

ARKELL MURDERED

Vigilante

on

the

loose

**Police
fear
killings
linked**



By PETER CULLEN
Editor-in-Chief

Former Wollongong lord mayor Frank Arkell may have been the victim of a vigilante killer.

Police are now worried that the same killer murdered and mutilated David O'Hearn at Albion Park Rail two weeks ago.

They think a sadistic and depraved killer is on the loose and that he might be choosing his third victim.

Arkell was found bashed to death on Saturday morning in a flat attached to his home in Reserve St, West Wollongong.

His skull had been caved in, and a Rotary Club pin driven into one of his eyes. Tie pins were jammed into his cheeks.

The long-time lord mayor and former NSW MP was an accused

paedophile who was awaiting trial on a number of sex charges.

Tight-lipped police had little to say about the murder investigation yesterday, but a highly placed police source said the vigilante theory was being taken extremely seriously.

However, police have set up a new task force to probe the Arkell murder.

They have formed Task Force Limestone which includes Sydney crime agencies, homicide detectives and Wollongong police to investigate the slaying.

Task Force Lema is probing the O'Hearn murder after the 60-year-old bachelor, who lived alone, was found decapitated in his Bateman Ave townhouse on June 13.

Task Force Limestone head Inspector Geoff Leonard released no

CONTINUED PAGE 3



ABOVE: Frank Arkell ... his reputation tainted by child sex allegations which were due to go to trial in September.

LEFT: Police at the scene of Arkell's brutal murder. Police believe a vigilante killer is on the loose after the murder of Albion Park Rail man David O'Hearn.

Picture: KIRK GILMOUR

The ARKELL murder

The day Frank's world came crashing down

By LISA CARTY

May 1, 1997, was not a good day for Frank Arkell.

In the morning he walked around the Unanderra shopping centre, apparently desperate to engage people in conversation.

One astonished woman later told *The Mercury* how she had resisted his attempts to shake her

hand, and had told him: "I hope you haven't moved to Unanderra."

"He went crazy - he chased me down the street and accused me of calling him a paedophile," she said.

"He said he was going to sue me."

Clearly the tension of being revealed in the Wood Royal Commission as a key player in

Wollongong's seedy paedophile network was beginning to show.

After that encounter in Unanderra, Arkell lunched with a friend on Mt Keira Rd, totally unaware that his humble home nearby in West Wollongong was under police surveillance.

Later, about 4.30pm, officers from the Child Protection Enforcement Agency pounced.

Arkell was arrested and charged with 29 sex offences involving four victims.

At the committal hearing, that was reduced to five charges involving three victims. He was to stand trial in Parramatta District Court on September 14 on four charges involving two of those victims. He was still to be indicted on one other charge involving the third victim.

Victims wanted their day in court

By LISA CARTY

Frank Arkell died a brutal death but some of his devastated victims still feel he has had the last laugh.

Robbed of their day in court, the men were in shock when they heard that their tormentor would not face the legal system.

The two men who were due in the witness box at his trial in September said they felt completely let down.

However, a third man, over whom Arkell had been committed to stand trial but not yet indicted, said he was delighted the former lord mayor had met his death (see separate story).

One of the men who was due in court in September said: "For 13 years I have been working up to this, and finally I found the courage to go ahead."

"I was working up to the next court appearance and now it has all been for nothing. I am just in complete shock. I don't know what to think."

"I was looking forward to going to court because it was going to be very satisfying to tell a jury what he did to me."

The man, now 31 and married with children, said Arkell had ruined part of his life, but declared he was not motivated by revenge.

His psychiatrist had warned him that Arkell might suicide but the possibility of a murder had never crossed his mind, he said.

In relation to this man, Arkell was to be tried on charges of administering a stupefying drug (alcohol) in order to commit indecent assault, and having sexual intercourse without consent, between January 1, 1984 and June 16, 1984.

At Arkell's committal hearing in Wollongong Local Court in February, he told Magistrate Paul Johnson that he had met Arkell through his family, and regarded him "as a second father, a mentor".

That relationship was irrevocably destroyed when Arkell invited him into the Lord Mayor's office and gave him an alcoholic drink.

They chatted, and soon the conversation had turned to sex, he told the court.

"He touched my body, touching my muscles, feeling me up, telling me how beautiful I was. He asked me if I would like to join him at his place ... he said it would be a lot more relaxed, comfortable and private."

The man said the drink had made him feel quite unwell and he subsequently dozed off.

He woke up and found Arkell assaulting him with two objects he remembered as being short and fat and long and skinny. The assaults left him chafed and bleeding, he said.

The other victim who had been due to testify against Arkell in September said he was completely devastated by the news. "He's got away with it," the man said. "I can't believe that it's all over. We won't get justice. In the eyes of the law he's innocent."

