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## If ever there was a Logie for TV's best all-rounder ...

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### Tony Ward, television personality, 1924-2006

TONY WARD was Australian television's original action star and an inaugural reporter on two national current affairs programs. His career encompassed medicine, the theatre, television, documentary making, banana-growing and antique prints. His interests included the Rolls-Royce Bentley Owners Club, trains, theatre organs, Manly ferries and roses.

Anthony John Ward was born in Sydney - his father worked in the NSW Valuer-General's Department. After education at Catholic primary and secondary schools, Ward became a trainee radiographer at Lewisham Hospital in 1942. He was called up for the armed services but was placed in a reserved occupation.

After World War II, he developed a love of theatre and took up acting, appearing in and directing productions for the J.C. Williamson company, Garnett H. Carroll, Aztec Services, Edgley and Dawe and other entrepreneurs around Australia and New Zealand. Actors he appeared with included Robert Morley, Emyln Williams, John McCallum and Gogie Withers, Diana Barrymore and Jessie Matthews. Productions included *Harvey with Joe. E Brown*, *Dear Charles* with Sophie Stewart, *Present Laughter*, *Teahouse of the August Moon*, *Edward My Son* and *Larger Than Life*.

Realising the potential of television, Ward joined Channel Nine in Adelaide as a director and producer soon after TV began in Australia in 1956. He also appeared on camera in newsreading and advertising roles. This led to current affairs, where he became the first reporter for Channel Seven's *Seven Days* and then joined Bill Peach on Channel Ten's inaugural *Telescope* current affairs program.

Crawford Productions, planning a new James Bond-style action series, chose him in 1967 for his good looks and air of savoir faire for the title role of *Hunter*. The highly rating series, which included Gerard Kennedy as his arch-enemy, took him around Australia and overseas on location.

The early days of television did not run to action stunt doubles and Ward performed many of his own, often in hazardous situations. He left *Hunter* after several seasons, believing Crawford Productions was unwilling to update the formula and dissatisfied with the quality of later scripts. He made appearances in *Sons and Daughters* and played a villain in an episode of *Skippy* - which he described as "ham v kangaroo".

While in Alice Springs he saw a newspaper article reporting that Mike Willesee was planning a current affairs program. Ward rang to seek an interview. Willesee asked what would an actor know about current affairs, to which Ward replied he had been in the business before Willesee had ever heard of it. He became the first reporter on *A Current Affair*.

One of his achievements was the discovery of Paul Hogan - in a report about the riggers on the Sydney Harbour Bridge - leading to Hogan's appointment as resident comedian on *A Current Affair*.

Ward later reported for the ABC's *Nationwide* and made documentaries for SBS television. He appeared in TV commercials, including for car insurance. This arose from his membership of the

Rolls-Royce Bentley Owners Club after he bought a 1949 Bentley saloon. He kept it in his garage while driving a small Japanese car. His standing joke was that he could legitimately put a sticker on the rear window reading "My other car is a Bentley".

The stately English car looked a little incongruous at the banana plantation at Coffs Harbour that Ward farmed for more than 10 years. Until two years ago he also ran an antique print gallery in Woollahra's Queen Street.

Ward's other passion was trains. He took thousands of feet of film and videos of steam train excursions throughout Australia and overseas, stretching back to the 1960s. They form part of a collection of film, video, theatre programs, photographs and other material now in the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra.

When at home, the Squire of Belrose - a nickname he enjoyed - cultivated prize-winning roses. He also served for many years as an usher at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. Cardinal Edward Clancy was among his callers during his final illness.

Following divorce, his former wife took his daughter and stepson overseas. His sister, Patricia Schlawe, and brother, Peter Ward, also survive him.

### **Allen Callaghan**

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