ROYAL ROAD TEST

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Abstract: a collection of anecdotes regarding falsified and exaggerated qualifications.

The Greek mathematician, Euclid, was employed as a tutor of mathematics in the royal household. King Ptolemy I complained about the difficulty of the theorems that Euclid expected him to grasp, wondering whether there was not an easier way to approach the subject. Euclid gently reproached him: “Sire, there is no royal road to geometry.”

Isaac Asimov’s Treasury of Humor (1971)

The Spring 1993 edition of Bar News exhorted readers to undertake post-graduate legal education at the University of Melbourne. As one who has “been there, done that” I can assure readers that the glory does not justify the pain. I well remember the proud moment I handed my Dad a bound copy of my Master’s thesis: perhaps a small thank-you for all the years of cheque-signing that he had endured. He opened it to the title page, studied it briefly (it is a brief title page) and asked, “Does this mean that when you go to court for your clients, you can charge ’em more?”

“No, Dad, it doesn’t.”

With that he closed the volume and handed it back to me. Although he was a man of few words my Dad could be most eloquent with his gestures.

Given that the game is not worth the candle, is there an easier way? Notwithstanding Euclid, subject to cautionary notes, there are several royal roads.

ADOPTING ANOTHER’S TOIL

As Nathaniel Hawthorne’s son, Julian, was also a writer, father and son were frequently mistaken for each other. “Oh, Mr Hawthorne, I’ve just read The Scarlet Letter [written by the father in 1850], and I think it’s a real masterpiece,” gushed a lady to whom Julian had just been introduced. “Oh, that,” said Julian, shrugging modestly, “that was written when I was only four years old.”

Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife (1884)

This one is fraught with peril - just ask the ex-partner in a leading Melbourne firm of solicitors who lost his practising certificate after the publication of two articles (one in the Law Institute Journal) that bore striking similarities with previously published (by
others) articles. During its research into this incident those stickybeaks from the Melbourne *Age* found that there were also striking dissimilarities between the putative author’s *curriculum vitae* and the official records.

For a similar offence (also committed in the pages of the *Law Institute Journal*) a member of counsel was fined $3,000 and ordered to pay costs by the Barristers’ Disciplinary Tribunal. Why the disparate penalties? As one solicitor was heard to remark, “It’s expected of barristers - they’ve never had an original idea.”

However, worse than resignation (see next section), termination or monetary penalties is the prospect of criminal prosecution under sections 81 or 82 of the Crimes Act. In the late 80s a tutor and Ph D candidate at the University of Melbourne was so prosecuted. Apparently, he happened upon the happy circumstance that he shared an identical name with that of a Melbourne graduate (now a public servant in Canberra) and adopted his namesake’s academic record. Consequently he graduated with a Master’s degree from Melbourne and gained employment there as a tutor. His game came unstuck when he sought to enrol in a Ph D. It appears that he was more than a competent tutor and his MA had been honestly earned - apart from the irregularity of his not having graduated with the pre-requisite Bachelor’s degree.

**SHONKY QUALIFICATIONS**

In addition to the *Age* research noted above (obviously the newspaper is overstaffed for them to have the resources to compare claimed with actual qualifications) the following are given by way of examples.

In 1993 the Law Institute of Victoria applied to the Supreme Court to have a practitioner’s name removed from the roll of Barristers and Solicitors. While the practitioner did not oppose the application, he maintained that his UK legal qualification was kosher. With some glee, the *Age* (again!) noted that the practitioner had lectured at the Victorian Police Academy.

