Emeritus Professor Patrick Alfred Pierce Moran

Unique role in training of statisticians

Professor Patrick Moran, who had been Head of the Department of Statistics from 1952 to 1982, passed away in Canberra on 19 September.

During his thirty years at ANU, Pat Moran played a unique role in the training of several generations of Australian statisticians and in particular, nine out of the current fifteen professors of statistics in Australia have been associated with his department, either as students or staff. He also did much to stimulate research activity in statistics, and the high international recognition which Australia has achieved in the discipline owes much to his efforts.

Pat Moran was born in Sydney on 14 July 1917. He was educated at St Stanislaus College, Bathurst, and at the Universities of Sydney and Cambridge. He held positions as Experimental Officer, Ministry of Supply, 1940-42; Australian Scientific Liaison Officer, London, 1942-45; Bayliss Student, University of Cambridge, 1945-46; Senior Research Officer, Institute of Statistics, Oxford University, 1949-51 and University Lecturer 1951; Professor of Statistics, Institute of Advanced Studies, ANU, 1952-82. After his retirement he stayed on at ANU as Visiting Fellow in the NH&MRC Social Psychiatry Research Unit.

Moran was honoured for the excellence of his research by election to the Australian Academy of Science in 1962 and the Royal Society in 1975. He was awarded the Lyle Medal of the Australian Academy of Science in 1963 and the Premiers' Medal of the Statistical Society of Australia in 1982. He became an Honorary Life Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society in 1970 and an Honorary Life Member of the Statistical Society of Australia in 1978.

Moran served Australian science in many ways, including periods as President of the Statistical Society of Australia (1963-64) and the Australian Mathematical Society (1976-78). He was also Vice-President of the International Statistical Institute (1975-77). His list of publications, more than 170 in all, include contributions to a wide range of topics and includes the influential books The Theory of Storage, Methuen (1960), The Random Processes of Evolutionary Theory, Oxford (1962), Geometrical Probability (with M.G. Kendall), Griffin (1962) and Introduction to Probability Theory, Oxford (1968). His work penetrated many areas of science and was never constrained by man-made boundaries or disciplines.

At the Requiem Mass in his honour, his friend and colleague Dr Scotti Henderson spoke of how selfless he was in the way he walked through life. He gave so much to others. And he did so informally, even lightly or casually, so that the recipient might not realise it at first. At a personal level he was well remembered for his contemplative wisdom, pipe in hand, and for his virtuosity with penetrating one-line phrases.

— C.C. Heyde

Mrs Maisie Carr

RSBS loses foundation member

With the passing of Mrs D. J. ('Maisie') Carr on 9 September 1988, the Research School of Biological Sciences lost one of its foundation members. Maisie Carr had held an honoray fellowship in the school with great distinction since 1967.

Mrs Carr made major contributions in no fewer than four fields of Australian plant science.

In the 1940s she was seconded from the University of Melbourne to the Victorian Soil Conservation Authority to study soil erosion in the Victorian Alps. She covered vast territories on horseback and became uniquely expert on the history and ecology of alpine Australia. The new quantitative methods which she introduced to monitor vegetational changes had lasting influence on the conduct and teaching of ecology, and her work on the alpine vegetation was classic. Her most enduring memorial from those five years of fieldwork is to the great benefit of all who nowadays visit the Alps. She worked so harmoniously with the cattlemen of the High Plains that she was able to introduce measures to combat over-grazing — no mean feat, in view of their century old traditions! She was proud of having been attached to a Royal Commission which led to the proclamation of a crucial Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act in 1949. Glowing tributes to Maisie's conservation efforts feature in the book The Alps at the Cross-roads and in the late Sir Keith Hancocks's book Discovering Monaro. At her request the State Electricity Authority enclosed a large plot of land at Rocky Valley, near Falls Creek, where the rich vegetation which grew up under her protection is now a tourist attraction.

Maisie returned, as a senior lecturer, to Melbourne University in 1946, and in the next ten years became renowned for her inspirational teaching of ecology and systematics.

In 1955 she married D.J. Carr, later Professor of Developmental Biology in RSBS, and shortly after embarked on a study of Eucalyptus which became a life's work for both of them, with over 50 papers and two books published by 1988. Yet another productive research career for Maisie was as a historian. She lovingly documented the early exploration and settlement of the High Plains, and contributed many fascinating chapters in the two-volume social history of botany in this country which she and Professor Carr edited — People and Plants in Australia and Plants and Man in Australia. Maisie will be remembered for her pioneering field work, her inspirational teaching, her painstaking studies of Eucalyptus, and her acute historical insights. Her many friends also remember her as a wonderfully warm and accomplished person, and extend their sympathy to Professor Carr, Emeritus Professor in RSBS.

— Brian Gunning

Retirements...

After more than 23 years' service, Mrs Jean Fenton has retired from ANU. Throughout her lengthy stint she worked with foresters, firstly as a lecturers assistant in what was once the Australian Forestry School and, before her retirement, as assistant to Dr John Banks, lecturer in the Department of Forestry. According to Dr Banks, she also acted as the department's unofficial librarian, played a vital part in organising social events such as the annual fancy-dress ball, and left her mark on virtually every student through her skill at drafting tables and diagrams.

After 12 years with the Humanities Research Centre (HRC) and more than 24 years at the University, Miss Mary Theo has left the campus to marry and live in Berriedale. Prior to her resignation, she was personal secretary to the Director of HRC, Professor lan Donaldson. Among her many other duties, she looked after the needs of the 30 or so visitors from various parts of the world attached to the centre each year.

Mr Wally Pfugler retired recently after almost 28 years' service at ANU. Well-liked and respected by his workmates, Mr Pfugler began working at ANU in 1962 after emigrating from England, where he worked in the Royal Navy, and later as a toolmaker. He joined the Research School of Biological Sciences in 1967 and moved through the ranks from laboratory craftsman Class 3 to his final position as workshop supervisor. Former colleagues describe him as a gifted raconteur, an aspiring golfer and a founding member of the Canberra Anglers' Society. He has bought land in Queensland, where he intends to build a house to escape Canberra's winter months.

Another man who retired recently from the University was Mr Laurie Swift, head attendant for the Research Schools of Social Sciences and Pacific Studies. Most of his tasks was delivering mail, Mr Swift became well known throughout both schools. Colleagues say he is planning an overseas holiday and in the meantime is devoting plenty of attention to his garden.

Mr Norman Banham, of the mechanical workshop, Mt Stromlo & Siding Spring Observatories, has retired after more than 40 years' service with the observatory, the first nine under the Commonwealth Government and the remaining 31 under the ANU. His retirement brings to an end not only an exceptionally long period of continuous employment but also a family connection with the observatory almost as old as the observatory itself.

Mr Banham's father, joined the staff of the then Commonwealth Solar Observatory in 1925 as a mechanic. The temporary offices and workshops were in what is now the Menzies Pavilion of the Hyatt Canberra Hotel. He eventually became workshop foreman and retired in 1963.

Norman came to the observatory in 1948 as an apprentice mechanic in his father's workshop. On completion of a five-year apprenticeship he was appointed instrument maker and, when ANU took over the observatory in 1957, senior instrument craftsman. He has now retired as a senior technical officer.

Norman's colleagues are sad to see him go but, knowing that he has suffered from ill health in recent years, hope that he will enjoy better health in a long and happy retirement.