

Origins

Newsletter of the UNSW Archives
No. 7 January 2002



"I suppose, Prof. Baxter, all I have to do is to put this transistor under my pillow."

Voices

Higgins: Oh, that comes with practice. You hear no difference at first; but you keep on listening, and presently you find they're all as different as A from B.

G.B. Shaw *Pygmalion* (Act II)

Voices can be a complete give-away. At my university there was no question what the prevailing culture of the institution was: you only had to listen about you, to the sharp Cork voices, the Tipperary lilts, the Kerry burrs ... Among students and staff the prevailing accents were Irish. And that was not unexpected since it was University College, Cork, in Ireland, and this was thirty-odd years ago. There, it was people such as I, despite being half-Irish, that stood out with our different accents, from having been brought up outside Ireland. We were the aliens because we sounded like

aliens. Instantly spotted as soon as our mouths opened to speak.

Still, even in this place of such apparently monocultural tone, there were anomalies and exceptions. The music professor and his daughters, my contemporaries, were named Fleischmann; one of my best friends was a Rosenstock — their accents were perfectly Cork and Limerick. My French professor, however, an O'Flaherty, had the elevated and distinctively non-Irish accent of a grande dame; something I attribute now partly to time she spent out of Ireland, and learning, speaking and teaching

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Ethereal voices. George Molnar's whimsical comment (from Sydney Morning Herald 1960) on the coming of UNSW's Radio University, which was opened by Vice-Chancellor Baxter in May 1961. [D. Broadbent 01A34]

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in French. Her associate professor was an elderly Belgian woman who, despite years spent in Cork, retained her harsh Flemish patois.

Equally, gradations of class, social aspiration and political affiliation were, as my friend Alex instructed me when we ethnographically trawled Cork pubs listening for their distinguishing signs, clearly marked within the 'Cork accent' — what, from the outside, you might have thought was a single song, one voice.

What this taught me was that within apparently singular communities other voices sometimes strive to be heard and others strive not to be noticed, or are noticed too easily and sometimes wish they weren't. Difference is not always as manageable nor as detectable as some might wish and others suppose. What looks like difference isn't always, and what looks or even sounds the same is not always what it seems. Nevertheless, voices and names can be clues to the hidden composition of a community: they can suggest pathways for discovery and enquiry. In the history and understanding of a particular community they can be a tool, brought finely to bear to support other lines of enquiry or stimulate new ones.

So, what does all this have to do with the University of New South Wales? As I walk through the campus nowadays the mix and range of accents and different languages I can hear is wide: its international character is more or less a given these days. That wasn't so obviously the case when I started working at this university, a quarter of a century ago; even further back in the university's history it would appear, if one believes what people automatically say, that it was even less the case.

People still claim that this university was monocultural in character in its early days — 'anglocentric' is the term most often heard. The idea that there was a specific mainstream culture operating at this university — with its corollary, that certain people within the university community who stood outside this prevailing culture may have suffered some institutional discrimination as a result of their difference — is an intriguing one. But how real is it?

What I find interesting is to wonder to what extent such a characterisation of this university can be sustained and to look for clues that can guide us to the real nature of this community in its early days. In other words, what do we mean by saying this university was monocultural? and how can we determine whether it really was so?

The notion of an 'exclusively anglocentric' institution in fact begs more questions than it supposedly puts to rest. People succumb too readily to the temptation to see homogeneity as an all-pervading norm when in fact the fractures that seam such a community are apparent with a little attention. In a society that sees itself as homogenous, minorities move awkwardly, uncertainly, often concealing difference for the sake of an easier passage, attempting to masquerade as far as they can the mainstream. They know too well that suspicion or worse often attends difference; hence the attempt to minimise it by whatever means.

This means that in an aggressively homogenous society, as Australia seemed to be in the 1940s–50s, when this university was founded, there was little outward or visible challenge to such dominant orthodoxies. The idea of assimilation prevailed — not for migrants alone, but for any minority or marginalised group. Assimilation is based on the notion of becoming like, being incorporated into — into what? Into a society in which difference was subsumed and which spoke, apparently, in a single voice. An 'anglocentric' society?

Yet, if you actually listen to the members of this society, it becomes clear that there never was a single voice; there were many voices and a range of sounds hinting at different perspectives and backgrounds, different experiences and acculturations, ideologies and beliefs. A range of expression that lay beneath the surface but was muffled by the blanket of the monoculture laid over it all.