In the 1980s it was rumoured that a member of counsel ceased using the prefix “Dr” before his name after receiving discreet advice from the Bar Council. Unfortunately, Telecom’s White Pages has yet to receive the same advice.
In 1986 Canada abolished the rank of Queen’s Counsel - on the basis that it was meaningless as it was conferred as of right upon request to any practitioner of ten years standing. In fact, some highly experienced and well-known advocates had refused to seek silk as a point of honour. Some bright entrepreneur hit upon the idea of producing for sale, at $5 a pop, a QC certificate (standing for “quality chap” or “quality conversationalist” or somesuch in fine print). A university contemporary of this writer, while pursuing post-doctoral research at the CITA in Toronto, lashed out $5 and sent me one of these certificates. The last I saw of it, it had been commandeered by several of the wags who then had chambers on the same floor as mine and they sent it to the ex-Doctor with an annotation to the effect that it was another fake qualification to add to those already in his possession.

At the time that the ex-Doctor came to the bar, one of the members of this writer’s Bar Readers’ intake was heard to mutter in the Four Courts Cafe that “if he can be the _______ of ________, why can’t I be the Drunk of William Street?”

Late last year, the chief of Research and Information Technology at Telecom resigned five weeks into his new job after doubts were raised about the authenticity of his qualifications. He also resigned his part-time position as senior associate at Melbourne University’s Graduate School of Business citing “other commitments.”

Conrad Black’s recently published A life in progress (1993) makes snide references to the doctorate conferred upon his publishing rival, Dr Tony O’Reilly. According to Black, Dr O’Reilly is equally contemptuous of his own doctorate.

The Federal Government-encouraged amalgamation of tertiary institutions saw the Warrnambool IAE absorbed by Deakin University. A Warrnambool lecturer of twenty years standing applied for the post of professor in the newly enlarged university. After he missed out, he appealed and was successful. This apparently put some noses out of joint and these funny-nosed persons began to delve behind the professor’s cv. As a consequence the professor retired “for personal reasons” and the two years he had put into his Ph D at the University of New England was lost when that body expelled him
from his candidature after an investigation into his enrolment in the programme without holding any degrees.

In 1990 a Deputy Registrar of the High Court left without even submitting her resignation after only one week’s employment. The pesky people from personnel had continued to harp at her regarding her certificate of honourable discharge from the armed forces that she kept forgetting to bring in. On the last day she came in early, cleaned out her desk and departed. It was only then that doubts were raised about her LL B from the Northern Territory University which had only commenced its first year intake that year and whose graduates are only now coming on stream in 1994 and 1995.

FAKING RESEARCH

_The English magazine_ New Scientist _asked its 70,000 readers in 1978 if they knew of or suspected any cases of “intentional bias” [a euphemism for scientific fraud]. Some 204 [completed] questionnaires were received, one purportedly from a laboratory rat._

The recent downfall of Dr William McBride of Sydney is well known. A recent scandal at Deakin University saw the retirement of a professor who substituted his fertile imagination for laboratory experiments relating to the contraceptive pill, the research being funded by the manufacturer. Kohn (False Prophets: fraud and error in science and medicine, 1986) and Broad and Wade (Betrayers of Truth: fraud and deceit in the Halls of Science, 1982) provide other examples including Mendel, Newton and (perhaps) Claudius Ptolemy while Bell (Impure Science: fraud, compromise and political influence in scientific research, 1992) relates the tarnishing of the reputation of the 1975 Nobel laureate Dr David Baltimore.

Such faked research reminds one of the old saw (here taken from Isaac Asimov’s _Treasury of Humor, 1971_):

_University President - Why is it that you physicists always require so much expensive equipment? Now the Department of Mathematics requires nothing but money for paper, pencils, and erasers … and the Philosophy Department is better still. It doesn’t even ask for erasers._

The last word perhaps belongs to Sir Josiah Stamp of the British Inland Revenue Department (1896 - 1917):
The government are very keen on amassing statistics. They collect them, add them, raise them to the n-th power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of the figures comes in the first instance from the village watchman, who puts down what he damn pleases.

