

His Excellency Sir Arthur Roden Cutler VC KCMG CBE KStJ



At a special meeting of the Senate held in the Great Hall on 5 April 1967, the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) was conferred by the Chancellor, Sir Charles McDonald, upon the University Visitor, His Excellency Sir Arthur Roden Cutler, VC KCMG CBE KStJ, BEc, Governor of New South Wales.

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Emeritus Professor Sir Stephen Wallace:

Since the inception of The University of Sydney in 1850, Her Majesty's Governor of the time has invariably been the official Visitor to the University, and, as such, the practice has been for the Senate to confer upon him an appropriate honorary degree. We do this with pleasure in the case of our present Visitor; but, over and above that, we honour Arthur Roden Cutler in his own right as one of the greatest sons of the University, because he is a Governor coming from our own University, coming from our own regiment. In an unrivalled way, he exemplifies the achievements in a great variety of fields available to an Australian boy and man as a result of his own efforts. Born in 1916, he attended Sydney High School, and under conditions of great sacrifice, he became a Bachelor of Economics in this University as an evening student. If there is one feature more than any other that endears him to our academic community, it is the fact that in his public appearances with us he has brushed aside the gaudier robes which could have been provided for him and insists upon wearing what he himself has called his "earned" degree with the Bachelor of Economics hood.

When the war came he enlisted in the Second/Fifth Field Regiment of the AIF and saw severe fighting against the French in the Syrian campaign in the bitter battle for Merdjayoun from June 16, 1941, onwards. Transferred to the coast at Damour, his troops saw their zero hour just after midnight on July 6. Luckily for himself, he persuaded some French to surrender. According to his own regimental history, he persuaded them by a judicious mixture of pugnacious six-foot-four Australianism, hand grenades and his own special variety of French. Shortly after, he was severely wounded when crossing open fireswept ground by himself and was twenty-seven hours without medical attention and alone and isolated until found by those self-same prisoners and brought in. Unfortunately, his wound had become gangrenous and he was immediately operated on in the field.

According to the official citation, his name became a by-word for most conspicuous and sustained gallantry throughout the Syrian campaign. I quote, "throughout the campaign this officer's courage was unparalleled and his work was a big factor in the capture of Merdjayoun". So the gunner, No. NX 12378, was awarded the Victoria Cross. He received the medal in Sydney on June 11, 1942, from Lord Gowrie, himself a Victoria Cross winner.

After the war, the Governor added another facet to his varied career by joining the Diplomatic Service and was, in turn, Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand for six years, High Commissioner to Ceylon, Minister to Egypt, Chief of Protocol at the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, High Commissioner in Pakistan, Australian Consul-General in New York, and in 1965 he became Australian Ambassador to the Netherlands. Words would be a mere gloss to such a record because the later appointments could not have come without success in the former. The present, but not the last, phase in this career came when Arthur Roden Cutler was appointed Governor of New South Wales, a post he still holds, and with all the years available for a man not yet fifty-one.

He has always taken a particular interest in this and in other universities, especially in matters concerned with his own old faculty and with the Sydney University Regiment, of which, towards the end of last year, he became Honorary Colonel. Above all, he is essentially human in the same way that he has made Government House a home instead of a congregation of public rooms, and the functions which he so often attends, gatherings of human beings.

And so, Mr. Chancellor, for these and many other reasons, I present to you the Governor of New South Wales, Arthur Roden Cutler, Victoria Cross, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Bachelor of Economics - scholar, soldier, diplomat, representative of Her Majesty the Queen, the "compleat man" in the Renaissance sense, for admission within The University of Sydney to the Degree of Doctor of Laws (*Honoris Causa*).

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