Oral history provides a good way to tap into this world of difference — to listen to these other voices — because oral history deals in the actual words and experiences of the individuals unmediated by the dominant cul-

ture. You can sit down and listen directly to the person on tape speaking in their own words, or read the transcript. Oral history carries the music of difference in the voices. Then you can see — or rather, hear — for yourself the extent to which people were like each other in fact: you can actually hear the fractures in society speaking softly beneath the blanket.

* * *

So, what voices would you have heard in those earlier days at the university? — what, if anything, might they reveal about that community? Unfortunately, not everyone has been recorded and the archival remains for some are incomplete. From the voices we have, though, you hear the nuances at first hand — unadulterated, with rich and varied intonations, and steeped in their own cultural expression, they delineate the shifting markers of the mainstreams.

For Neville Wills the mainstream here was 'this lower middle class environment', which he further defined, with a great deal of distaste, as 'an Irish Catholic subculture'. Patrick O'Farrell felt, by contrast, only a few years earlier, that his Irish-Catholic identity had placed him at some disadvantage in his initial job interview at this university. He describes himself rubbing up against a Protestant culture, whereas Wills saw his own membership of this same Protestant culture as the reason for his own keenly felt status as an outsider: 'There is a Catholic thing here - an Irish Catholic subculture ... of which I was not a member, being an Anglican'. What the mainstream is depends on your position relative to it. A Protean form, it shifts ambiguously each time you adjust your listening position.

Religious/sectarian matters are important in defining cultural positions of difference but how far these may have played in the new university is unclear: in Wills's case, an edge in his voice suggests to me, rather more, an element of class expectations. The 'class question' often comes up in discussion of the early university, and the Tech. College and Labor origins of this university's progenitors aroused in some a suspicion that Wills's observation might be on the

mark. Certainly, a divide had existed whose point of focus revolved around the Public Service Board control of the university and those for whom this stood in contradiction to their own concept of what a university should be. The members of this latter group are commonly identified as the 'English professors' — those Wallace Wurth recruited on his trips overseas.

Did these professors exert a dominant influence over the shape of the early university in its efforts to shake off the PSB constraints and become what Roy Caddy called 'a university in spirit ... and not a university in name only'? Caddy's description of these men 'imported from England' encapsulates what became a general view: 'They had come from a background where universities were staffed, both administratively and academically, by gentlemen and scholars'. It looks, from this perspective in time, as if this idea coalesced with the developing characterisation of the 'anglocentric' core of the university. In the struggle for the control of the university's soul, once again a binary had been set up: the 'gentlemen and scholars' vs the 'trade unionists' (Caddy again), 'who'd come across from Tech Ed'. Somewhere the myth was being created about the 'English professors' foisting on the university a (their?) mainstream set of values — predominantly, one supposed, Oxbridge values.

Three of the Oxbridge members of those original professors (Phillips, Hartwell and Alexander) were the 'Turks' (Hartwell's phrase) most responsible for initiating the 'prayer'. But in fact two of these hailed from the metropolitan margins, not its centre — Hartwell and Phillips. Superficially, Max Hartwell seemed to perfectly fit the Oxbridge mould many assumed was the norm for these professors. He looked the part, the epitome of the 'gentleman scholar' with his features and Oxford bags, and perhaps sounded it too. Yet he was Australian, a product of Sydney University before taking up postgraduate studies at Oxford.

David Phillips was Welsh, and had started as a boy in the coalmines: he spoke Welsh and, said Baxter, 'never forgot his Welsh origin, nor his native tongue'. We don't, sadly, have Phillips on tape but Hartwell recalls with great affection 'that beautiful Welsh voice' telling stories in the pub. An irony is that these two friends, with their Oxbridge pedigrees, subsequently found themselves on opposite sides of the university divide over the Russel Ward issue. Gentlemen and scholars, indeed.



David Phillips, as Welshmen do, loved poetry and rugby; the university's Daceyville sports field is named after him. He was appointed foundation Professor of Mining Engineering in 1949, and became the first Pro-Vice-Chancellor in 1955, roughly when this picture was taken. [CN130]

To venture momentarily into the vexed area of statistics, by 1953 (the year after the first Colombo Plan students arrived) the main initial appointments were made at professorial or associate professorial level. Of the sixteen appointed, six were English and one was Welsh, one was a New Zealander, one was German, one was Hungarian, and

the remaining six were Australian.