**NEPOTISM HELPS**

*I can’t see that it’s wrong to give him a little legal experience before he goes out to practise law.*

President John F Kennedy on being criticised for appointing his brother Robert as Attorney General (1961)

Consider the following entry from the 1988 edition of *Who’s Who in Australia* (page 166). The entry is absent from subsequent editions:


The remarkable aspect of this entry is the wholly unremarkable nature of the accomplishments of the biographee - let’s face it, back in 1952 I played the part of the hindquarters of a donkey in that year’s Christmas Nativity play put on by the Lake Buloke Sunday School. Why has Mr Cadman been accorded an entry? Why is it so? as the late Professor Julius Sumner Miller was wont to ask.

The answer to these questions lies on the title page of the 1988 edition. Dear readers, please refer back to the entry. Mr Cadman’s second wife is one Kerith Cadman. The editor of the 1988 edition is also one Kerith Cadman. That Mr Cadman’s entry in the Australian *Who’s Who* ceased along with his wife’s cessation as editor of the volume should bring no surprise.
WRITE YOUR OWN TICKET

Thomas Hardy was responsible for the ultimate authorised biography - he wrote it himself, and had it published under another name.

Hamilton, Keeper of the Flame (1993)

The following examples may well assist the noted Australian playwright David Williamson who is on record as complaining that his recent works have received excessively harsh criticism - write your own reviews! The number theorist and mathematics historian Eric Temple Bell was also a prolific author of science fiction under the pseudonym John Taine and in 1951 Taine wrote a glowing review of Bell’s text *Mathematics, Queen and Servant of Science*. Taine concluded his review by writing “the last flap of the jacket says Bell is perhaps mathematics’ greatest interpreter. Knowing the author well, the reviewer agrees.”

Perhaps even better was the New York lawyer Arthur Train who wrote a number of supposedly autobiographical books by the old-fashioned and gentlemanly Ephraim Tutt. Nowhere on these books did Train’s name appear and Train’s publisher only narrowly averted the inclusion of an entry on Tutt which had been solicited by the American publisher of *Who’s Who* and gleefully supplied by Train. In 1943 Train reviewed in the *Yale Law Review* (vol 52) his own book *Yankee Lawyer: the autobiography of Ephraim Tutt*. The review was laudatory and closed with the reviewer paraphrasing Voltaire’s aphorism: if Mr Tutt did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.

One of the complaints levelled by Williamson and others of the current Australian literary scene is the coterie of writers reviewing each other’s work in glowing terms in return for an equally glowing review when the roles are reversed. They do not follow the example of the US Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black who, when invited to write an article about fellow Justice William Douglas in 1958, declined writing “our views are so nearly the same that it would be almost like self-praise for me to write what I feel about his judicial opinions.”

Kohn (*False Prophets: fraud and error in science and medicine*, 1986) suggests that the discredited psychologist, Sir Cyril Burt, in addition to faking his data, wrote
favourable reviews of his own work under the pseudonyms Miss Margaret Howard and Miss J Conway.

ADOPTING ANOTHER’S PERSONA

It was, however, in the matter of religious - or irreligious - eccentrics that the credulity of the Christchurch people was most made manifest. The most remarkable of these was a man named Arthur Bentley Worthington. He called himself at first “Dr” Worthington, and let it be understood that he was a Doctor of Laws from an American university. At other times he was “Counsellor” Worthington, a member of the American bar; but he could produce no diploma of proof of these qualifications, and as persistent questions began to be asked about them, he dropped them and allowed them to be forgotten, because he had very soon made them unnecessary. Before he had been many months in Christchurch he had firmly established himself in the hearts of hundreds of people as a Prophet of Righteousness.


It was a decade ago that there were two members of the Victorian Bar sharing the same surname. One was an adept at sword swallowing (the pork variety) and the other was not. Early one evening the St Kilda constabulary happened upon the first who was demonstrating his expertise in a public convenience. Upon being asked to provide his name he adopted the persona of the second. There were those at the Bar, including the second, who thought this was poor form on the part of the first. Needless to say only the second remains a member of the Bar. For once the details were not reported by our friends at the Age and it was left to those doughty propagators of the truth from the Truth to enlighten its readers.

