



THE
ACCLAIMED
BESTSELLER

RICHIE

The Man Behind the Legend

EDITED BY NORMAN TASKER AND IAN HEADS

FOREWORD BY JOHN BENAUD

“A wonderful, unprecedented celebration”

MARK NICHOLAS

RICHIE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION by Norman Tasker & Ian Heads – xi

FOREWORD by John Benaud – xv

PRELUDE: The Most Promising Youngster Since Bradman – 1

— 1 —

A CERTAIN MYSTIQUE

Bill Lawry	21
David Frith	24
Sir Tim Rice	27
Alan Jones.....	29
John Howard.....	33
Gideon Haigh.....	35
Rodney Cavalier	36

— 2 —

EARLY DAYS

Jon Erby.....	45
Bruce Ritchie	48
Harold Goodwin	51
Eric Tweedale.....	54
Alan Cramond.....	55
Wilf Ewens.....	58
The Phoenix.....	61
<i>Mail Train to Mudjee</i>	63

— 3 —

THE BENAUD ERA

Alan Davidson.....	69
Neil Harvey.....	75
Colin McDonald	78
Peter Thomson.....	81
Gordon Rorke.....	82
Neil Marks	85
Sir Garfield Sobers.....	90
Frank Misson.....	93
Brian Corrigan.....	98
Ted Dexter	100
Brian Booth.....	102
Ian Meckiff.....	106
Barry Jarman	110
Nari Contractor.....	113
Bob Simpson	116
<i>Saga of the Boots</i>	121

— 4 —

IN THE PRESS BOX

John Woodcock.....	125
Phil Wilkins	126
Norman Tasker.....	131
Mike Coward	134
Max Wooldridge	136
Geoff Roach	138
David Norrie	142
<i>Day of the Shipwreck</i>	148

— 5 —

WORLD SERIES CRICKET

David Hill	155
Brian C. Morelli.....	164
Clive Lloyd.....	168
John Curtain	170

FUTURE GENERATIONS

Doug Walters.....	177
John Gleeson	180
Brian Taber.....	182
Barry Knight	186
Greg Chappell	189
Mike Whitney.....	192
Steve Waugh.....	194
Shane Warne	197
Simon Katich.....	199
Michael Clarke	200
<i>For Sir Donald Bradman</i>	<i>202</i>

A GENEROUS SPIRIT

John Fordham.....	207
Bob Cowper	210
Charmaine Hutton	213
James Erskine	214
Alan Cardy	216
Jack Newton	217
Graham Cornes	219
Ron Luxton.....	220
Cathy Gauld	223
Warren Saunders.....	224
Tony Shepherd.....	226
Michael Hennessy.....	228
Neil Hutchinson.....	229

SEASONS IN THE SUN

Vicki Jones.....	235
Renton Laidlaw	238
Basil Sellers.....	242
Clare Oldridge	247
David Cox.....	249

Libby Reeves-Purdie	250
Jack Bannister	252
Sarah Wooldridge	254
Tony Lewis	257
Bob Hawke	260
<i>The Calm Voice of Reason</i>	261

— 9 —

A MARVELLOUS INNINGS

Ian Chappell	269
Michael Atherton	276
Billy Birmingham	279
Ian Healy	283
Richard Fisk	285
John Brennan	287
Dennis Cometti	288
Jim Maxwell	290
Mark Taylor	292
Tony Cozier	295
Mark Nicholas	298
David Gynge	300
Steve Crawley	302

— 10 —

POSTSCRIPT

Gregory Richard Benaud	309
Jeff Benaud	311

For the Record — 315

Acknowledgments — 319

Notes on Sources — 320

Photo Credits — 322

Index — 325

INTRODUCTION

By Norman Tasker and Ian Heads

THE extraordinary reaction to Richie Benaud's death in April 2015 was born of an international respect that is the preserve of a very select group of people. Even the millions who did not know him felt somehow that they did, such was his command of the television medium. He was the ultimate communicator.

To those who did know him personally — as a sportsman, as a television commentator and more importantly as a man — Richie's passing meant so much more. It seemed there was so much to say, so much to thank him for, so much to acknowledge. This book has come about to give expression to those people — the many friends and associates whose lives Richie Benaud touched in such positive ways.

When the idea of such a commemoration was conceived, it was conveyed to Daphne Benaud, who embraced it. So did Richie's sons Greg and Jeff and his brother John, himself an accomplished Test cricketer. The Benaud family has provided valued support and encouragement throughout the gathering of so many personal reflections.

The book grew as a seamless spin-off from a tribute event held on Wednesday, April 15, 2015, at Richie's home golf club, the Australian, at Kensington in Sydney. At an afternoon gathering of family and friends, countless stories were shared — publicly and privately — beginning a process that ultimately expanded across the globe, producing an especially rich harvest for these pages. In total, the tales told illuminate the many highways and byways of an extraordinary life.

In inviting the contributions that fill the following pages, we have tried to encompass the full breadth of Richie's life. Many of the stories are from cricketers who played with or against him in some famous encounters. Some are from people who knew him

as a child and grew up with him. There are those who worked with him, in press boxes and commentary boxes around the world. There are tales of summer days in the south of France, of the travails of maintaining his fabled Sunbeam Alpine motor car, and stories of innumerable acts of kindness and comedy.

