ground. So on Christmas eve the boys went to bed, and Scott armed with lights, mattock, shovel and spade and the pool kit, marked out the pool in the backyard of their Dudley home.

The first problem was that the yard is quite sloped and so the high end had to be dug fairly deeply. What's more the ground above the pool had to be graded away so that soil wouldn't fall into the pool. Then too, the ground was a lot harder than

anticipated. The result was that Scott dug and dug and dug. Eventually the boys got their pool, but the job was completed with the sun rising and poor Scott had slaved all night. Santa Claus certainly earned his money that Christmas.

Scott was an outstanding footballer. At high school he was desperate to play first grade but it was required that he weigh more than 8 stone 7 lbs, which he did not. So prior to the official weigh in at the start of the season Scott filled the pads of his football shorts with lead pellets. He made the weight, but astute coaches were awake, upended Scott and lead pellets flew all over the room. He didn't make first grade that time and had to wait another year.

From school he went straight to the University first grade rugby team when the incumbent half had a career ending injury. In the first year his team won the premiership. Scott was the regular half for four years. During this time he also represented New England, and in his fourth year was chosen in the N.S.W. Combined Country team which toured Southern States.

When he was appointed to teach in the Hunter Scott played rugby union with Tech College. In 1954 he was awarded the Anderson Medal, best and fairest in Newcastle Rugby Union. Moving to Maitland to live, in 1955 he played with Maitland and for a second time won the Anderson medal. Maitland Rugby League enticed him to switch codes in 1956, and in this year he won the Agland Trophy, awarded to the best and fairest player in Newcastle Rugby League, sharing the trophy with Cessnock international forward Don Schofield. Scott and Noreen went overseas for the next three years. On returning Scott had his last year of football in 1960 as Captain Coach of Maitland rugby league. Scott represented Newcastle in both Union and League and certainly no-one else has ever been awarded Best and Fairest in both codes. Scott played the game weighing no more than 10 stone (65kg). He showed tremendous courage at this light weight to tackle and be tackled by 14, 15 stone forwards, and not only survive but excel. He was a very fast and elusive half, was an astute footballer, and could read the game.

After football Scott played many sports. He involved himself in swimming, surfing, running on the beach, skiing and social squash, golf and tennis. For 38 years he was a member of the Charlestown Charlies tennis group. Scott loved sport. He was always competitive but played games in great spirit and revelled in the social interaction between and after games.

Scott's first teaching appointment was to Cessnock High School. Most young and inexperienced teachers assume that anything they say has been absorbed by their pupils and has been effectively taught. Scott once told me how he made this error when teaching decimals to a first year maths class. They did decimals solidly for the first two weeks. At the end of this time Scott told the class that they had finished decimals, and next week would go onto a new topic, but before leaving did anyone have questions about decimals? A Scottish boy sitting in front of the class raised his hand and asked "Please Sir, what is that wee dot?"

Scott's teaching ability improved rapidly. After three years teaching he and Noreen took leave to travel in Europe. During this time Scott taught some maths in English private schools. He returned to teaching in the Hunter in 1960. The headmistress of Newcastle Girls' High had attracted to her maths staff some of the best maths teachers

in the area. Scott was appointed to Newcastle Girls High School. He was very popular with all the girls who appreciated his humour, easy manner and teaching ability. He then applied and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship on teacher exchange to the United States. So in the 1971-72 American school year Scott taught in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. The whole family went together with Scott's mother who helped look after the children, particularly baby Robert. Scott taught a number of lower level classes with discipline problems and had to work hard to develop techniques to handle the situation². After returning to Australia his next move was promotion to Maths Master across the road to Hunter Girls High. From there he moved to teach students training to be teachers at Newcastle Teachers' College which was absorbed into the University. He retired in 1990 at 58 years of age. Many hundreds of students throughout the Hunter have profited from Scott's teaching ability and his contribution to education.

Scott was very popular with every group with which he was associated – the staff with whom he worked, his students, players he teamed with, and clubs and groups to which he belonged. He had a great sense of humour and a sense of fun. He was confident, but quietly so. He was not materialistic. Scott was a great raconteur. Members of the Charlies' group and their partners many times at their annual dinner have appreciated his clever stories, and the Charlies on Saturday afternoons have welcomed his jokes, his one liners, and have appreciated his smart repartee.

Scott's health problems have been many and severe. Macular degeneration has affected his sight for a number of years. From using a magnifying glass his eyesight deteriorated so that he could not drive, use his computer, watch sport and other television programs. Nor could he read the *Sydney Morning Herald* where he covered international, Australian and financial news, reading the paper each day thoroughly from front page to last.

His illnesses and disabilities became many - lymphoma, shingles, shoulder injury. He found movement difficult, his strength lacking. In card parlance I would say he had been given a very poor hand, and for someone who had been so active, it was a very unfair hand. Despite all the difficulties he faced, the treatments, hospitalization, Scott remained stoic. He didn't in any way complain his lot, and in attitude remained strong to the end.

Scott will be very sorely missed by Noreen, Scott Jnr, Jason, Robert and their families, sister Pam, nephews Carl and Nick and cousins Jim and Julie, and by his many friends and former colleagues.

On behalf of Lyn and myself³ and our family I say farewell to a remarkable man, a great mate and a wonderful friend.

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² At this Pittsburgh high school students and teachers were 'locked in' to classrooms for each teaching period in a very tough teaching environment.

³ Alan Ebert had a successful teaching career and retired as Principal of Merewether High School in Newcastle. He also played Rugby with Scott in the University 1st grade team at Armidale (Ed.)