It so happens that at about that time a member of the Bar spent the mid-year Legal Vacation in old Blighty (remember, this was back in the days when it was possible to make a living at the Bar and even undertake overseas holidays). Upon being invited to an evening soiree our tourist friend was astonished to meet the erstwhile member decked out in the garb of a middle-ranking member of the Anglican clergy. Our tourist friend was implored not to give away the erstwhile member. There should have been no concern. Our tourist friend was speechless from stupefaction and entirely incapable of unmasking the erstwhile member.
It was at that time that this writer proclaimed his satisfaction at being the only representative of the Briefless clan at the Bar and his resolve to formally change his name to Aaron Aardvark should any other person bearing his surname join the Bar.

VANITY PUBLISHING

_Henry David Thoreau’s A week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers did not sell._ Eventually his publisher, who needed the space, wrote to ask Thoreau how he should dispose of the remaining copies. Thoreau asked that they be sent to him - 706 copies out of an edition of 1 000. When they arrived and were safely stowed away, Thoreau noted in his journal, “I now have a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself.”

_Journal (October 27, 1853)_

Some members of counsel may have been the lucky recipients of correspondence recently from the International Biographical Centre which boasts a Cambridge (UK) postal address and has adopted on its letterhead and seal a representation of King’s College Chapel of Cambridge University. The physical location is noted (in very fine print) as Ely, Cambridgeshire, some 16 or 17 kilometres distant from Cambridge. No doubt, on a clear day, with acute eyesight and presumably a highly elevated viewing platform one can make out the dreaming spires of Cambridge from Ely, Cambridgeshire.


Of course the publishers limit the inclusion of entries only to “the world’s most notable intellectuals” who “are selected because of their particular achievements and contributions to humanity, as well as reputations within artistic, academic and business fields. Invitations are issued ONLY after the most careful consideration by our editors and researchers. You are one of the very few who warrant inclusion into this much coveted title. It is hoped that you will except this honour.” It is noted that this spelling of “accept” is not excepted by the _Oxford English Dictionary_ which is of course published in a place other than Cambridge.
Of course, it goes without saying, that inclusion into this much coveted title is dependent upon sufficient gullibility to outlay the purchase price of a copy of the eleventh edition of the *International Who’s Who of Intellectuals*:

- US$235 for the Standard Edition (payable in advance),
- US$380 for the Luxury Edition (leather with gold embossing), and
- US$595 for the Royal Edition (limited to 100 copies bound in real leather with gold embossing).

The distinction between real leather (Royal Edition) and leather (Luxury Edition) is not explained in the invitation.

Included in the subscription price is a fancy Certificate of Inclusion - FREE OF CHARGE and hand-inscribed on parchment by IBC’s calligrapher “highly suitable for framing and hanging on a wall in home or office.”

To allow invitees to see what they get for their money the accompanying brochure includes a Sample Biography of an Intellectual as it appeared in the Tenth Edition. There follows an entry for the Headmistress of the New England Girls’ School, Armidale, NSW: Mrs Anna Leonie Abbott. Given that Mrs Abbott is a real person and real headmistress of the real NEGS (as reported by one of the writer’s underpaid spies on the University of New England campus) it is not proposed to reprint Mrs Abbott’s entry from the tenth edition as it is felt that she has already been sufficiently punished for her vanity in that her entry was published in the tenth edition and is now being used to tout for subscribers to the eleventh. What is not clear is, having made the tenth edition as an intellectual, is Mrs Abbott included in the eleventh edition as a matter of course or does it require a further subscription to the eleventh edition? Does a failure to subscribe to the eleventh edition mean that the status of intellectual accorded in the tenth edition is lost?

