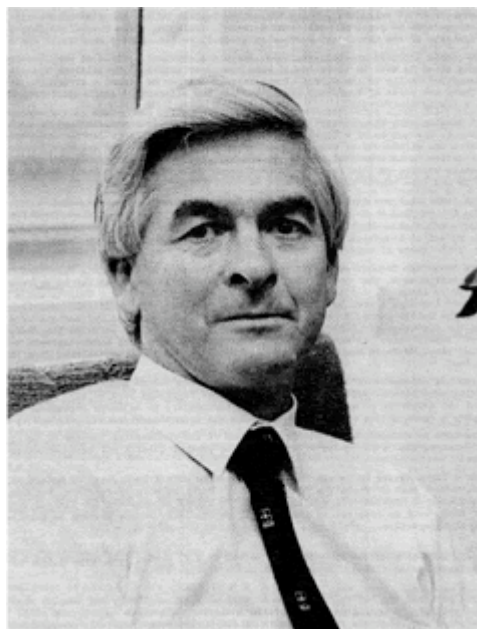


CENTREFOLD

Professor Wilf Malcolm



Wilf Malcolm left the Chair of Pure Mathematics at Victoria University at the end of January to become Vice-Chancellor of Waikato University. We lost a man of integrity, of great intellectual honesty and of quiet determination.

Unlike many mathematicians he was not a child prodigy. He failed U.E. the first time round, but made it to the Wellington Teachers' College in 1951 where he studied concurrently at Victoria, at first in English because they thought trainee teachers always failed mathematics. He proved them wrong the next year, and went on to win a Senior Scholarship and finish his M.A. with First Class Honours in Mathematics.

This background may help to explain his well-known skill in teaching and in communicating both enthusiasm and abstract ideas, but it was his strong Christian faith that guided him into his first position after graduation: Travelling Secretary to the Inter-School Christian Fellowship.

In 1958 he took up a Shirtcliffe Fellowship to Cambridge where he took Parts II and III of the Mathematical Tripos, specialising in algebra and topology, married Ruth, and then returned to Victoria as a lecturer in pure mathematics.

He introduced algebraic topology to Honours level classes in the early 1960s and then moved in the mid-sixties to mathematical logic and the foundations of mathematics. The latter subject eventually percolated much further down than Honours level, helped by his well-known textbook 'Number and Structure'.

From 1964 to 1966 he took another break from mathematics, working as General Secretary of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (later the Tertiary Students' Christian

Fellowship), but returned to lecturing at V.U.W. in 1967.

The following year he became a senior lecturer; in 1972 he completed his Ph.D. thesis on ultraproducts and high order models; in 1975 he was promoted to reader and soon afterwards was appointed to the Chair of Pure Mathematics which he held until recently.

What has marked Wilf's work over the last decade particularly has been his willingness to share in the wider responsibilities of university management. In his chairmanship of the Leave Committee he brought to the V.U.W. research and study leave system a concern for fairness and, in particular, a conviction that staff should be treated equally, regardless of rank. As Academic Pro-Vice-Chancellor he guided many reviews of policies and procedures through the Academic Committee and the Professorial Board, and more recently he was the key figure in the discussions and negotiations over the possibility of closer relations between the University and the Wellington Clinical School.

Relationships with the Wellington Teachers' College, at times marked by mutual suspicion, improved considerably while he was on the College Council, with his careful work to reassure the staff and Councils of both institutions.

These exercises called for considerable patience and tact and an equally considerable amount of hard drafting work.

From Victoria we can take some pride in the appointment of one of our own graduates and long-serving staff members to Waikato's Vice-Chancellorship. We congratulate Wilf on his appointment; we thank him for all his work for the Mathematics Department and Victoria in general; we hope he is not entirely lost to mathematics; and we wish him and his family all the best as they settle in Hamilton.

Adapted from News VUW by John Harper