The gathering of such stories has been tinged with sadness, too. We approached 93-year-old Arthur Morris, Richie's captain when he made his first-class debut for NSW in December 1948. Arthur responded with enthusiasm.

'Richie,' he said, 'what a wonderful boy he was. I did spend a lot of time with those young blokes ... Richie and Jimmy Burke and the others. I'm very happy to talk about them, but can we do it next week? I have to have my hip replaced, but I'll only be in hospital three days.'

We waited three weeks and rang again. Arthur had fallen a couple of times and was feeling poorly. 'Could we leave it another week?' he asked. Sadly, he died before we could hear his stories, one champion on another. Arthur's respect for Richie would surely have been matched by Richie's respect for Arthur, also one of the game's true gentlemen, whose outstanding career placed him in Australian cricket's Team of the Century.

Respect is perhaps the word which best sums up the 90-odd contributions gathered in this book. Respect for the Benaud talent, for the work ethic and the consistency of it, for the gentle nature of his persona, for the way in which he put the game before himself, for the humility he maintained in the face of incredible celebrity and for the many kindnesses he offered on so many fronts.

The tales told here also were told out of an overarching affection. As John Benaud writes in the foreword, there will be many things revealed here that you did not know about Richie Benaud. Of his youth, of his family, of his early working life, of the hard yards necessary to get him to the very pinnacle of his sporting and working careers.

Richie came from a remarkable family. His parents lived through hard times, and instilled in their sons a high character, a sense of fairness and responsibility in the way they lived their lives. Richie's father Lou was a fine cricketer who gave him a love of the game. His brother John was a rich talent, too, both as a NSW captain and as a hard-hitting batsman of Test-match quality. John

INTRODUCTION

was also a high-achieving journalist, as sports editor and then editor of the Sydney afternoon paper *The Sun*.

The people who have contributed to this book did so with enthusiasm and a genuine sense that it was an honourable thing to do — to pay homage, in their own particular way, to a man who had been in many cases central to their lives. The stories are rich and heartfelt, poignant and funny, revealing and respectful.

Together they paint a wonderfully expansive and varied picture of Richie Benaud ... the man behind the legend.

– 1 –

A CERTAIN MYSTIQUE



'As long as cricket is played and wherever it is played, the public will always remember Richie Benaud.'

– Norm O'Neill, 1964



BILL LAWRY

Bill Lawry made his Test debut during the 1961 Ashes tour and was a stalwart for the next decade, captaining Australia in 25 of his 67 Tests. He scored 5,234 Test runs at an average of 47.15, and was the durable rock on which many a Test innings was built. When World Series Cricket started, Bill joined Richie Benaud in the commentary box and quickly became a fixture in the Channel Nine team. He remembers a much-loved friend and colleague who earned the respect of all who knew him ...

WHEN Richie left us, I looked back on 78 years of life and realised I had been looking up to Richie Benaud for about 63 of them. I was maybe 15 when, like all aspiring young cricketers, I first followed his deeds as the glamorous new face of first-class cricket. When I made the Australian side in 1961 at age 24, he was my captain. He had a commanding aura about him and I was just one of the young blokes down the back of the bus.

When I began my commentary career at the advent of World Series Cricket, Richie was our leader. He had nearly 15 years' experience as a television commentator with the BBC; he was the doyen and we were all novices. We all looked up to him as the cool presence that made everything work.

Even in latter days, nobody ever doubted where we all stood in the pecking order. If we left the ground together at the end of a day's play, the fans would make way for Richie with obvious respect, and he would move through them, head high and eyes fixed ahead.

Tony Greig or Ian Chappell or myself might cop some lip, but never Richie. His dignity brought the same response from fans in the 21st century as it had from the likes of us, who had played cricket with him half a century before.

Richie was cool and calculating as a cricket captain. He maintained a certain mystique about himself. He didn't talk all that much; certainly he never ranted or raved as some captains might. As a result, his words carried so much more weight. What he said was gold and that attitude carried into his commentary career.

He was also highly principled. He stuck with what he thought was right, even in the most pressured of circumstances and up against the most powerful of people. When World Series Cricket came about, it was Richie who made it work, both in siding with it at the start and giving it his credibility, then as the face of a television coverage that was quite revolutionary. He gave us all confidence. When he appeared you somehow knew it was going to be a good day. He did have to work under enormous pressure, and the professional attitudes he exuded made it better for all of us.

It was, though, a whole new ball game and even Richie was asked to make some adjustments. At the BBC he had become used to the 90-second gap after each over when he could gather his thoughts and give a considered appraisal of what had taken place through the previous over. In the new commercial world of Channel Nine he couldn't do that — just a quick score then off to an ad break. So more information had to be provided during an over.

I remember one occasion when we were on air together — Richie was economical with his words and I was a new boy content to let him lead the way. A couple of overs were played out in relative silence, and then there was a phone call from Kerry Packer wanting to know what we were doing. He informed us in very clear terms that this was not the BBC, most of the people watching didn't have a clue about cricket, and we were supposed to be telling them what was going on.

Richie wasn't going to change or in any way dilute the commentary lessons he lived by: you only spoke if you could add something to the pictures. So the next over was again virtually word-free. After that, I thought keeping Kerry onside was a bit more important, so I started rattling on. The pattern sort of stuck.