"I wasn't looking forward to giving evidence again, especially in front of people with wigs on, but I was determined to go through with it. Whoever killed him has robbed us of justice."

At Arkell's committal, this man - who was 19 when Arkell allegedly lured him to his home and gave him a stupefying alcoholic beverage - said he had felt "strange" and "just like falling asleep" after the drink.

He told the court: "I was laid down on the bed. He took his clothes off. He started rubbing me with oil or moisturising cream. He rubbed it all over my back and my body. He had sexual intercourse with me."

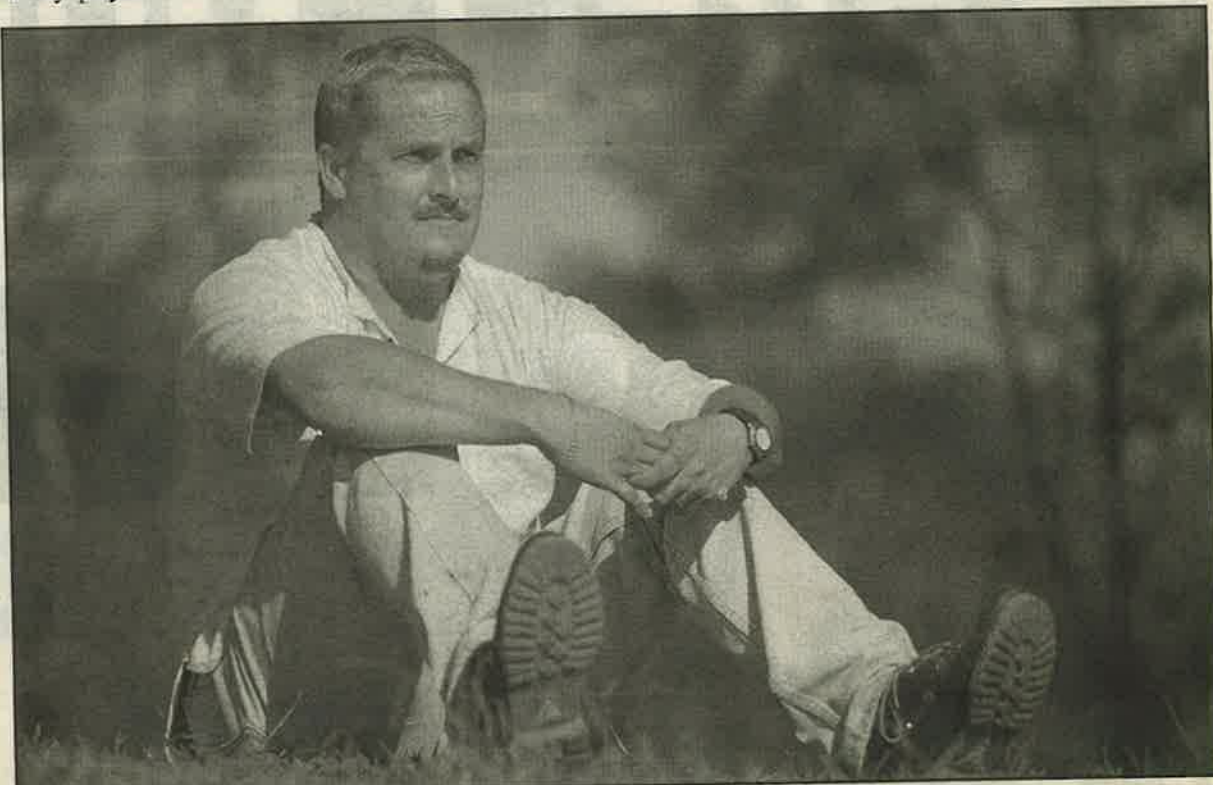
In relation to this man, Arkell was to be tried on charges of administering a stupefying drug (alcohol) in order to commit indecent assault, and buggery, between May 1, 1978, and May 31, 1979.

Charges in relation to another man were dropped at the committal, partly because of the length of time since the alleged offence in 1973.

The man, a paedophile with a long criminal record, was shattered when the three charges of indecent assault which related to him were dropped.

His criminality, as well as questions about the identity of his assailant, were also in the magistrate's mind when he dropped the relevant charges.

Speaking from jail, the man told *The Mercury*: "They've all got away with it - (Tony) Bevan (a former Wollongong lord mayor exposed after his death as the organiser of an extensive boy sex racket), (Brian) Tobin (a former city councillor and paedophile who suicided as he was about to be questioned by the NSW Police Royal Commission) and now Arkell."



Great news ... David Potbury prepares to get on with his life after the death of Frank Arkell. "It's finished. If I could find the bloke who did it I'd shake his hand."

Accuser can now 'get on with life'

By LISA CARTY

David Potbury felt no sympathy at all when he heard that Frank Arkell had been murdered.

"That's great news - now I can get on with the rest of my life," he said.