Baxter, subsequently the first vice-chancellor, was among those early professors. He was not Oxbridge, but 'redbrick', and regional (growing up in Hereford and Birmingham). His whole pedigree in fact was distinctly unpatriotic: and it can be heard quite clearly in his flat vowels on tape. Baxter's background was, indeed, more industrial than academic in any case. Thus, arguably, despite his west English origins, Baxter could be seen as having more points of connection, politically and in other ways, with the industrial forces behind this university's establishment, and as being more in tune with the aspirations of the

university's founders than was an Australian such as Hartwell.

Baxter's gritty pragmatism seems closer to qualities associated with captains of industry than to the more rarefied concept of academic institutions his 'English' colleagues espoused. When Wurth delved and Baxter span, who then was gentleman?

A voice mayn't tell us everything but it will yield insights. Tone and vocal colour can furnish a hint of character and drama and expose complexities the words on the page mask. Hearing the voice helps you interpret those awkward spaces when subjects that are hard to broach or discuss come up, or are avoided; it also alerts you when pomposity becomes a threat to veracity. Voices reveal cracks beneath the papered-over surface.

The expressive horror seeping through Neville Wills's urbane enunciation when talking of his initial reaction to this university leaves one in no doubt about the depth of his feelings, something his words don't fully convey on the page. It ably dramatises the lack of acceptance he experienced, a clash of cultures between colleagues in the same community. Access to such immediacy contributes to a more rounded picture but it may also subvert.

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Malcolm Chaikin's name hints at a certain exoticism but little in his voice suggests his background as a Shanghai-born and educated, White Russian Jew. His accent is a curious product of a Shanghai education through English and some years spent in England. Although its character is predominantly English, it has an overlay of something that can't be precisely pinned down — a faintly detectable colour that isn't English at all, as Chaikin himself observes. '... as you can hear, I have a peculiar accent. In England they couldn't quite make out where I came from. ... they might think I am from some county they hadn't heard of.' According to Chaikin, this simulacrum of an English accent meant he was accepted more easily. It is certainly an accent that *passes for* 'English', without actually being so; as such, it has the capacity to submerge itself in an English-speaking context, to not draw attention to itself, unlike accents some others had.

This points to a dilemma faced by anyone who stands outside any perceived mainstream: for many of them a way forward is to adopt habits, ways, attitudes — accents even — to (it is hoped) facilitate assimilation, acceptance and advancement. Precisely the process graphically described in a recent newspaper interview by the Hungarian-born Susie Annus (Kim Beazley's wife), a migrant in Australia fighting all her life against feeling European: 'I just



wanted to be like everyone else. Not take the salami sandwich. Not have an accent.'

So, it's only hearing these words spoken in his thick, slightly harsh, strong German tones by Dr Fritz Reuter, talking of the first Colombo Plan students, that makes you realise some sort of inner dissonance is at work here: 'just imagine someone like myself, any Australian for that matter, who meets these foreigners with names they can't pronounce or can't spell, with dialects to which your ear is not accustomed'.

Probably unfamiliarity with those Asian names constituted a barrier as much for Reuter as for anyone of English-speaking background. It may also be that Reuter, as a pre-war arrival (1936), saw himself as being already sufficiently assimilated to adopt this kind of mainstream position without any sense of irony. It makes sense to align yourself with where you think acceptance lies, and it is interesting how both Chaikin and Reuter expressed a strong sense of feeling accepted in Australia. 'We were happy right from the beginning', Reuter says, 'We had no problems such as refugees normally have.'

Malcolm Chaikin painted by Brian Dunlop (1985). Chaikin was 31, the youngest professor in Australia when, in 1955, he was appointed foundation Professor and head of the School of Textile Technology; at 36 he became the nation's youngest Dean (Applied Science). He was UNSW's first Pro-Vice-Chancellor, External Affairs (1984, until his retirement in 1988). Through the Malcolm Chaikin Foundation he has been a major university benefactor. [00A127]

Chaikin says, 'a few weeks after I arrived in Australia I felt Australian'.

Acceptance is a divided path, however, as Chaikin well knew from his English experience (where, despite sounding English, he realised he 'could never really become an Englishman'): even if you do adopt a mainstream position, your voice is never totally submersed. Difference is always jostling below the surface. Sometimes it comes through clearly, unmistakably. Sometimes it needs one to strain a little harder to hear ... but each time the voice gives it away.

RODERIC CAMPBELL

What have you got that might interest us?

We would be interested to hear from staff leaving UNSW who have personal papers or other records relating to their time here or who could be of help in documenting some particular aspect of the story of the university and its people.

