

# Footy hero now a legend in print

BY ANNEMARIE WHITE

It has taken New Farm writer Robert Allen 10 years to write his first book, *Cazaly, the Legend* but while it seems a long time penning the story of an Aussie Rules footballer who played in the first decades of the 1900s, this is much more than a sporting biography.

"I wanted to write not only about sporting icon Roy Cazaly but to put his life as a man into the context of what was happening around him, locally in Melbourne, nationally in Australia and even internationally," said Allen.

"This book for me became more of a social history, straddling academic research with popular writing, than just an interesting personal description of Cazaly.

"I see it as the life story of a local Aussie Rules footballing hero set in the ever-changing cultural landscape of early Australia."



Robert Allen

The 428-page book is not a lightweight read about the player who despite his small stature had the seemingly superhuman ability to take high flying marks.

The chant by his South Melbourne team mates of "Up there Cazaly" captured a nation and ensured his place in 1996 as one of the inaugural immortal legends in the AFL Hall of Fame.

It is an amazingly detailed and extensively researched tome that enthralled and educates, indicated by the 1262 reference notes included.

Formatted to replicate an AFL match, the 34 chapters begin with *Before the Game*, then travels through each of the *Four Quarters* and fittingly ends with *The Final Siren*.

"Although Cazaly was an outstanding footballer and coach, he was really a Renaissance man

who off the field, found himself influencing a diverse group of people through his high moral code, his healing work as an early-style physio, a dedicated father and grandfather and almost a politician.

"The more I delved into his life, the more I found the essence of the man influencing me and my own life decisions."

For those who don't follow AFL, the song *Up There Cazaly* celebrated an Aussie icon.

Written by Mike Brady in 1979 as a jingle to encourage fans to watch AFL, rivalling *Cricket's Come On Aussie*, the catchy song quickly surpassed Slim Dusty's *Pub with No Beer* as the highest selling single in Australian history and etched Cazaly and his famous leap into our cultural vernacular.

Robert said that while the jingle certainly captured the imagination of the modern public, the cry of *Up there Cazaly* was in common usage from the 1920s.

It transcended sport and was heard as an emotional battle cry by Australian forces during World War II.

He also found it fascinating that playwright Ray Lawler used that phrase in his 1953 play, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, because it was set in Melbourne and Lawler

explained he'd used the phrase because "it was the way people of my generation spoke. It was a common expression that was part and parcel of the slang at the time".

An early photograph of Cazaly's high-flying take has been viewed through generations as epitomising the spirit, not only of AFL footballers, but of the culture of ordinary Aussies having a go.

"Interestingly, it is commonly assumed that the giant one-handed snatch was a mark," explains Robert, carefully not wanting to spoil the folklore and urban myths around the famous photograph.

"But in fact after searching through the old files and images it seems it was more likely a one-handed ruck duel with Cazaly palming the ball to his team mate, Fred Fleiter, who is crouched ready to receive."

Sometimes it is better not to let the truth spoil a good yarn.



The book, published by Slattery Media, is finally finished and will be launched in July so pre-order at your local bookstore.