Arkell had been committed to stand trial on one charge of buggery against Mr Potbury but was yet to be indicted. Eleven other charges relating to Mr Potbury were dropped at a preliminary hearing in February this year.

Speaking from his Brisbane home, Mr Potbury, who was recruited as a teen into the boy sex racket run by another former Wollongong lord mayor, the late Tony Bevan, said he was elated that the case was closed.

"My life had been on hold because of the court proceedings and now I don't have to worry about it any more."

"It's finished. If I could find the bloke who did it I'd shake his hand."

In February Mr Potbury told Magistrate Paul Johnson that he had had sex with Arkell for the first time at an East Corrimal flat owned by Bevan in April 1984.

Some days later he had seen the city's Lord Mayor Frank Arkell on the television news and recognised him as his client.

Mr Potbury told the court he had had sex with Arkell on four subsequent occasions at East Corrimal, and once at the Wollongong Aerial Patrol base established by Bevan at

Windang. Quizzed by Arkell's barrister Phillip Boulton about the identity of the man on television, Mr Potbury said: "He resembled exactly the same guy."

Mr Boulton said Mr Potbury had told the NSW Police Royal Commission that he had had sex with Arkell once, at Wollongong's high-rise residential apartment block Creston.

Magistrate Paul Johnson accepted Mr Potbury's explanation that the Royal Commission investigators were interested in who he had had sex with, not how many times.

After giving a statement to the commission he realised that he had been mistaken about the location.

Old wounds still raw

By LISA CARTY

Frank Stansbury was bitterly disappointed when the police told him they could not charge Frank Arkell with indecently assaulting him back in the early 1980s.

The dates were vague and there was no corroboration of Mr Stansbury's story that Arkell had slowly and carefully stripped him naked before standing back to admire his young body.

Mr Stansbury was then in his mid teens, and already recruited into the sex racket run by now-notorious former Wollongong lord mayor, the late Tony Bevan.

He said it was at Bevan's farm at West Dapto that he met and was undressed by Arkell while Bevan waited outside.

"He just took off all my clothes slowly and he folded everything up carefully and neatly," Mr Stansbury

said. Just then Tony called out and I had to go."

Mr Stansbury raised his allegation with the Child Protection Enforcement Agency after its officers charged Arkell on May 1, 1997.

A statement was taken but his allegation was regarded as too flimsy.

"I understood what they were saying but it still upset me to think he was going to get away with it," he said.

Mr Stansbury was at a friend's house on Saturday night when he heard of Arkell's murder.

"I saw it on the TV and I ran across the lounge room so fast I tripped over the coffee table," he said.

"It's something I thought about doing for years."

"I thought he had it coming. Justice has been done."



Frank Stansbury ... Arkell "had it coming".



Arkell thought he'd live forever

.. but vicious killer took his life

By LISA CARTY

Two years ago Frank Arkell said he thought he had 30 years of life "left in the wonderful city of Wollongong".

But that was before a vicious killer who could have been bent on revenge decided to take the law into his own hands.

Apparently driven by fury, Arkell's murderer meted out savage punishment to the alleged paedophile.

Late on Friday night, probably as he was preparing for bed, Arkell was beaten to death in the sad little granny flat at the rear of his carport.

He put up a fight but was no match for the killer who came to claim the scalp of the former Wollongong lord mayor and state MP.

Arkell was beaten so ferociously that his skull caved in. In an act of savagery, the killer drove Arkell's prized Rotary Club pin into one of his eyes.

Other tie pins were jammed into the dead man's cheeks.

A neighbour discovered Arkell's bloodied, lifeless body as she delivered bread and milk to his Reserve St, West Wollongong, home on Saturday morning.

Within half an hour a large team of police - at times

numbering up to 30 - converged on the scene, cordoning off his house and a large section of the adjoining park.

As word about the demise of "Mr Wonderful Wollongong" spread, small groups of locals gathered. One woman told another: "He wrote me a reference years ago. I don't know whether to burn it or keep it."

Detectives investigating the shocking murder of Albion Park man David O'Hearn, who was beheaded exactly two weeks previously, have been called into the case.



MR O'HEARN

Officers from the Child Protection Enforcement Agency - which charged Arkell with 29 sex offences on May 1 last year - are assisting.

His known victims will be interviewed and asked to supply alibis for Friday night, but police concede there could be a great number of unidentified victims.

Most of the painstaking work centres on trying to identify any link between both murder victims.

Arkell's brutal attack fell short of the extreme mutilation suffered by O'Hearn, but the mutilation with the pins is considered a key link.



Pictures: KIRK GILMOUR, ORLANDO CHIODO, GREG TOTMAN, KEN JAMES, JACKY GHOSSEIN, ADAM McCLEAN



TOP: News crews and onlookers gather outside Arkell's Reserve St home where he was brutally murdered.