Family members of those who have been associated with the university and who have inherited personal papers, photographs and other memorabilia may also like to contact us about depositing them in the Archives.

Examining women's lives in universities

On 27 July, in order to take advantage of the presence in Sydney of Pat Thane, Professor of Modern History at the University of Sussex, the Archives hosted a half-day seminar titled 'Examining women's lives in universities'.

Professor Thane has been working on an oral history of the women of Girton College, Cambridge, and had agreed to talk about her research approach and some of her preliminary findings. Our seminar aimed to look at the way historical information can be obtained from interviews and surveys of women graduates, and also to consider the uses to which some of this information can be put for planning and policy purposes.

Invitations were sent to those women graduates of UNSW who had responded to surveys on students in the 1950s and 1960s conducted by the Archives as well as to women staff who had participated in another Archives survey, which sought information on their experiences of academic life, especially at UNSW. The seminar was also advertised generally.

Approximately fifty people attended, among them a number of former UNSW women students. There were also participants from various interested units and institutions such as Women's College at the University of Sydney, where work on the

College history is in hand.

Professor Elspeth McLachlan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) opened the seminar. Dr Julia Horne from the Archives Oral History Program then spoke about the three Archives surveys which now constitute a significant collection for future research on the experience of women at UNSW.

Anita Devos from the Women Research 21 program at UNSW then outlined some of the problems involved in understanding the present position of women in universities.

The subsequent discussion at afternoon tea was lively and enthusiastic. It also had something of the atmosphere of a reunion for old friends from university days and comrades from former struggles for the rights and recognition of women.

After the coffee and cakes, Professor Thane spoke about her Girton research. She remarked that, as someone who had also studied the history of old age in British society, it was fascinating to find how long Girton-educated women seemed to live and to remain in command of their faculties.

She also discussed the kinds of information she had been able to gather on the opportunities that were open to these women and on the subsequent careers of Girton graduates. A great many, especially in the early period, had little choice but to

become teachers, regardless of their training and expertise, and it was quite surprising how many felt they were not suited to teaching, or really disliked it. Even Girton graduates, it seems, have had difficulty in combining suitable employment with marriage.

One of Professor Thane's interests is the impact of higher education on the lives of the women who have experienced it and on the society in which they live. She has been able to gather useful information, for example, about changing attitudes to sexuality and the use of birth control among women with university educations. None of the UNSW surveys so far have sought specifically to obtain information on these questions, though there is undoubtedly some material embedded in the answers to some of the questionnaires, which certainly a historian will excavate one day.

The discussion which followed canvassed some of these matters, and also, as is always the case when the opportunity is presented, many of the current frustrations of university women.

More information about the Girton College research project can be obtained from the project's website at <http://www-lib.girton.cam.ac.uk/Archive/research.htm>.

BEVERLEY KINGSTON

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

50 years of UNSW Engineering

Getting to know our engineers with the help of the survey, 'The first 50 years of Engineering at UNSW', conducted by the Oral History Program and the faculty of Engineering

'Engineering is an exciting profession. Civil Engineering is Big, Bold, Beautiful — everyone should do engineering.' So goes the recommendation of a retired Engineering academic and with these words he pens a tune which many of our past students and academics would happily sing.

The responses to our survey form a happy chorus of fond memories and invaluable lessons learnt on campus. Many praise their education at UNSW. According to one, 'The benefit I received has been accruing over my whole professional career; in association with other graduates, from watching the reputation of

UNSW and its graduates grow and in the respect that UNSW now commands in the community generally'.

A few of our 1960s graduates offer good advice to aspiring students: 'For anyone interested in using their common sense to solve problems, use quantitative information and improve the world —

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Engineering is the way to go'. There is also a range of interesting reasons as to why they chose the profession and the university: 'Passion for physical and meaningful creativity of functional items. UNSW, because it was, at that time, the best!' A 1999 graduate wrote: 'I chose engineering because I was keen on doing a "hands-on" type of job and also wanted to live away from the big cities'.

Reflecting upon experiences particular to engineering students, a 1982 Electrical Engineering graduate (male) recalled that social activities 'tended to be all male and involved lots of beer'. A 1999 graduate remembered: 'Industrial training, field trips and beer drinking seemed to be unique to engineering students!'

And women's experiences. A 1970s graduate recalls, 'Being one of only two (at the most) females in all my classes (except Maths 1, Physics 1 & Chem. 1) made my "absences" very obvious. I think being one of the first women through Eng. was actually a mixture of advantage/disadvantage.' This same graduate had been advised not to study engineering because it was deemed 'unladylike'.