In those early days, Richie did the presenting as well as commentating. He didn't have the small army of commentators we see today, or a 'Cricket Show' or anything like that to help him fill the time at lunch or during other breaks in play. He would do ten minutes before play started, to set the day up, then he'd do another summary at lunch, before we crossed to the 18-footer sailing races as we did in those days. He did all the talking at tea and summaries at stumps. It was a lot of pressure, but he handled it with the same easy assurance that he had managed when he was the Australian cricket captain. Even when things went wrong, as they often did, he was in control. In tandem with a super producer in David Hill, Richie opened up a whole new era of sport on television. More cameras ... and at both ends of the ground ... jingles, coloured clothing, night cricket — they all came in a rush as the public got on board and the modern game started to take shape.

I remain convinced today that WSC would not have worked without Richie. Let's face it, half of the cricket community was willing us to fail, and there was so much innovation it needed a really steady hand to put it all out there. Richie did that brilliantly, bringing the game into a new era decades earlier than may have been the case otherwise.

It had been like that on our 1961 tour of England, too. Richie was the first player to bring some theatrics to the game, jumping about in celebration and generally being more lively. His background as a journalist and the fact he did a BBC-TV course way before he ever got a job there meant that he knew how to work with the media. If there was a TV or film camera around he was a natural.

Our manager on that tour was Syd Webb QC, a nice bloke who was an Australian Cricket Board of Control member back home and liked to be at the centre of things. Syd held a press conference at 10am to announce that Richie would be giving no more press conferences, as he had done to that point, and that Syd would be handling all of that from now on. At 5pm that day, Richie gave another press conference, as was his practice. I don't think anything ever changed. Richie might have resented the attempt to gag him, but he knew the value of what he was doing, so he just kept doing it.

Another thing about Richie Benaud the captain that endeared him to everybody was that his buoyant celebrations of good performance were never countered by sharp criticism. He never felt

the need to criticise, realising players were mature enough to know where they had let matters slip and that labouring the point would serve no purpose. I can remember saying to him that someone or other had got out to a poor shot, but Richie would counter, ‘Yes, but it was really well bowled.’ Always positive.

The outpouring from the public when Richie died — respect, I think, rather than just grief — was extraordinary. To those who knew him, he was a generous, considerate, well-loved man. But those who never met him sort of knew him too. When you think about it, for anybody 80 years of age or younger, Richie had been a part of their life for most of it.

I knew him all my adult life. I still look up to him.



DAVID FRITH

David Frith was born in England, emigrated to Australia as a 12-year-old and developed a love of cricket in Sydney, playing for St George and Paddington. As a young man, he returned to England, where he now lives, having become one of the world’s pre-eminent cricket authorities and historians. Among many things, he launched and edited *Wisden Cricket Monthly* and has written more than 30 critically acclaimed cricket books.

PUSHING through just over six decades of my memory’s shrubbery, I do recall my first sight of Richie Benaud. My precious and priceless old autograph book provides the evidence. ‘R. Benaud’, he’d neatly signed, just beneath Ray Lindwall and Jim Burke. The date, in fading red ink, is ‘17-2-51’, which places it as the Saturday of the NSW v South Australia Shield match from 1950–51. The 20-year-old Benaud was 18 not out that evening. My hero, Lindwall, was 22 not out and that afternoon Keith Miller, whose signature I’d already bagged, had stroked a century. These were blissful days with

famous cricketers close at hand, thanks to Stan Mealey, the genial SCG members' gate attendant, who let us boys into the sacred sector an hour or so after close of play.

Then, as now, I was very, very interested in what kind of people these cricketers really were. Batting and bowling averages were one thing. But what sort of men were they? Friendly? Conversational? How well did they dress? How did they speak? What cars did they drive?

We were not all that taken by our first Benaud encounter, to be honest. He seemed slightly aloof, perhaps even a touch arrogant. That padded-shouldered cream sports jacket and smooth hairstyle emphasised his resemblance to some young American film actor. There was no chirpy remark following the signature. And where did this 'Richie' come from? That's the kind of name usually given to a perky little bloke who makes mischief all the time. A Richard in those days was commonly known as 'Dick', just as Williams were all 'Bill', Roberts all 'Bob'. Imagine it: Dick Benaud.

What complicated the situation was that over the next few years, during which he made his Test debut, there were suggestions that the selectors were crazy to continue picking him. There seemed to be so many other promising young players being left on the sidelines while Benaud continued to win favour but so seldom produced the goods. In particular, there was a superb 85 by Ray Flockton for NSW against the 1951–52 West Indians which had old-timers speaking of Victor Trumper. It seemed to rub in the irrational nature of the situation.

Next summer, the poor chap had a ball slashed straight into his face. My young brother was down by the pickets and heard Graeme Hole, fielding nearby, murmur, 'Asleep again!' We considered that rather cruel. And when 'RB' could do nothing right during the 1953 Ashes series over in England, well, what future? He might have been about to disappear forever.

We now know how the selectors' unflinching faith finally paid off. Subsequent personal memories of Richie Benaud in action, 'live', on the radio and then on TV, make a stirring package: whacking Queensland fast bowler Colin Smith high into the SCG Ladies Stand, stiffening Australia's tail in Test after Test in company with Ken Mackay or Alan Davidson, that 97 against England at Lord's in 1956 alongside the miracle catch at gully from Colin

Cowdrey's fast slash, loping into the outfield in pursuit of the ball with Ian Craig alongside him, the flick back by one to the other, who then threw the ball in, being revolutionary for its time, though standard practice today.