LEFT: Arkell's solicitor Peter Daly (right) was shocked to hear of his client's grisly death.

BELOW LEFT: Senior Detective David Laidlaw (right) and another policeman talk outside Arkell's home on the morning after the murder.

TOP RIGHT: A police photographer took numerous pictures of the murder scene.

RIGHT: A police spokesman briefs the media on the details of the savage killing outside Arkell's home on Saturday morning.

BELOW: Police removed a glass door from Arkell's home for closer inspection.



Police task force starts work

FROM PAGE 1

new information about the Arkell case yesterday.

It is known that blood was in every room of the Arkell flat.

Police even found blood in a bathroom, suggesting the killer might have tried to

clean up after the gruesome murder.

Insp Leonard declined to say whether Arkell had expressed to police fears for his life in the weeks before his murder.

They continued to conduct forensic tests on the former lord mayor's home yesterday, hoping to uncover some clue that

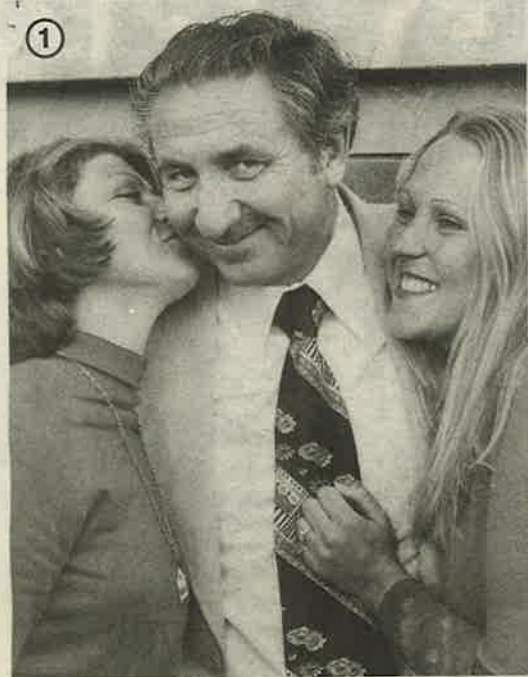
would put them on the killer's trail.

An autopsy was conducted in Sydney yesterday but police will not release results until today.

They renewed appeals for help and urged callers to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

The double life

The good times ...



1. Frank Arkell gets a good luck kiss from Kate Edwards (left) and Susan Bath before the Wollongong City Council elections in August 1977, when he defeated Labor's Ray Wetherall.
2. Ever ready to be photographed to promote community events, Frank Arkell was even prepared to mount a horse to launch the Festival of Wollongong's show-jumping in 1980.
3. Frank Arkell launches his campaign for the State seat of Wollongong in March 1984, which he won, beating Labor's candidate Rex Connor Jnr and setting up a dual role as Lord Mayor and State MP.
4. Tickling the ivories with US entertainer Liberace.
5. New MP Frank Arkell's first day in Parliament in May 1984, learning the ropes from another Independent, Member for South Coast John Hatton, with a fresh-faced John Fahey in the row in front.
6. Good morning Wollongong! Frank Arkell runs a test transmission for community access radio station 2VOX-fm in November 1984.
7. Ship ahoy! Frank Arkell opens a scale model shipping display at Stuart Park in November 1984.
8. December 1986, and Frank Arkell christens the northern cycleway with fellow councillor Jack Parker and Deputy Lord Mayor Bill Mowbray (walking).
9. Frank Arkell celebrates Wollongong Mall's first birthday in 1987 with Kerrie Humphrey (left) and Rose Senatore. Arkell presided over a transformation of the city centre, which included the introduction of the Mall and the construction of the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre and council office block.



of Frank Arkell

... and the bad



1. A sign of things to come for Frank Arkell – a pink closet left at the gates of Parliament House in Sydney's Macquarie St in June 1984 after the newly-elected MP had refused to vote in favour of liberalising homosexuality laws.

2. May 1991, and Frank Arkell bids farewell to his NSW Parliamentary career after losing the seat of Wollongong to Labor's Gerry Sullivan. Arkell also lost his Lord Mayoral role the same year.

3. The beginning of the end – Police Inspector Gordon Ball escorts Frank Arkell from his West Wollongong home when he was arrested in May 1997.

4. Frank Arkell leaves Wollongong Police Station on the night of his arrest in May 1997.

5. November 1997, and Frank Arkell and a police officer inspect graffiti on the wall of his home at Reserve St, West Wollongong proclaiming: "You are a wanker". Arkell, who was on bail on sex charges, considered he was the victim of an harassment campaign.

6. February this year, and Arkell arrives at Wollongong Court with his lawyer Peter Daly to face a committal hearing on sex charges.

7. Frank Arkell arrives at Wollongong Court on the first day of his committal hearing on sex charges in February. He was subsequently committed to stand trial, and was due to appear before a Sydney court in September.