Some respondents thought engineering and student politics did not mix. 'For most engineers, student politics was generally avoided.'

Mining Society 1952. The Archives thanks Dr Russell Burdon for help with identifying many of those shown. Readers are asked to contact the Archives with any corrections or additional detail.

[CN801 and 01A55] Back row (from left): D. Chen, R.J. Buchhorn, O.J. Richards, K.P. Tognetti, M.O. Kefford, C. Harrison, R.C. Williams, D.S. McCallum, (?) Burgess, D.E. Morrow, J.D. Brooks. Middle row (from left): W.H. Conrow, T.A. Nestal(?), K.F. Findlay, C.F. Forbes, A.E.R. McCoy, C.M. Davison, D. Saunders(?), D.H. Robinson, K.R. Jubelin, D.J. Hay, J.M. Baker, M.J. Muir. Front row (from left): F.J. Gardner, R.G. Burdon, R. Menzies*, D.R. Cooley (President), Professor D.W. Phillips*, M.J. Smith (Secretary), A. Danchev*, A. Joplin*, L.J. Lawrence* (*staff members)*

The first 50 years of Engineering at UNSW, one of the faculty's 50th anniversary initiatives, is a joint project of the Oral History Program and the faculty of Engineering. If you are a past student or past/present academic and would like to participate in the survey or have photographs or other memorabilia of your time at UNSW, please contact Dr Julia Horne, Oral History Program in the UNSW Archives — ph: (02) 9385 2908 / email <J.Horne@unsw.edu.au>.

An in-depth questionnaire can be downloaded from: <www.oralhistory.unsw.edu.au>, and follow the links to 'Oral History Survey' to 'Questionnaires' to 'Engineering at UNSW'.



Another offered ‘A true engineering perspective’ when he referred to the Students’ Union as ‘A mob of mostly “ratbags!!”’. But for some of our engineering graduates it was a different story — ‘My political values were formed, my dress became (and still remains 30+ years later) far more casual. My mother did not approve (and still doesn’t!).’

On General Studies and Humanities, many respondents

Second-year Mechanical and Industrial Engineering students haul away during Project WET, Open Day 1981 [CN1127/9]

(from top) Mark Thompson, Warwick Bartlett (centre) and Malcolm McEwan

shared the view that they were, ‘Best subjects I had taken — gave me a more balanced view of life and learning’. One graduate listed the General Studies component as one of the reasons he would recommend this university: ‘UNSW courses have a good balance of professional and academic content. The Industrial Training in my course was excellent as was the required General Education subjects.’ A 1950s graduate wrote: ‘At the time — an easy break from difficult subjects. Now — an excellent introduction to some habits (reading appreciation, for example) that can last a lifetime.’

But not all agreed, and why weren’t they compulsory for Arts students? A 1978 Mechanical Engine-

ering graduate thought that, for engineering students, General Studies was: ‘not really necessary, especially given high engineering work loads. Grossly unfair that Arts students were not required to do science subjects to round out “their” education.’

The engineers certainly had their own way of looking at the world and one of our electrical engineering graduates summed this up well when he wrote: ‘There was an S-shaped path across the Chemistry Lawn, and a well-worn ‘track’ across the diagonal. It was said the “Arts” students followed the pathway and the “Engineers” took the diagonal — shortest distance between two points.’

VIRGINIA PACINO

Laurie Dillon, University Archivist Emeritus

Laurie Dillon, UNSW’s inaugural University Archivist, has been conferred the title University Archivist Emeritus, in recognition of his unique contribution to the preservation of this university’s history.

Laurie Dillon was appointed to the position in 1980 at a time when there was little understanding within the university of what an Archives section was nor of what it needed to do. When he retired in 2000, he left in place a rich and singular resource, which includes a distinguished and growing oral history collection, and a unit committed not just to the best national and international standards of archival practice but also to the highest levels of ethics and professionalism.

He established the University Archives from scratch: as no procedures existed here for the collection of archival records, he had to develop them. He formulated the policies and programs required to plan and equip the unit, and procure the materials. To ensure contextual significance and integrity of the collection, he also analysed and documented the constitutional and administrative history of the

university. To capture the living history of the institution, he established the oral history program, which has grown in size and scope and publishes works based on its own collection.