Never was Richie Benaud the bowler seen in a better light than when he paralysed the Englishmen with leg-spin variations in the 1962–63 NSW v MCC match at the SCG. He took 7–18 that afternoon, his best ever figures in first-class cricket. Left-hander Peter Parfitt was free to pad everything away, so long as impact was outside the off-stump line. A bloke on the hill could take no more: 'Tie yer flamin' bat to yer leg, Parfitt. Ya might make a run!'

Career-best it may have been, but this performance was still outshone by what he achieved in the pulsating Old Trafford Test match of 1961. With England needing 256 and coasting nicely, Benaud took Ray Lindwall's advice offered the previous evening and tried bowling around the wicket into the rough. It needs to be remembered that this was rarely tried in those unadventurous days. Rash shots by Ted Dexter, Peter May and Brian Close soon had England in disarray and a momentous victory resulted.

Film survives and it shows captain Benaud's enthusiasm clearly. When a wicket fell he would run down to embrace the catcher — and you can see the likes of Neil Harvey and Bob Simpson preparing to run to safety. This evolutionary trend is seldom if ever credited to Richie Benaud, but the fact is that the casual nod and occasional quick handshake after the fall of a wicket were now superseded by a bit of physical expression.

Not only was it contagious but it led in time to the mass love-ins we see today and the 'ring a ring o' roses' when a match is won. I'm sure he didn't intend it to develop like this. But society has gradually moved nearer to hysteria in most walks of life — even television commentary. If only Richie Benaud were still able to take some of the moderns to one side and whisper in their ears that non-stop microphone babble is alien to proper commentary. He might have wept had he listened to recent telecasts when a commentator was regularly blitzing the ears even as the ball entered the wicketkeeper's gloves.

He had that one thing in common with Len Hutton, the Englishman who'd often teased him in their Test match confrontations. A vivid image from the old days is of Benaud trying

to hit the SCG clock off Hutton's occasional and barely turning leg breaks in 1955: poor fella was bowled, but it made an ageing Yorkshireman happy in his final Ashes Test. That common trait was a strict economy with words. Some people carry on chuntering away long after they've delivered anything they had to offer that was meaningful. Not Len. And certainly never Richie. He was careful never to predict a boundary four. The ball might just stop short and he'd look foolish. Couldn't have that.

As a press-box neighbour, Richie was always there for a chat at the right time. I'd long known how much he appreciated being regarded as the shrewdest of them all. He was a clever chap.

Of the cameos remembered from many decades of Richie-watching, one more snippet must suffice: Old Trafford, 1980s, RB laboriously climbing the perilous iron staircase to the press box on high. Two Lancashire lads spot him. 'Ay! There's Richie! Yer gettin' old, Richie!'

Back came the instant reaction: 'Maybe, but at least I'm still sober.'

The cricket world mourned his passing on a truly extraordinary scale. It was natural to picture the elderly man, the cricket commentator, who had just died. But for me the vision is of the tall, cool, smartly dressed young chap at the rear door of the SCG pavilion that evening in 1951. No one could possibly have predicted such a future: world-class all-rounder, Test skipper, shrewd, unflappable commentator, just that little bit larger than life. To draw on his French blood, a *bon viveur* and *éminence grise*.



SIR TIM RICE

Known throughout the world for his work as a lyricist and author in musical theatre and film, Sir Tim Rice is also a cricket player and fan with a deep and lifelong attachment to the game. A special event for him each year is the arrival

of the players from the Heartaches Cricket Club, which he established in 1973, for a weekend of cricket on the ground at his home. Richie and his wife Daphne's interest in musical theatre meant it was a 'perfect match' when they first met Tim Rice. The friendship was strongly sustained through the years, as Tim Rice's name and talent became associated with more and more global successes, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita*, *Chess* and *The Lion King* among them.

I shall never forget the first time I met Richie — at a preview of *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Palace Theatre in London in the summer of 1972. I recognised him across a crowded foyer in the interval. I felt rather guilty about approaching him without an introduction but he was typically polite even before I revealed that I was in part responsible for his evening's entertainment. The chat that followed was a little disjointed as I wanted to talk about Doug Walters and Paul Sheahan while Richie and Daphne were more interested in discussing Jesus and Judas.

Thanks to that chance meeting I was lucky enough to establish a lasting association for over 40 years. I remain extraordinarily privileged to have known both Richie and Daphne for so long.

I particularly relish the glass of wine we shared in Tasmania the morning I diffidently asked Richie if he would consider becoming MCC president. I knew it was a long shot, and his charming refusal was totally understandable, but I wanted him to know that the Marylebone club, a conservative pillar of the England cricketing establishment, which curiously I was representing in 2002–03, could have imagined no greater honour than having Richie — an Australian hero whose progressive views on the game both on and off the field for so many years had been so instrumental in dragging the game into each successive modern era — at its helm. As a commentator and journalist, he performed the same invaluable service with distinction right up to his final day behind the microphone.

And, of course, he was a magnificent player and captain. There are so many millions of Richie fans who must think of him primarily as a great cricket broadcaster and writer, but while this is an indisputably accurate description, I still think of him first as one of the best players and leaders it has been my privilege to witness. I

only wish I had seen him play a good deal more than I did, although I am perhaps grateful that I did not see him demolish England in 1958–59.