The next lot of correspondence from IBC in December, 1993 solicited from the addressee assistance in compiling further IBC publications. In return for providing 250 names and addresses of individuals suitable for inclusion in their future titles, the Editor, one Jocelyn Timothy, will create the provider as an Honorary Research Associate of the IBC. Of course, to be so elected, the electee must contribute (in addition to the 250 names and addresses) US$175 to be used *solely* for biographical
research (emphasis in original). US$770 will see the contributor created as a Research Fellow. Both contributions are acknowledged by another fancy certificate proclaiming “internationally, after a careful study of thousands of portfolios, that John A Gullible has been elected unanimously as a Research Fellow of the IBC in recognition of outstanding services to biographical research.”

DO IT YOURSELF (as recommended by Prince Lorenzo)

Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble when you’re perfect in every way
I can’t wait to look in the mirror ‘cos I get better lookin’ each day
To know me is to love me, I must be a hellava man
Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble, but I’m doin’ the best I can.
It’s hard to be humble (words and music by Mac Davis)

Just in time for last Christmas an advertisement appeared in the Age offering “a limited opportunity to acquire an Honorary Doctorate” and depicting, in half-tone, a man in tie, gown and mortar board holding a rolled-up diploma. To be fair to the advertiser, the ad did state that “Honorary qualifications are NOT an academic passport, … ”

Having sent off the completed coupon I received a letter from Alex Kharitonov, Deputy of International Parliament for Safety and Peace, Honorary Doctorates Department congratulating me on meeting the basic criteria illustrating the leadership achievements of a select group of Internationally influential people (Heck! all I did was complete the coupon and dispatch it with a 45 cent stamp - being too embarrassed to send it off through my clerk’s office).

For a fee starting from US$5,000 (payable to Transglobal Immig. Agency) I can have the pick of:

1. The Order of the Temlars (Medal)
2. General Knighthood (Medal for Life)
3. The Order of San Circiaico
4. The Order of the Circulo de las Caballeros Universales
5. The Beethoven Medal
6. The (personalized) Albert Einstein Medal
7. Wilson International Des Intellectuels (including buttons for my coats)
8. Institute des Affaires Internationals Diploma d’Honerus
9. Academia Argentina de Diplomacia Honor Diploma, and (sorry ladies, but this one is only for gentlemen):
10. Captain of the Traditional Legion de L’rigle de Mer
If I am prepared to lay out US$7,000 I am competent for one of the following Honorary Doctorates:

11. Doctorate Bodkin Bible Institute
12. Doctorate Christian Congregation
13. Doctorate Universal Church
15. International University, Bombay, India
16. University Sancti Spiritus, California

US$8,000 will be acknowledged by one of the following Honorary Professorships:

17. Australian Institute for Coordinated Research
18. High School of the Rupac (Alliance Universalle de la Paix) Paris
19. Institute European de Documentation, Brussels
20. Institute des Houtes Etudes Economiques et Sociales, Brussels
21. Institute d’Enseignement Technique Superieur, Brussels
22. Academie des Sciences Humaines Universelles, Paris

However, real patrons wishing to benefit mankind will receive one of the following knighthoods (in return for US$10,000):

23. Baron of the Order of the Bohemian Crown
24. Knight of the Lofoensic Ursinius Order, Germany
25. Knight of the Order of the HTE Holy Grail
26. Knight of the Italian Order of San Ciriaco
27. Knight of the Spanish Order Circulo Nobilario de las Caballeros Universales
28. Knight of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem
29. General Knighthood (Merit for life)
30. Knight of the Order of the Templars

Accompanying the letter of congratulations there is a two-page application form and four further pages depicting the various medals and certificates available.

The applicant is required to state Professional and Parliamentary activities, Social and Military offices, academic degrees and “State, Governmental and Knighty Awards.” Given that Edward III instituted the Most Noble Order of the Garter in 1348 and it being rumoured that the Prince of Wales intends instituting a similar Order of the Tampon upon accession to the British Throne, there should be no surprise at being requested to provide details of any knighthly awards the applicant may have received.