Equally vital, Laurie Dillon worked hard to persuade influential administrative and academic staff members of the importance such a resource had for the university and to maintain support for its continuance and growth. The value of the archival and oral history collections became particularly evident in the university’s fiftieth anniversary year, when they were crucial in contextualising the university’s background and development, and were used extensively in research for the writing of the university history.

Laurie Dillon’s work, over twenty years, has been significant in its pioneering nature and in its enduring legacy to the university; it is in recognition of this that he has been made University Archivist Emeritus.





On campus in the 1970s

Recollections from the Oral History Program's survey, 'Students in the 1970s'
Time for freedom, Time for moving, It's time to begin, Yes, it's time.

For many students university is a time of significant change in their lives. For students in the 1970s their university experience was further heightened by the decade's major social and political changes. Events off-campus played a major role on campus.

From the late 1960s some students participated in anti-Vietnam war protests. Many were directly affected by this war, as one male graduate recalled: 'I became a Labor supporter when Whitlam guaranteed the end of conscription, particularly as I had been drafted, and had it deferred due to my studies'. Not all were actively involved. One female graduate remembers that she 'looked on from the sidelines at the Vietnam moratoria — father being ex-police added an edge to home discussion'.

The abolition of university fees in 1973 was to make a significant change in the lives of some students: 'The Labor government made uni free, and this was wildly celebrated, particularly as one of my friends did not have to pay fees any more'.

Although there was student outrage and protest at the Labor government's dismissal in 1975, not all were interested. 'I remember the names from the Whitlam years, but was surprised to visit Old Parliament House, Canberra, recently and make sense of these names. I became involved in

feminism but not until the middle '80s. Other issues did not impact on me. I was a very dedicated student and family/church youth group person.'

First impressions do vary, but an apt description for what most students felt in their first semester on campus in the 1970s was provided by one graduate who wrote: 'The freedom was bewildering. I was a kid in a lolly shop.' For some, university was

The 'Students in the 1970s' survey was made possible by the generous support of UNSW alumnus Peter Noble.

The aim of the survey is to try to capture and preserve the memories of students who attended UNSW in the 1970s: why they wanted to study at university, why they chose UNSW, and what they thought of their university education. The survey includes an in-depth questionnaire to help graduates compose a memoir of their student days.

If you were a UNSW student in the 1970s and would like to participate in the survey, or have photographs or other memorabilia of your student days, please contact Dr Julia Horne, Oral History Program in the UNSW Archives — ph: (02) 9385 2908 / email <J.Horne@unsw.edu.au>.

An in-depth questionnaire can be downloaded from: <www.oralhistory.unsw.edu.au>, and follow the links to 'Oral History Survey' to 'Questionnaires' to 'Students in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s' to 'Students in the 1970s'.

Evocation of an era — a scene during Orientation Week, February 1973
 [CN486/2/10A]

the only means of liberation, as with one student, whose brother had shown the way by attending UNSW: 'The only way for a Greek girl to leave home respectably was to go to university'. One student, coming to UNSW from the country, recalls: 'I was surprised at the number of "Asians", because I came from a country high school. I regarded them as smart and hard-working.'

Feminism became an aspect of campus life. One female graduate recalls, 'As a bunch of young women at uni, we felt we had the world at our fingertips with the changing attitudes ... It was a shock when I turned up for work at a chartered accountants office (in 1974) in my pants suit, and the partners were most upset.' A surprising number of female respondents did, in fact, burn their bras: 'I haven't worn a bra since uni days, thanks to women's lib ... On a more serious note, women's lib just fitted in with my family's easygoing attitude of doing what you're good at.' A male graduate wrote: 'Women's liberation/feminism — not taken very seriously by me or other males I associated with. Women were under-represented at the Law School and — with some exceptions

(e.g. Pat O'Shane, Sue Walpole, Dominica Whelan) — seemed to behave no differently. Overt sexism on campus disappeared.'

Tharunka was a major influence for some students in shaping their political and social views: 'The Wizard and *Tharunka* were my awakening to environmental issues, I recall the debate between pro- and anti-woodchippers. I was torn between the employment needs of woodchippers and their families, on the one hand, and the desire to preserve forests, on the other. Ostensibly, it was easy to condemn woodchipping as capitalism gone mad. Once it was put at the family employment level, however, the debate was more difficult for me.' For others the influence was not so great, 'Used to read *Tharunka*, but never really got into it. I would sit on

the library lawn and observe the students doing their protest thing but never really actively joined in. Saw it as a form of entertainment.'

