

KENNETH HENDERSON HUNT

An Appreciation

Youthful uncertainties about medicine, music and engineering resolved themselves happily in the later life of Ken Hunt when he found his vocation in engineering, his avocation in music, and his advice keenly sought in the health field. With the completion in 1941 of studies in engineering science at Oxford, with close to five years with the Royal Engineers, with five years of varied engineering experience in design, development and research in British industry; and with eleven years of academic exposure at the University of Melbourne, he came to Monash University at its beginnings in 1960 as Foundation Professor of Engineering. His task was simply given: here this year is a site (a "farm"); here next year will be a quagmire (1961 saw an unusually wet winter); here are some substantial funds: here the following year you should be teaching; plan and put up a few buildings and laboratories; choose a few decent chaps; and so create quickly a school of engineering which serves both community and professional needs, and which ranks in scholarly status with the best in the world.

As the first Dean of Engineering this he did, during the years 1961 to 1975. And this is his primary testimonial. But his talents remained utilised and remarked subsequently when he elected to take the Chair of Mechanism, the first ever in Australia and one of few in the world. And now he retires with the justly accorded title of Emeritus Professor satisfied, surely, that he has led the building of a substantial academic, professional and social edifice, that he has positively influenced and encouraged many colleagues and a host of students. At the same time, remarkably, he has sustained a contribution to and built a reputation in his discipline which has gained the immense respect of peers around the world through writings (articles and books), which can only be described as definitive in setting new directions, augmented by intimate personal contacts.

Honours both tangible and intangible have, of course, come his way. They include the Proctor & Gamble Prize (1972) and the Melville Medal (1977) of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The Kernot Memorial Medal of the University of Melbourne, and the A.G.M. Michell Medal of The Institution of Engineers, Australia were both awarded to him in 1979. Then in 1983 he gained the Peter Nicol Russell Medal of that Institution, the highest award to which any Australian Engineer can aspire. His talents are well appreciated by many; he has been Visiting Professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, at the University of Massachusetts, at Liverpool Polytechnic, at the Arizona State University and, most recently, he has been University Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ohio State University. Invitations have issued from Yale, a conference in Karl-Marx-Stadt, Purdue University, a UNESCO conference in Paris, twice from the South African Institution of Mechanical Engineers, twice from World Congresses on the Theory of Machines and Mechanisms, from the Center for Intelligent Machines and Robots of the University of Florida, and from Osmania University of Hyderabad.

Other forms of recognition of his unusual and broad ranging talents, matched by his interests, abound. He has been elected Fellow (or, rarely, merely member) of several learned societies including The Institution of Mechanical Engineers (UK), The Institution of Engineers, Australia, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences.

These many manifestations of eminence in research, scholarship and professionalism are worth dwelling upon. Not only do they mark the man. Importantly, his works illuminate Monash University, add lustre to the School of Engineering, and enhance the standing of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Add to this the reputation afforded the Australian mechanical disciplines.

Ken Hunt has served Monash, with distinction, in other ways. He early carried a heavy administrative responsibility for the academic and physical development of the school of engineering. But in the early days, when a diligent and dedicated small band of pioneers set about their business, he played a significant part in planning and policy making across the whole embryonic campus. He was, too, frequently concerned with senior appointments, chaired standing committees on promotions, acted as Superannuation Trustee; and served on Council during 1974-76. He willingly and effectively and wisely took on mammoth chores on Buildings Committee, Finance Committee, Honorary Degrees Committee, Committee of Deans, and the Discipline Committee, to name a few. No part of either the creation or the sustenance of this university seems to have escaped his attention and his constructive, critical influence.

His breadth and depth have been in demand way beyond this campus, however. Several of his professional initiatives have had lasting effect on the vitality of The Institution of Engineers, Australia - he (with a few others) can be greatly blamed for the vitalising impact of its newly-founded Colleges and was acknowledged to have had made major contributions to the restructuring and development of technical education in Victoria. His involvement, however, has extended also into music, the arts, and health matters. Twice has he been a member of the Faculty of Music of the University of Melbourne; for something like fourteen years the local Musica Viva Society benefited from his Vice-Presidency; he remains Patron of the Musical Society of the Lieder Society, both of Victoria. Another Vice-Presidency related to the Australian Arts Council; and he assisted the early development of the Victorian College of the Arts. Then, he served for five years as a Commissioner of the Health Commission of Victoria.

He is not now about to rest on his laurels. Few who know anything of the vigour of his past works would expect it. All touched by those works have gained. Through his selection of colleagues and associates he has consistently sought excellence, to match his own. Through his administrative and management practices he has invariably built cooperative, lively, productive teams. Through his sensitive, balanced advice he has frequently ensured sanity. Through his oratory he has guided and impressed many. Through all of his erudite endeavours he has deservedly gained the attention and the respect of all. It is the university's gain that his talents, his presence, his friendship will persist yet.