That was the Hogwarts Hymn from ‘Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire’. Some of you will know that George was a great Harry Potter fan over many years. The choice of music for a funeral reminds me of a story George once told me. A long time ago he attended the funeral of a prominent lamb and mutton exporter – one of the pieces of music played was by Bach – sheep may safely graze.

George first came into my life on a hot March afternoon in 1961, at 2 pm I think. It was my first legal system class, my very first law class as a student, in the Upper Lecture Theatre in the building behind the clock tower. At that time half the course was legal history and with that we started. Two years later he taught me land law, the subject which came to shape both our lives.

Unknown to me, George had been working since 1967 on a land law text to replace Garrow’s Law of Real Property. I recall George describing that book as a badly decorated
shop window – everything just shovelled in in random fashion with no structure, no discussion of principles, no ordered exposition of the material. He had refused an invitation by Butterworths to edit the book, but had offered to write a replacement. He began alone.

Though Peter Sim had moved back to Dunedin, his home city, in 1968, going to the Otago Law School as Dean, he joined George in the project in 1969, but his duties as Dean prevented him from making any progress. In fact, as primarily a family lawyer, which was the paper Peter had taught me, all he ever did contribute was some pages on the Joint Family Homes Act. George laboured on, still essentially alone.

I had returned to the Law School in 1972, teaching, among other subjects, land law. It was in 1976 that he approached me and asked whether I would take on the co-author role. For a young academic it was a wonderful opportunity and the work has been a major part of both our lives ever since.

George has also continued to teach me ever since. He had tried writing in a more discursive style, but found it
unworkable for the task in hand. So he had made a fundamental policy decision quite early on that the text had to be written in a style he described as Halsburyesque – every point ordered in a logical sequence and everything said only once in as clear and simple a style of English as one could manage. It's a style which doesn't come naturally and has to be worked at, but it is the shortest, clearest style of writing for a long text of this kind. I remember George telling me the story of the seventeenth century French philosopher, Pascal, who once apologised for sending someone a very long letter, but explained he did not have the time to write a short one. It does take time.

Learning Latin at secondary school and for stage I had instilled in me, probably through my own bad translation, a style of writing using long sentences with several subclauses. Breaking the habit became a conscious act that I really had to work at. I'm not quite sure I have got there yet. Even in recent years George has sent back to me pieces I have sought his comment on. Actually, I was looking for his thoughts on the substance and the reasoning, but instead they came back with a long word replaced by a short one, or a suggestion that a longer sentence with too many clauses
might be better broken up.

In addition to HMS, George worked on a number of other projects during his career. These have included volumes of essays, an edition of the New Zealand Law Dictionary which he did together with Marian, and work on the Property and Equity Law Reform Committee in the days before the Law Commission.

His contribution to the understanding and exposition of land law in New Zealand has been enormous and has carried on right to the end. I'm sure there's his final update to ch 11 on commercial leases in his chambers awaiting publication.

Though I have always taken a role in the policy decisions affecting HMS, more so as the years have gone by, it has always been George's eagle eye for detail that has observed, pondered and lead the management of the text. It has been his standards of perfection which have set the tone and the quality.

This year marked the 50th anniversary of George's connection with LexisNexis, formerly Butterworths, which
was celebrated three months ago at a private lunch. I well remember another such lunch which George himself organised in 1977. It was to mark the tercentenary of the passing of the Statute of Frauds in 1677.

George has long since earned his place in the line of prominent New Zealand land lawyers. These include Garrow, the original text writer in New Zealand for every branch of the law, E C Adams whose writings, though less accessible today, remain well worth reading, and Jock Brookfield whom many of us knew, whose main interest lay elsewhere but who edited Goodall and Brookfield on Conveyancing Precedents, and who took me and Peter Blanchard, the only two students in the class, for land law at LLM.

On the personal level, I have always found George a kindly, open and generous man. I often thought that finding himself linked indissolubly with me, especially in the mid-1980s, must have been at the least a little difficult for his retiring and somewhat conservative nature. But if so, he never let me see it. In later years, when he would organise a gathering of a few close friends for the opening session of
the latest Harry Potter film, followed by lunch at Tony's in Lorne Street, David and I were always included, and delighted to be so. I have always greatly appreciated and valued that.

Like many of us, George had his idiosyncrasies. I seem to recall that back in the 1980s he taught a paper on ‘computers and the law’. In later years one has never thought of George and computers together. He didn’t keep up with technology. Everything was handwritten in very clear and beautifully crafted script on sheets of lined A4. LexisNexis always accepted that his work had to be copy typed into digital format.

I encouraged him to at least get an email address, which he did, though what it was remained a closely guarded secret and I believe was given to very few, and only then provided they took an oath of secrecy. I don’t think he ever did learn how to use it fully. I would send him an email with an attachment and then ring to see if he had received it, knowing he would be very unlikely to check for incoming mail. “Yes” he would say, “but I can't open it.” Back to square one.
He was very upset when I disconnected my fax machine – that had enabled him to send manuscript. More recently, LexisNexis has provided for us the excellent services of Jill Reid, who looks after our needs for photocopies of library materials, and my weekly envelopes from Jill would always contain handwritten notes from George. He could always find a way around technological problems – none of them ever involved IT. And I sometimes wonder – just what was the content of that paper on computers and the law?

A person of George's many excellent qualities comes into one's life rarely, if at all. I count myself extremely fortunate that literally from day one of my life in the law George has been a central figure in my own journey. I will greatly miss his guiding hand and presence. Stepping into his shoes, and maintaining his very high standards in regard to the tome, will be a constant challenge and a very hard act to follow. I shall miss him hugely and the profession has lost someone who not only made a signal contribution as an educator and a writer, but who also set a high standard in so many ways for all of us to follow.
Thank you, George, for everything.