

## **Eulogy to Trevor Robinson given by John O'Neil at 'Rippon Lea' on Monday 18th June 2007**

Trevor Robinson's many friends and colleagues universally feel honoured to have known him.

Trevor led a rich and multi-faceted life, with many achievements. Today it is only possible to touch on some of the highlights.

Born in 1922, Trevor grew up on a remote property "Coongan", established by his grandfather and his brothers, between Port Hedland and Marble Bar. He was the eldest of four, his siblings being sister June and brothers Malcolm and Tony. At age eleven Trevor went to boarding school at Wesley in Perth, after having been home schooled in the primary years.

Trevor began a Science course at the Uni of WA that was interrupted by joining the RAAF in 1942. There he, along with John Bennett, attended the 2nd "Bailey" Course on radar at Sydney University. He then served as the CO of two radar stations, the first in Geraldton and the second in New Guinea.

After the war Trevor completed his BSc with 1st class Hons in Physics, and after 4 years of research joined Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) and was sent to England to assist in the design and development of a classified computer, one of which he installed in Melbourne in 1957. After this he led a team completing the design of a range-safety computer for the Woomera Rocket Range.

In 1961 he entered the commercial world, joining EL Heymanson, a Melbourne-based distributor, to manage their computer marketing activities. He convinced Heymanson to seek representation for Control Data Corporation, then a young US computer company based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and then convinced CDC to give that representation.

Trevor's foresight, determination and persuasive powers were further demonstrated by getting CDC to agree to the development of a new computer he specified to meet the requirements for multiple satellite machines in the networks proposed for both CSIRO and the Bureau of Census and Statistics.

Control Data was awarded both contracts in mid-1963.

Trevor was appointed MD of the new subsidiary Control Data Australia P/L & set about recruiting a talented group of engineers and analysts to support these contracts and to develop Control Data's business in Australia. Over the next 7 years under Trevor's stewardship, CDA became a leading supplier of computing systems and services, aggressively seeking to add local content. It grew to include a manufacturing plant, a systems division, a major data services operation and an educational institute.

Also during this period, Trevor wooed and married Kaye Hyatt (then a CDA analyst) – Jo and I well remember their engagement - and subsequently the

family grew to include Katie and then the twins Christopher and David. In mid 1970 the family moved to England, where Trevor became Group Vice President for the international operations of Data 100 Corporation, started a year earlier by a group of ex CDC people. He and the family moved to Data 100's Minneapolis HQ in 1976.

When Data 100 was acquired by Northern Telecom of Canada, Trevor decided against staying and the family returned to Melbourne on New Year's Day 1979. Here Trevor continued to encourage the development of local content in the IT industry.

In 1981 Trevor accepted an invitation from Control Data Corporation to establish Control Data Business Advisors in Australia, providing management and financial advice to entrepreneurial local startups in the IT industry.

From 1982 Trevor was also Chair of CDA until, in 1988, he had the unenviable task of closing down this subsidiary due to the severe financial difficulties the parent corporation was experiencing

In 1989 Trevor was appointed Special Advisor, Information Industries, to the Minister, Senator John Button, and the Dept of Industry, Technology and Commerce. In this role until 1993, Trevor constantly advanced the case for greater local content in Govt IT procurements, encouraged the development of viable local organisations in the Australian IT industry and advocated more effective management of Commonwealth IT resources. His persistent and logical approach did not always endear him to many of our "mandarins"!

After leaving this role, Trevor served as Chairman or on the boards of a range of local technology companies. He actively continued to give his time to many advisory committees and industry groups.

His contributions and service to the Australian IT industry were well recognized. These recognitions included being made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1994, and in 1999, being awarded the Pearcey Medal.

Turning now to Trevor the person, how do we remember him?

We admired him for:

- His integrity, honesty- a true gentleman, a gentle man
- His intellect; always curious, always farsighted
- His knowledge and his determination to follow the latest advances in science and technology and to understand their implications
- His ability to take the long view, to see the "big picture", to cut through the bull.
- His enthusiasm for challenge
- His hard work, his persistence and his probing nature - occasionally impatient.

At the personal level Trevor will be remembered for being:

- A caring family man, loving his sister and brothers and his childhood friends
- A man who loved, & took delight in the achievements of, Kaye, Katie and Martin, David and Chris
- A man who doted on his grandchildren Isabel and Eloise
- A loyal and generous friend, always quick to offer help
- A man with a wry and pixie-like sense of humour- with a huge fund of jokes and anecdotes
- A wordsmith, always able to find the apt and telling expression or pithy comment
- A man who loved good company, preferably with food and wine; he and Kaye were great hosts

As a leader Trevor was:

- An ethical and caring boss, treating all as equals
- A manager who managed by 'walking and talking', involving and consulting others
- A developer of people; inspiring, encouraging, challenging
- Always committed to meeting undertakings to customers, to staff, to family and to friends
- Always of the belief that that 'it could and would be done'
- A role model for many of us

Many of these qualities are exemplified in how, in setting up and leading CDA, he established a culture and 'esprit de corps' which lives on today in the continuing comradeship of the alumni. At a regular pizza lunch last Friday a number of us shared memories of Trevor – this greatly helped me in preparing this eulogy

All who knew this remarkable man benefited, grew and expanded their horizons.

Vale dear friend.

John O'Neil