It was a sad pleasure reading all the many wonderful British tributes to Richie, whom we regarded as an honorary Englishman, loved and missed as much in the UK as down-under.



ALAN JONES

Alan Jones is a radio broadcaster of commanding influence, a member of the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust, and a former coach of the Australian rugby team, the Wallabies. He has held a lifelong passion for sport in all its shades.

BOOKS of this kind are important. Generations are poor at seeking history, let alone understanding it. And so it is with this remarkable and much-loved Australian, Richie Benaud.

What has always concerned me about the worthy tributes paid to Richie on his sad passing in April 2015 at the age of 84 was that he seemed almost exclusively to be celebrated as a broadcaster. It is undeniable that Richie was, at his death, one of the most iconic figures and one of the most loved figures in Australian sports broadcasting. He was described by many as a broadcasting giant and indeed, to young Australians, he was the gifted, generous, forever dignified cricket broadcaster.

But to those with a greater span of history, he was a magnificent and flamboyant cricket captain, immortalised along with Alan Davidson in that famous Tied Test in Brisbane against the West Indies in 1960.

To win the Test, Australia had to make 233 runs. During the course of the afternoon, Australia were 6–92, with Richie and Davo at the crease. They took the score to 6–226. Seven more for victory.

Richie called for a sharp single. The West Indian, Solomon, hit the stumps from mid-wicket. Davidson was run out for 80. We're 7-226.

The new batsman, Wally Grout, managed a run from the penultimate ball of the second-last over. Try as he might, Richie couldn't score a single from the last ball to keep the strike. The last over of the match began. They were eight-ball overs.

- Ball 1:** Grout was hit on the thigh. The batsmen took a leg bye.
- Ball 2:** Richie was caught by the keeper for 52. Australia 8-228.
- Ball 3:** There was no run. The new batsman, Ian Meckiff, played the ball to mid-off.
- Ball 4:** A bye. The batsmen scrambled as the ball went through to the keeper. The great Wesley Hall failed to run out Meckiff, after the keeper threw the ball to him.
- Ball 5:** A run. Grout hit the ball high into the air. Wesley Hall dropped the catch. Australia 8-230.
- Ball 6:** Two runs and a wicket. Meckiff hit to the leg-side. Conrad Hunte cut off the boundary and as the batsmen turned for a third run, which would have given Australia victory, Hunte's return was accurate, low and fast and Grout was run out by a foot. The last man, Lindsay Kline, came in with two balls remaining and the scores level. Australia 9-232.
- Ball 7:** Kline played the ball towards square-leg. Meckiff sprinted down the wicket, but Solomon, for a second time, threw down the wicket, this time from side on. Australia was all out with the scores level. It was a tie.

When they went to tea, Richie, the captain, had gone to the chairman of selectors, Sir Donald Bradman, and said words to the effect: 'We're playing to win this.'

Well, he and Davo registered a partnership of 134 runs. They didn't win, but the captaincy of Richie Benaud was immortalised.

As a broadcaster, Richie let the pictures tell the story — coloured, sometimes, by hilarious observations. On one occasion, Glenn McGrath was out for two and Richie quipped that he was ‘just 98 runs short of his century’.

The Australian opener, Justin Langer, had hit a towering six. Richie waited, because pauses were important to Richie, and then added, ‘He’s not quite got hold of that ... if he had, it would have gone for nine.’

In reality, there were two generations who idolised Richie Benaud. The modern generation knew the man with the grey hair and the beige or cream or bone jackets. But very few of those admirers understood the other generation who saw him as an outstanding cricketer in the 1950s and 1960s.

A magnificent spin bowler.

A dashing batsman.

A bit of a sex symbol, if you like — shirt unbuttoned to his waist, good-looking and possessed of a gentlemanly charm. And yet, in spite of all these attributes, Richie was, in so many ways, a gentle soul.

He found his true batting partner in Daphne.

And over dinner or over drinks, the conversation covered every aspect of a world with which Richie was familiar, in all its facets.

In 1954–55, when England returned to Australia, the great Arthur Morris was not made the Australian captain, despite being the incumbent vice-captain. He remained deputy as Victoria’s Ian Johnson was called to the team and assumed the captaincy.

In the second Test in Sydney, when Johnson and Keith Miller were both unavailable due to injury, Arthur Morris led the team for the second and final time in Tests. But the Australian Board of Control made what was thought to be a surprising move by appointing the ‘young and inexperienced’ Richie Benaud as vice-captain to Arthur Morris.

Richie had been selected as a batsman and was not a regular member of the team. But typically Richie, he noted that the situation was embarrassing and Arthur Morris asked him not to be offended if he sought advice from veteran players like Ray Lindwall and Neil Harvey, who had been Test regulars for several years. Richie’s turn came in 1958 when he became Australia’s Test captain, following illness to Ian Craig. He remained captain until 1963–64.

He would often tell the story about the fact that his choice as captain of Australia was something of a surprise. It was either he or Neil Harvey, Richie would say, and then modestly argue that perhaps the Australian Board of Control disliked Richie just a little less than they disliked Neil.

Many stories could be told about a modest and unassuming individual, who simply let the record speak for him. The greatest innings he ever played, he would always say, was the one in which he remained not out until the day he died — with his partner, Daphne.