Less than a month passes and a breathless missive from the CEO ARO IRSP (Peter Lion) seemingly offering a discount of US$1 000 on the above quoted prices if the recipient forwards the full amount within five days.
Another two weeks passes and Mr Lion, now the CEO of IPSP, sends the following (which is not the result of the notorious Bar News proof reading):

DEAR SIR,

WE ARE VERY PLEASED TO HAVE SUCH A DISTINGUISHED APPLICANT LIKE YOURSELF AND, THEREFORE BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US, DECISION HAS BEEN MADE BY OUR CHAIRMAN TO GRANT A HONORARY DEGREE OR OTHER AWARD TO YOU. PLEASE, DON’T HESITATE TO SEND TO US YOURS COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TOGETHER WITH 2 PHOTOS AND A BANK CHEQUE.

YOUR AWARD (DEGREE, CERTIFICATE), IN ADDITION TO ALL USUAL SEALS AND SIGNATURES, WILL BEAR A SEAL FROM THE RELAVANT DEPARTMENT OF THE DUTCH GOVERMENT AND THE REGISTRATION NUMBER AND WE DO HEREBY FOR FORMALLY STATE AND IRREVOCABLY CONFIRM AND GUARANTEE WITH FULL LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY, ACTING UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY, SUBJECT OF RECEIPT FROM AN APPLICATION FORM AND FUNDS, THAT WITHIN 5 WEEKS THEREAFTER ALL THE DEGREES (AWARDS, HONORS) WILL BE DELIVERED TO YOU BY CERTIFIED MAIL.

SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US.

YOURS FAITHFULLY,
IPSP
PETER LION
CEO

THE PROLIFERATING PROFESSORS

[Lord Rutherford, Cavendish Professor, Cambridge and Nobel laureate in Chemistry, 1908] was actively hostile to the commercialization of scientific research, telling his Russian protege Peter Kapitza, for example, when Kapitza was offered consulting work in industry, “You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time.”

Davies, The Martin Committee and the binary policy of higher education in Australia (1989) 44

Today, not counting emeritus (“retired with great honour”) there are more professors in Australia than there are professorial chairs in institutions of higher learning. This is fine while the music is in full swing but when it stops there will be a mad scramble for too few seats.

Why is this so? Why doesn’t Professor Fels of the Trade Practices Commission prosecute chairless professors for breaches of the Trade Practices Act? Why doesn’t the DPP prosecute them for theft of university chairs?
It’s like this - a real professor occupying a real seat of learning at a real university calls a press conference. After serving God for many years the professor is fed up with his recently graduated students, snot-nosed pimply-faced boys all of them, paying more in income tax than he receives in gross salary. He has called the press conference to announce that he is forsaking God for Mammon and has joined a mega firm of solicitors as a senior partner.

This is all very well, but the professor wishes to retain the cachet of the title “Professor” and he can’t take it with him - the university wishes to seat his successor in the chair. Thanks to John Dawkins’s term as the Federal Minister for Education there is a whole slew of new universities that only a few years ago gloried in the name, style and title as the Koo-wee-rup College of Domestic Economy or somesuch. It is a marriage made in heaven. The new university desires the respectability of association with a respected academic and the new senior partner retains his title even if he is only a “visiting” professor.

This is not for us to carp at - the rot set in years ago when the first Chairman of the National Crime Authority insisted on retaining the privileges of judicial office forcing the then government to offer a Federal Court position to induce the first Chairman to relinquish his place on the NSW Supreme Court bench. So much for judicial independence. Those of us who bemoan the crumbling concept of such independence were strangely silent only so few years ago.

Brien Briefless
Master of Jurisimprudence
The Benjamin Boothby Professor of Constitutional Law
Yalla y poora Mechanics’ Institute and Lending Library
Author/s:
Park, Malcolm McKenzie

Title:
Royal road test

Date:
1994

Citation:

Publication Status:
Published

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/35039

File Description:
Royal road test

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