The ARKELL murder



MARRIED TO WOLLONGONG

By
GEOFF FAILES



who covered
Wollongong Council
during the Arkell era

To some he was the best thing that ever happened to Wollongong.

But to others who knew or worked with him, Frank Arkell was disliked, even hated.

Seemingly, Arkell was everywhere.

As a Wollongong alderman, first elected in 1965 and then as Lord Mayor from 1974 and State MP for Wollongong from 1984 to 1991, he was our best known citizen.

A bachelor, it was not uncommon for him to pop up at four or five functions a night, especially at weekends. Often he would stay only a few minutes at each function, but that hardly seemed to matter. His attendance had been noted - and appreciated.

He would have had a great career in public relations.

I saw him at local government conferences standing at doors handing out brochures on Wollongong, urging people to visit the city.

At a Terrigal tourism conference he once poked brochures under every hotel room door in the middle of the night.

Asked why he never married, he would say: "I'm married to Wollongong."

His message was simple and loud: "Wollongong is wonderful, but we have to broaden our economic base and find more jobs for our kids."

But after a few years the rhetoric became boring.

He would repeat the same catch phrases over and over again.

It was "Wollongong, Wollongong, Wollongong", or "Wonderful Wollongong" wherever he went.

By the late 1980s, his determination to put Wollongong on the map "to remind people that the W in NSW was Wollongong", became an obsession.

He became less tolerant with people, especially council employees, often chiding them in public if he was unhappy with something that they had



Frank Arkell with the fitting backdrop of an aerial photo of the city he championed in his role as Wollongong Lord Mayor and State MP. He served as Lord Mayor for 17 years to 1991, and as Member for Wollongong from 1984 to 1991.

done or not done.

I vividly recall seeing Arkell in a lift filled with members of the public at the council building, haranguing a senior officer for alleged incompetence.

At local government election time, it was often joked that Arkell missed out on 1000 votes - those of every Wollongong City Council employee.

But to many the public face of Frank Arkell was impressive. He got things done, like greening and cleaning the city, handing out trees to everyone who became an Australian citizen at naturalisation ceremonies, and turning Crown St into a pedestrian mall even though a former town clerk Phil Berthold probably deserves as

much credit for initiating that development.

At Parliament House, Arkell entertained regularly. Industrialists, businessmen and women, service club representatives - anyone he thought could help Wollongong - all enjoyed meals in the dining room.

But his world started crumbling around 1991 when Labor's David Campbell defeated him for the Lord Mayor's job.

He blamed council workers for his demise and hardly spoke another word to Cr Campbell during the next four years he remained as a councillor.

During this time, rumours about his involvement in paedophile activities - which had been around for some years

but never discussed openly - began to increase. The rumours reached a crescendo when the Police Royal Commission was called in 1996.

It seemed strange to many, including close friends who knew Arkell once dated an attractive woman from Bowral.

Those who knew him noticed how irritable he had become. He hated this newspaper and never let an opportunity go by to criticise *Mercury* journalists and management in public.

His friends began to desert him and before long, Arkell was living virtually as a recluse in his Reserve St, West Wollongong home.

There is no doubt Frank Arkell did much to promote Wollongong both in

and outside the city.

One of the best things he did was to save the manor house Gleniffer Brae and its gardens from the clutches of private developers. That lovely property which might have become a housing estate became the home of the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music and a popular venue for weddings and receptions.

But sadly, when historians look back on the life and times of Frank Arkell, it will not be his deeds as a councillor or MP that will be honoured.

It will be the violent manner of his death, and the charges that he did not have a chance to defend that will be remembered.

Franca sheds no tears for W1

By LISA CARTY

Anti-paedophile campaigner and rebel NSW MP Franca Arena will shed no crocodile tears for Frank Arkell.

It was she who used parliamentary privilege to reveal that the former Wollongong lord mayor was the W1 of Royal Commission fame.

While stressing her abhorrence of violence, Mrs Arena said she would be sickened by the "sob stories" which would now surface about Arkell.

"I couldn't believe that he'd been murdered, but let's not forget the victims," she said.

"Just because there was some good in Frank Arkell does not mean the allegations against him were not true.

"Every personality is multi-faceted.

"I don't want to hear about all the good things he did for Wollongong. My thoughts are with his victims."

Wollongong City councillor Terry Gallagher also refuses to mourn the death of the man many called

"Mr Wonderful Wollongong".

Cr Gallagher said that if the council held a minute's silence for its former leader, she would object.

"I have heard a lot of people say Wollongong is saddened by his death," Cr Gallagher said.

"I am not saddened and I am not in mourning, and if there's a minute's silence at council I will be asking that it go on the public record that I am not joining in.

"I will not give that sort of respect to a person who didn't respect the living."