Oddly, it was most probably the Sri Lankan cricket writer, Harold de Andrado, who came closest to the quintessential evaluation of Richie the cricketer and broadcaster, when he wrote:

Richie Benaud, possibly next to Sir Donald Bradman, has been one of the greatest cricketing personalities as player, researcher, writer, critic, author, organiser, adviser and student of the game.

We never lost a series under Richie's captaincy and we became the dominant team in world cricket. His legacy to young players today derives from his ruthless and relentless determination to attack, his tactical boldness, his ability to extract more from his players.

He was larger than life.

Known for his unbuttoned shirt.

Raised eyebrows.

He brought new life to Test cricket, with remarkable leadership, with his charismatic nature and with his public relations strengths. Cricket, because of Richie Benaud, was no longer boring.

And when he retired from playing in 1964, he left behind a playing legacy comparable with the very best. Indeed, in 1963, he became the first player to complete the Test double of 200 wickets and 2,000 runs.

He played 63 Test matches and 259 first-class matches, but he commentated on approximately 500 Test matches.

The most enduring virtue of Richie, the common man, was seen when he chose to end his British commentary career, which had spanned more than 42 years, when the rights to broadcast live Test match cricket were lost by Channel 4 to the subscription

broadcaster, British Sky Broadcasting. Richie was a staunch advocate of cricket being available to everyone. Free-to-view TV.

Richie is gone, but the memories remain. The record stands. The broadcasting legacy will never be equalled.

And his books are a permanent and enduring record of a man who succeeded resoundingly, lived enthusiastically and was loved greatly.



JOHN HOWARD

The 25th prime minister of Australia, John Howard, has been called Australia's most noted cricket 'tragic'. A passion for the game has been a strong undercurrent throughout Mr Howard's life.

MY first recollection of meeting Richie Benaud was in the late 1950s, when he presented a talk at our local church hall, aided by coloured slides of what I think was Australia's 1957–58 tour of South Africa. As an even younger person, I had seen him play for Australia at the SCG against the West Indians in early 1952, the South Africans in 1952–53 and England in 1954–55. I particularly remember that savage late cut from a South African batsman which shattered some of Richie's front teeth.

In 1958, I recall the late 'Johnnie' Moyes heavily plumping for Richie Benaud to become the Australian captain against Peter May's touring Englishmen. This was the era of Trevor Bailey's funereal performance as an opening batsman for England, when in a Test match the spectators were lucky if a team scored 200 runs on the first day.

Benaud brought an enthusiasm to the Australian team which over time infected others. I could be wrong, but I think it was under Richie's leadership that the practice of teammates running to congratulate a bowler when he took a wicket commenced.

As it is for so many cricket followers of my age, the 1960–61 West Indian tour of Australia remains unforgettable. Under the leadership of Frank Worrell and Richie Benaud, all five Tests were played aggressively but with amazing goodwill and in an atmosphere of mutual respect and friendship. This series included the famous Tied Test at Brisbane. Australia won the series by two matches to one — the fourth Test in Adelaide was a draw.

At the end of the series, the ABC evening radio news included a report on the outcome of the fifth Test in Melbourne, won by Australia. I have never forgotten the newsreader's concluding words: 'Australia won the series 2–1 but both teams shared the greater prize for sportsmanship and adventure.' Australians loved the West Indians' approach to the game, but I have always felt that the spirit Richie Benaud brought to the leadership of the Australian team played no small part in that series being indelible in the memories of cricket lovers of a certain age.

As the years passed, I followed Richie Benaud's career as Australia's captain, talented all-rounder, regular commentator and, of course, his role in the emergence of World Series Cricket and the revolution brought to the game by Kerry Packer.

He was a man for generations of cricket lovers. My sons were enthralled by his manner of cricket commentary. His match summaries were always a lesson in understatement when that was necessary, and polite but precisely delivered criticism when that reaction was needed.

Years later still, I got to know Richie during my political years and enjoyed his gracious company and that of his lovely wife Daphne on a number of social occasions. He always had something relevant to say about current affairs. It was never cynical or carping, but rather thoughtful and reflective. One such occasion was a boardroom lunch he and I attended not long after the 1998 election. He was asked his opinion on the continuing influence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, which had polled a million votes at that election. After reflecting for a moment, he said that although that party's support had probably peaked, its influence would continue for quite a time yet. It proved a most accurate prediction.

I enjoyed the privilege of playing golf with Richie on one occasion. He was kind enough to applaud those few shots of mine that encouraged one to return the following week. This was, I

think, in 2004 and such was his physical condition that he carried his bag for the entire 18 holes.

When Sir Donald Bradman died in February 2001 it seemed the most natural thing that Richie Benaud should deliver the eulogy at his memorial service in Adelaide. For a number of years before his death, Richie was the patron of the Bradman Foundation, of which I became a director early in 2008. He took the duties of being patron seriously and displayed a keen interest in all its work.

When Richie died in April 2015, I said publicly that after Bradman himself Richie Benaud was probably the best known name in Australian cricket.



GIDEON HAIGH

Internationally respected writer Gideon Haigh remembers a rare Benaud defeat.

FOR about ten years, Richie and I were members of the selection panel for the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame. Its annual meeting at the MCG, usually on the third morning of the Boxing Day Test, was an event to which I always looked forward — a selection meeting for posterity.