A number of former students believe that many of their values and beliefs had their foundation during their time at university. 'I remember going along to a lunchtime meeting addressed by an indigenous female person where they took up a collection at the end in support of the cause. I can't remember understanding much about this, but I do now, and still trace back my interest to such events at UNSW.' How did university change their religious values? One graduate wrote: 'If anything, they strengthened. One of the uni chaplains, became almost a personal confessor. I felt that I had a place to go and share the Eucharist that was more

meaningful to me than my high-school days.'

And drugs? One Arts/Law graduate wrote: 'Dope at parties was so common that for a number of years I did not attend a dope-free party. I gave up dope after six months because I found it interfered with my short-term memory and I disliked the harsh smoke in my throat and lungs. I also embarrassed myself at a law lecture that I attended stoned.'

Many remember their university days with fondness, as a time of great change and challenge. One past student echoed the sentiments of many when he wrote: 'University experience was mind-broadening, socially exciting and has probably profoundly influenced my life since'.

VIRGINIA PACINO

Dr Leo Emil Koch (1903–2001)

UNSW Archives is very grateful for the donation of Leo Koch's personal papers. These include material on the teaching of geology at UNSW, his publications and papers on his *Tetraktys* system of categories. His obituary from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which contains more biographical detail, is also held in the Archives.

Dr Koch's long relationship with UNSW began in 1951 with his appointment as Research Lecturer in the school of Mining and Applied Geology at the New South Wales University of Technology (now UNSW); he subsequently became Senior Lecturer. After retiring in 1969, Dr Koch continued his close ties with UNSW through the Alumni Association, being awarded the first Honorary Life Alumni Associateship (1999), in recognition of his life and work.

Dr Koch was born in Köln (Cologne), Germany, in 1903. He gained his doctorate there in 1930 and, after holding lectureships at universities in Germany, he went to Iran in 1936 to take up the position of inaugural Professor of Geology and Mineralogy at the University of Teheran. He remained there until the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran, in September 1941, when he was interned by the British and subsequently transferred to Tatura Camp, Victoria. Following his release in 1946 he re-entered academic life,



This 'prismatic structure' (Bondi 1926), reproduced from Leo Koch's papers, illustrates the kind of formation *Tetraktys* was devised to deal with [01A15]

this time in Australia.

He maintained a public profile throughout his professional career. In retirement he kept up a range of inter-

ests and scientific activities, writing and speaking, including among others his involvement in the Lapidary Club and as a contributing editor of the *Australian Lapidary Magazine*. These interests and activities are reflected in the papers held in the Archives.

Perhaps his greatest interest, however, and something that had occupied him since his Teheran days, was the development of a system of categories to provide universally acceptable and precise ways of describing geological and mineralogical features. He believed the geological sciences lacked the same scientific basis underpinning the natural sciences and that his system would remedy this defect.

He devoted many years to refining this system, which he called *Tetraktys*, reflecting 'the fourfold, partly tetrahedral, configuration of its part and elements'. *Tetraktys* drew on formal logic, mathematics and 3-D geometry to arrive at its reductive categories; but, perhaps most significantly, it also used linguistics, particularly his work on nomenclature.

Table talk

Researchers, it's often said, benefit from working in the ambiance of their subject. The Archives is doing its best, therefore, to assist researchers who come through its doors by providing a roomful of the university's past to stimulate them.

The Archives Reading Room has been remodelled and refurbished to contain the very table this university's Developmental Council sat round between 1947 and 1949, as its members deliberated over what had to be done to establish the university. At this table debate, lively conflict even, took place over the form the new university was to take, what was to be taught there, and the name it was to have.

This rather grand table-top is made from Queensland maple, measures 1.55 x 3.65 m, and is supported at each end on a base consisting of a platform with six Ionic columns. It is accompanied by a set of twelve, solid high-backed chairs.

A commemorative plate, inset on the table, must have been placed there after 1958 as it refers to the university by its present name, not by its original name — the NSW University of Technology. It reads:

This table was used between 1947 and 1949 by the Developmental Council under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Education The Hon. R.J. Heffron MLA for Meetings which led to the Establishment of The University of New South Wales.

The recent history of the table remains somewhat clouded. We know that this is the table on which the establishment Act for this university was signed. And apparently the table was used in the chancellor's office in the old Main Building, but we have no further details.

We would love to hear from anyone who knows anything about the recent history of the table, or has anecdotes or any memorabilia relating to it.