MRS ARENA

The ARKELL murder



Death shocks, saddens colleagues

By GEOFF FAILES

Shocked and saddened by his murder, Frank Arkell's former council colleagues yesterday remembered him as an obsessive champion of Wollongong.

"He was the person who put a face on the city - he was almost a zealot in the way he worked to see Wollongong get recognised," city council general manager Rod Oxley said.

"He coined the phrase 'Wonderful, wonderful Wollongong' which will stick with him for a long time."

If there was a darker side to Arkell, then it was not visible to his fellow aldermen, both members of his own Arkell Independent group and the Labor Party who served alongside him for many years.

Yesterday they spoke about a man, a bachelor "married" to Wollongong and totally committed to promoting Wollongong.

They spoke about a man who was a guest in their homes and known as "Uncle Frank" to their children. They also spoke about a man who became difficult to deal with; cranky if he couldn't get things done.

Former political ally Ted Tobin, a foundation member of the Arkell Independents, said he would remember Arkell as a man "unbelievably committed to the city and region's development."

"His greatest attribute was his love of Wollongong. In political terms, his greatest short-coming was his inability to delegate because he was afraid he would miss something important," Mr Tobin said.

"The Arkell Independents grew in stature and credibility in the 1980s because of his drive and commitment. In fact one of the requirements was that we each had to sign a statutory declaration saying that we were not members of any political party."

Mr Tobin also recalled Arkell's almost manic determination to be everywhere - he would often attend four or five functions on the same night.

"The only blue I ever had with him was when we tried to talk him out of standing again as Lord Mayor in 1991 (when he lost to David Campbell). We had a classic run-in when we told him he would lose."

"The end of this saga is an absolute tragedy."

Another colleague Peter Hilton, who also served as an alderman with Arkell and was his campaign manager at lord mayoral and state government elections, said in all the years he knew Arkell he "never saw a side of him that worried me" (referring to the paedophile allegations).

"Over the years I spent a lot of time in his company - he also visited our home - but I never saw anything that concerned me."

"It's a great shame the person who gave so much finished up the way he did. Instead of going out and losing everything he should have gone out a winner."

Mr Hilton said among Arkell's most memorable campaigns were his desire to make Wollongong a "greener and cleaner" city, helping migrants integrate with the community and promoting the city as a conference centre.

Mr Oxley said he first knew Arkell in the early 1980s when he (Oxley) was city treasurer, and worked closely with him when appointed general manager in 1988.

"Frank was an inspiration to a lot of people. People were prepared to walk over hot coals for him," he said.



Happier days ... Councillor Pat Franks shares a light moment with former lord mayor Frank Arkell who was brutally murdered on the weekend.



CR CAMPBELL



MR OXLEY



MR TOBIN



MR HILTON



MR HATTON

'Mr Wonderful' fought for city

Mr Oxley said in the latter part of the 1980s, Arkell's popularity waned and people started to challenge his policies.

"He became difficult to work with and started believing in himself too much. His supporters also began to desert him."

Mr Oxley said Arkell could take credit for promoting Wollongong by inviting businessmen and women to special luncheons at State Parliament.

"Benefits flowed from these. I remember he formed a close association with Frank Lowry, the boss of Westfield after we met with him in Sydney," Mr Oxley said.

"He did a lot of positive things in the 1980s. A lot of people would do anything for Frank Arkell and I was one of them."

"But he started to become obsessive and less tolerant of people. He became frustrated and took this out on staff."

"At the time I told him you cannot treat people like that, but it got to the point where people were apprehensive about dealing with him."

Mr Oxley said when Arkell was defeated as Lord Mayor in 1991 he blamed staff for his downfall.

Lord Mayor David Campbell said Frank Arkell would be remembered for coining the phrase "Wonderful Wollongong".

"I acknowledge the contribution he made as an elected person over some 30 years," he said.

Councillor Campbell said after he defeated Arkell to become Lord Mayor in 1991, "he never spoke much to me again".

Former Labor alderman and political rival Ray Wetherall said Arkell's "very presence indicated Wollongong was going somewhere".

"His view was that anyone working for the council was expected to do a day's work," he said.

"It is a terrible end for a man who was never convicted of anything."

Former Wollongong lord mayor Jack Parker served with Arkell on Wollongong City Council for 22 years. Obviously shaken by his former colleague's savage death, Mr Parker said he was "sickened" by the news. "I had a very high regard

for Frank," he said. "He was a very decent man."

Mr Parker said it saddened him to think that Arkell would never get the opportunity to prove his innocence in court.

The Illawarra Regional Information Service's chief executive officer Martin O'Shannessy remembers Arkell as the best boss he ever had.

Mr O'Shannessy worked for Arkell as a research officer from 1984 to 1988. He said neither he nor the two drivers working for him at that time ever saw any evidence of the sorts of activities with which the former lord mayor was later charged.