Richie, of course, was always superbly prepared, and we awaited his verdicts — shrewd, subtle and weighty with experience. By the end of his involvement, I think he had played with ten of the Hall's members, commentated on 11, and been acquainted with another six. At one meeting, however, we arrived at an impasse.

I made a pitch for one player; Richie made a pitch for another. After a lively discussion, we moved to a show of hands and Richie was outvoted by the narrowest margin. Looks were exchanged, and there was an uneasy pause at our going against the great man's will.

Eventually the secretary said: 'Well, that makes four–three. It's not really clear-cut.'

Richie smiled. ‘Oh, I don’t know,’ he said dryly. ‘Four–three sounds pretty clear-cut to me.’

I loved that — thought it summed up Richie’s unassuming matter-of-factness in all circumstances.



RODNEY CAVALIER

Rodney Cavalier is a former chairman of the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust. In that role, he combined with benefactor Basil Sellers to develop the Basil Sellers SCG Sports Sculptures Project.

WHEN I first visited the sacred soil of the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1962 it was to see the second day’s play, NSW v MCC, a Saturday. NSW was batting. Norm O’Neill and Bob Simpson were blazing. Richie was captain of NSW. His services with the bat were not required. When the game resumed on Monday, Richie ran through the MCC for 7–18. NSW did not have to bat again.

Richie was always there whether you saw him or not. When first I saw a Test later that season, first day, third Test, January 1963, Australia was fielding, Richie was captain, shirt open, very much in command. It was the image of him that day that Basil Sellers and I tried to have created in the sculpture of Richie that stands at the SCG.

Richie was always there in conversation. You did not long talk cricket as a schoolboy without Richie entering the conversation. He featured in my earliest writings about cricket, private stuff in a diary. Going over back issues of the newsletter of the Australian Labor Party’s Southern Highlands branch, which I edit and in which I always find room for cricket, he appeared so often. He was on television, it seemed, from the beginning of television.

Then one day Richie moved from the field, television and debates among colleagues into my life and friendship. In writings

and personal conversations, Richie took me inside a life lived in cricket and beyond.

‘TIMING is one of the great things in life,’ he once said. ‘Timings may be your own, they may be luck, you make of them as you will.’

Richie’s first sighting of first-class cricket was 1939–40, the last season before the war, when on January 13, 1940, Lou Benaud took his son to the SCG to see NSW play South Australia. They came by steam train and toast-rack tram.

From the back of the Sheridan Stand with a bottle of Blue Bow and sandwiches, two spectators in 30,400. Lou wanted his son to have a view of Grimmett, Ward, O’Reilly. In that match spinners took 34 wickets. Grimmett 6–118. At the end of the first day, which was all they were able to watch, NSW had made 270. South Australia was making its reply. Bradman was 24 not out. That was wonderful.

DURING the 1953 Ashes tour, Tiger O’Reilly cancelled dinner with Hasset to dine with Richie. That is, Bill placed advice to a coming player ahead of a night out with a friend. Bill provided Richie with advice in six points. The advice came with a warning: to achieve the levels you are seeking will require all your discipline, total dedication and four years of effort. The strictures were correct in every particular.

The O’Reilly advice Richie has shared with any bowler who sought his assistance. Books on spin bowling can take up 250 pages. Bill O’Reilly required two pages. After Warne made his poor debut in Test cricket, Warne asked to meet Richie. At their meeting Richie provided Warne with the O’Reilly wisdom, the warnings about the work ahead. Warne was so good that he mastered the mysteries in two years.

Conventional wisdom about the making of Shane Warne accords the credit to Terry Jenner. It does not diminish whatever Jenner advised to believe the difference was what Richie imparted from Bill O’Reilly. Jenner was a spinner of the second rank. Bill O’Reilly was the best there ever was.

Bill, like Richie, was a masterful writer; each wrote daily reports on the day before, accounts which saw beyond the headlines; each wrote books of memoir that stand as literature in any genre.

A line of advice that reads O'Reilly-Benaud-Warne strikes one as most likely.

Interesting that Richie never entered the contest for history. Contesting history was not Richie's way.

RICHIE'S journalism and books on the game place him in the most exalted company — among players who wrote he is up there with Fingleton and O'Reilly. *A Tale of Two Tests* is a classic work which you never tire of reading.

He was so very good at telling stories because he was so good at listening to stories. Listening, storing, distilling. A memory bank to draw from in any situation for the rest of his days. In any story I told him about politics and the SCG Trust, I did not doubt I was enjoying his full attention. An excellent memory and a wide vocabulary were reasons Richie could ride through technical and other breakdowns as long as he had a functioning microphone. No use for a cue card had he.

A signature Richie moment was recounting a story from Keith Miller about Lord's 1945 just after the war ended. Whit Monday to be precise. Richie erred on the side of precision. Why be proximate when you can be accurate? On that Whit Monday 1945 a vast crowd had turned out to be present at the resumption of serious cricket. Friends of cricket across the world were affirming life.

The story Miller told Richie was the most powerful story Miller ever told, the most poignant cricket story Richie ever heard, and it lost none of its poignancy as another retold it at a ceremony to mark the centenary of the NSW Cricket Association. We who heard Richie tell were as affected as was Richie when Richie first heard the story from Miller.