The difficulties Dr Koch experienced at Teheran University in precisely rendering geological terms across four different languages convinced him of the need for such a system as *Tetraktys*. His lectures there were conducted in French, but based on sources mainly in English and German. Dr Koch also learned Farsi (Persian) in order to communicate more effectively with his students.

All this also led him down fascinating culturally linguistic byways. As a talented linguist, who spoke several modern European languages fluently, with a good reading knowledge of classical Latin and Greek, he was well-placed to explore the origins of names and meanings attached to geological materials. For instance, the way that names for Baltic amber in

places as far apart as Iceland and Iran both relate to the word for 'fox' in their respective languages, obviously referring to how, when one rubs a fox's tail or a piece of amber, static electricity is produced.

To Dr Koch, such intriguing cross-cultural correspondances in nomenclature indicated close connections between the naming of substances and their intrinsic properties. *Tetraktys* itself was an attempt to isolate such intrinsic properties and, to him, this was further evidence that his system was capable of opening up insights, beyond geological classification, into the development of universal human language and experience.

BEVERLEY SODBINOW
& RODERIC CAMPBELL

Oral History in the Archives

Asian perceptions of Australia

The presence of overseas students in Australia is not a new phenomenon. By the 1950s the number of overseas students was beginning to increase significantly, particularly students from Asian countries. This was owing both to the Colombo Plan and to Australian government policies on education, largely aimed to help newly formed Asian nations gain tertiary-educated nationals, who might be employed in government and industry.

A special questionnaire on overseas student experience of Australia in the 1950s–1970s has been devised, and is available for distribution. We would greatly appreciate the names and addresses of any overseas students, whether they now live in Australia or not, who might be interested to participate in this survey.

Calling engineers

The faculty of Engineering and the Oral History Program are conducting a joint documentation project on the faculty's history and development. The project includes collecting personal reminiscence, photographs and other memorabilia, which will be

made available, subject to access conditions, in the University Archives (for more on this project, see p. 5).

Calling 1970s students

Funded by a generous donation from Mr Peter Noble, BCom LLB (UNSW), a questionnaire about student experience is now available for 1970s UNSW alumni (for details of where to obtain the questionnaire, and more on this project, see p. 8).

Oral History on the web

The Oral History Program's website now includes the updated index to the oral history collection. This updated index is also available in the Archives Reading Room. For web access, go to <www.oralhistory.unsw.edu.au>, and follow the link to 'Index to the oral history collection'.

Michael Birt

As we were going to press, University Archives staff were saddened to hear of the death of Emeritus Professor Michael Birt, third vice-chancellor of the UNSW. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs Jenny Birt and family.

Accessions

This is a selection of records received by the University Archives from November 2000 to October 2001. The Archives extends its special thanks to all depositors.

Access enquiries to the collection are invited. In some instances access is restricted or special conditions apply.

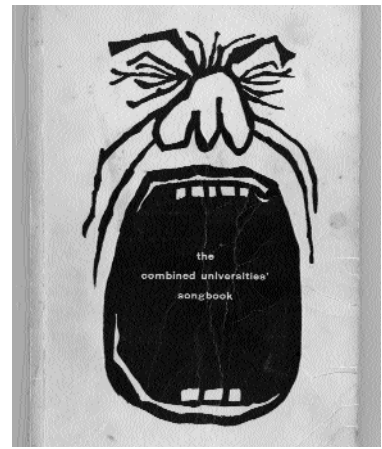
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A 37-year-old Kurt Neubauer, 1946. An oral history interview is under way and includes an account of his experiences in German concentration camps, in Czechoslovakia under communist rule, and post-war Australia. [01A68]

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Douglas Anderson's cover from the combined universities' songbook (ed. and publ. Harry Dutton, UNSW Students' Union, for NSW Regional Conference of Students' Unions), September 1965 [01A23]

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- Information Services, Director, Ms C. Page-Hanify. Office files, working-party papers and reports, UNSW publications. [00A125].
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(from left) John Yu, UNSW Chancellor, Professor Hi-Won Yoon, Korean linguist and 1999 Sir Anthony Mason Fellow, and Mah Bow Tan, Singapore minister for National Development and UNSW alumnus (BE 1971, ME 1974), during a relaxed moment at the UNSW International Alumni Forum on 'Globalisation: Leadership Challenges', Bangkok, 23–25 March 2000 [01A8]

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University organisations, & associations

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ISSN 1326 – 5407



We greatly acknowledge the U Committee's generous assistance in the publication of *Origins*.