He said he considered Arkell a family friend and he had never had any problem with him being around his own young children.

He was "absolutely stunned" when Arkell was charged and it would have taken a guilty verdict to convince him of the truth of the charges.

"Now we'll never know," he added.

Former independent South Coast

MP John Hatton who was in State Parliament at the same time as Arkell, said yesterday Arkell would be remembered as a "diligent and hard working member" who pushed for government and industry investment in Wollongong.

Mr Hatton said he had not the "slightest inkling" of any suspicion that Arkell was homosexual.

He said in all his investigations into police corruption he never came across any evidence of police being involved in any cover-up of paedophilia activities.

The news of Arkell's death, and the manner of that death, had put a pall over the city of Wollongong, said Arkell's former council colleague Pat Franks.

"The sad part about it is that he has been identified as being a paedophile, but he was never convicted," Cr Franks said. "The great tragedy is that the case was still pending."

She felt "absolutely rotten" and desperately sorry for everyone in Wollongong. "Nobody can deny that he really cared about this city."



Frank did put Wollongong on the map

.. but for all the wrong reasons

Like everybody else in our Illawarra community, I am shocked by the brutal slaying of Frank Arkell.

It was a ghastly crime, almost sadistic, and we must all hope that police capture Arkell's killer before he strikes again.

That Arkell should end his life the victim of what might be a serial killer is indeed a tragic development in a city reeling from a spate of horrendous crimes.

Who will be next? They are the words on everyone's lips. Certainly those involved in any way with paedophilia, known or unknown, would be trembling in their boots.

Since news of the murder rolled through the community on Saturday morning, people have been asking me ... How do you feel about it?

I answer them two ways. Firstly, I am stunned that Arkell has been slain by a maniac, whether he be a victim seeking revenge or a random killer.

And secondly, I have no regrets that the *Illawarra Mercury* took the stand it did in helping to reveal the dark side of his life.

Some of our community leaders are saying Arkell put Wollongong on the map.

I agree. He did. But for all the wrong reasons - for his double life, the sinister side which resulted in his being charged with sex offences against teenage boys, now grown men with their lives torn apart.

Arkell's life is over. For some of his victims, their lives finished years ago.

Arkell was relentless in blaming *The Mercury* for his fall from grace. At every opportunity he condemned the newspaper, pleaded with people not to buy it, and said he would not stop until we answered for our sins.

He had sued for defamation.

We were not fazed by that and intended to



By
**PETER
CULLEN**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

defend our wicket with every resource at our disposal.

However, let's get a few facts straight. It was the Wood Royal Commission and its investigators who caused most of Arkell's heartache.

They produced three alleged victims, all strangers to *The Mercury*. They went before the commission under code names and made damning allegations against Arkell.

Yet, when Arkell had the chance to enter the witness box and refute the allegations, he ducked it.