Entering the field to bat for the Australian Services side was Warrant Officer Robert Graham Williams. He had last played first-class cricket for South Australia in 1938, a broad-shouldered paceman.

In the meantime there had been a war, he had joined the RAAF, his plane was shot down over Libya, he was taken prisoner. He had spent the war in German POW camps teaching braille until his release only weeks earlier. Then he was on a plane, drafted to meet the needs of Australian cricket with no say in the matter. The London papers had picked up his story and splashed it.

He came through the gate at Lord's, broad shoulders gone, gaunt, a shadow of what he had been. Of all the moments that Keith Miller ever witnessed in cricket, this was the most powerful. The whole crowd stood and clapped him. Softly. No cheering. The crowd kept clapping all the way to the wicket. The noise was 'almost orchestral'.

Williams may have enjoyed no say in whether he played but play he did with all the pride of someone worthy of the colours of South Australia and the uniform he had worn in the skies over Europe. His presence in the Services side was his farewell to cricket. Coming in at 8-366, the applause did not unsettle him. Williams scored 53 in a partnership of 88. He also opened the bowling with Bert Cheetham and took 2-56 in the first innings, 0-47 in the second.

Richie made his first-class debut about three-and-a-half years later, on December 31, 1948. Heavy rain fell. Arthur Morris did not have to call on Richie to bowl. NSW needed 143 to win, Arthur made 108 not out. In those early days, Richie had 'three wonderful mentors' — Morris, Miller, Ray Lindwall. 'What need had I of coaches?'

He made his first-class debut at the SCG, his Test debut at the SCG and played his final Test at the SCG. Who could ask for more?

'The SCG is such a great ground,' said Richie. 'It is a wonderful thrill to walk out on it.'

Words spoken with deliberate intent as there was an ill-informed few present who advocated playing cricket elsewhere. Play hard but make sure, make absolutely sure, you maintain the tradition.

THE day of the unveiling of the Richie Benaud sculpture at the SCG, January 4, 2008, remains a special memory. He was the perfect choice to be the first subject. And we had kept the secret; only a precious few knew who the artwork depicted before it was unveiled. The man himself had not seen it.

People were everywhere on the morning of this first unveiling, including the administrative leadership of Australian cricket and a large number of former players. The cloth which covered the sculpture had caught the attention of the SCG members as they filed into the ground from 7am onwards. The stairs leading into the Ladies Stand and the overhead walkway connecting the Ladies to

the Members Stand provided a fine view of the sculpture's location, as did the open windows at the back of both stands. The lawn that runs from the members' main entrance to the practice wickets is elevated, so in every direction people were watching. The media was present in large numbers, including Channel Seven because Channel Nine, the television rights holder for international cricket in Australia, had been gracious in granting all media access to the ceremony.

The governor-general, Major-General Michael Jeffery, had agreed to undertake the unveiling, but this led to a brief crisis when he advised with genuine apology that he needed to represent the nation at the funeral of the former Western Australian premier Sir Charles Court. I had rung the governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir, at her home immediately to apprise her of what had happened. If she was free, could she make herself available? She would make herself available whatever was on, Her Excellency answered. The selection of Richie Benaud impressed her. She wanted her office to be associated with such a significant occasion.

We had planned a ceremony in fine detail, intending to make everyone present feel that the event was memorable. We wanted proceedings to move along. The unveiling was the central moment and should proceed without delay. After my welcome, I provided an introduction to the guest speaker whose job it was to talk in general terms about the sport being honoured, maintain the suspense about the identity of the subject, spread clues (not all helpful) before announcing the name of the subject and lifting the veil.

The governor delivered a perfect speech. In the audience were Richie Benaud, Arthur Morris, Neil Harvey, Mark Taylor and Stephen Waugh, clues perhaps but not definitive, given we had made it clear the subject was not necessarily alive. When the governor announced that the sculpture was of Richie Benaud, the applause was spontaneous in every direction. We had a shroud purpose-built but the governor pulled the string the wrong way. To get it over the sculpture's outstretched arms was a challenge. The crowd renewed their applause, this time more strongly, when they saw how well done was the representation of Richie.

Basil explained his project. The sculptor, Terrance Plowright, expressed his honour at being commissioned and the pleasure of meeting the challenge. Then it was Richie.

‘The first thing I want to say,’ he began, ‘is that I like it.’

OVER a number of years, I pieced together my knowledge of Richie Benaud in a score of conversations. Most of our chatter was at the SCG and at Lord’s. The sculptures project at the SCG took me beyond casual chats into the friendship of Richie and his wife Daphne.

So it was that I, who did not ever expect to share breathing space with Richie, was invited with my wife Sally and son Nicholas in 2009 (after the Lord’s Test) to be a guest of Daphne and Richie at their home in Beaulieu on the Mediterranean. Richie took us to dinner at the African Queen, a restaurant on the bay. We walked the streets of Beaulieu, we talked into a late hour, his mind eclectic, capable of reaching out to the non-tragics at the table. Next afternoon we backed up on the lawn of Basil Sellers’ home at nearby Cap Ferrat — an opportunity for me to perform ever after a shameless specimen of name-dropping and place-dropping. For truly it was heaven to hear Richie recall the fourth Test, Manchester, 1961.

There was not a moment in those days and nights I did not have to convince myself I was truly in the presence of Richie Benaud.