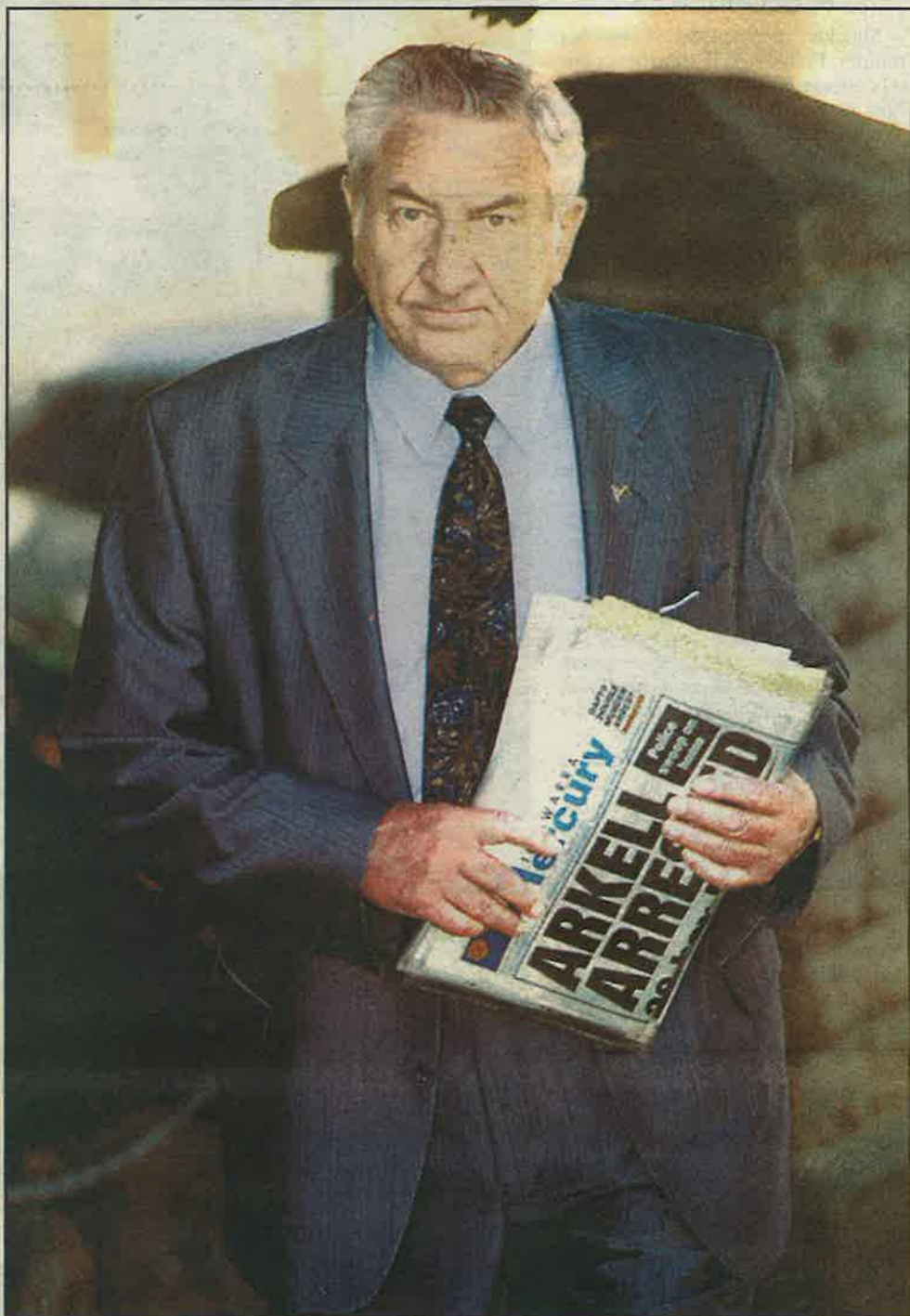
Instead, he produced a statement and his solicitors presented a sick certificate to the commission as a reason why Arkell could not attend.

The following day *The Mercury* interviewed Arkell, and he told us he felt fine.

This bothered me a lot. Wouldn't an innocent man raise the roof, and almost demand to be heard and rebut the allegations in the most aggressive manner?

Here was his golden chance and he wanted no part of it.

The Royal Commission was less than impressed. The Arkell documents were then handed over to police. After extensive investigations they charged Arkell.



Frank Arkell on his way to face court in May.

The Mercury did not charge him. His trial was scheduled for September, and I believe he would have been in serious trouble.

The Scorpion Tape also convinced me Arkell had a double life. It was unmistakably Arkell's voice and he was trying to procure a teenager for sex.

The Mercury handed that tape over to the Royal Commission.

The Mercury stand from the outset has been that Arkell should face court and answer all these serious allegations levelled against him.

It is a shame that will never happen. Certainly some of his victims wanted it to happen.

I acknowledge that as Lord Mayor and an MP Arkell flew the Wollongong flag with gusto and never missed an opportunity to talk the city up.

As a PR man, he was great.

But to me that pales into insignificance compared to the other side of his life.

Do I have sympathies?

To his family, yes.

To all his friends, and those people who believed in him, yes.

But my greater sympathy rests with his victims whose lives have been torn asunder.

Will history be kind to him? I think not. His name will always be linked to paedophilia, just as surely as it will with the late Justice David Yeldham.

Still, his death, and the manner of it was a horrible event and that he should end up murdered in his own home was a very sad finale to a man who quite obviously cherished his Wollongong.

Desolate Arkell had contemplated suicide



Devastated ... Frank Arkell's close friend Dot Johnson. She said he had contemplated suicide.

Picture: ORLANDO CHIODO

By LISA CARTY

Frank Arkell had spoken of suicide after he was charged in May last year with 29 sex offences against four male victims, according to his long-time friend Dorothy Johnson.

Mrs Johnson said Arkell had felt desolate after he was dumped by people he had regarded as close friends.

But other friends had rallied to help the then 66-year-old bachelor out of his depression.

Mrs Johnson, a close associate

for 40 years, said she never doubted his word that he was innocent of the sex charges which had brought him before the courts.

"He was looking forward to his day in court and was very confident of clearing his name," she said.

Mrs Johnson said that after so many years of devoting his life to Wollongong, Arkell felt flat and purposeless.

"When he was in public life he was wanted and needed," she said.

But after he got through his post-charging depression he had focused on seeking revenge on *The Illawarra*

Mercury for pursuing the allegations against him.

That was his new purpose in life, she said.

Mrs Johnson said she had been horrified to learn of her friend's brutal death.

"He was in such frail health ... he probably heard a noise outside and went to have a look," she said.

She said Arkell had been a very shy person who covered his shyness with brashness.

"But he was a very genuine person," she said.