

Centrefold



Dean Halford

In June this year, the mathematics staff at Massey University marked the retirement of their longest serving member, an academic whose career here outspans that of Massey University itself. In 1962 Dean Halford was appointed as a Junior Lecturer in mathematics, at the Palmerston North University College, a feeder college for Victoria University, teaching first year undergraduate courses at Palmerston North and taking the responsibility for teaching university courses extramurally throughout New Zealand. Dean had just completed his MSc at Canterbury, studying under Professor Derek Lawden, presenting a thesis "On the Cosmological Problem". His appointment at PNUC was a return to the Manawatu district of his childhood.

In 1964 PNUC merged with Massey Agricultural College to become New Zealand's fifth university. The university was initially named Massey University of Manawatu, the geographical component was soon dropped to give it its current title. During his 37 years service to Massey University and its precursor, Dean has played a major role in developing the discipline of mathematics, from a single first year paper, to a fully fledged programme from undergraduate to PhD studies, both internally and extramurally. A particular programme Dean keenly pioneered in conjunction with the Physics department, was the BSc and BSc(Hons) degrees in Mathematical Physics, a particularly popular and successful programme, attracting top students from both disciplines. He quickly rose through the academic ranks, promoted to a readership (Associate Professor) in 1981, and was Head of Department from 1995 to 1997 (In 1998 the department was absorbed into the Institute of Fundamental Sciences.) Dean played a prominent role in the wider administration at Massey, serving on numerous faculty and university committees, including 5 years as staff representative on Academic Board, secretary of the local branch of the Association of University Teachers, and University Proctor from 1993 until his retirement.

When the opportunity arose, Dean completed his PhD, studying under Professor Roy Kerr (then at Canterbury) with his thesis entitled "The Conformal Group and Einstein Spaces". Although he had previously published research papers, this marked the establishment of an enhanced research activity, leading to 26 papers to date, mostly in the area of mathematical physics. During this period he also supervised 3 PhD students. He is currently engaged in writing a textbook on Differential Equations and Symmetries.

However Dean's contribution has not been confined to activities at Massey. He has also made a substantial national contribution to the mathematics community, and in the broader educational arena. He was a

foundation member of this Society, serving as President (80-81), on the Council (78-82), was editor of this newsletter (78-80), as well as serving in a number of other roles. He was senior author of the Society's successful 7th textbook *Mathematics with Calculus*.

In 1981 Dean was elected to the Board of Governors of newly established Awatapu College in Palmerston North, becoming chairman in 1984, continuing in this role with the chairmanship of its succeeding body, the College Board of Trustees, until 1994. During this period he became a member of the New Zealand Secondary School Boards' Association (from 1983), taking the presidency 87-89, and was a substantial contributor in 89-90 to the formation of the New Zealand School Trustees Association. He had significant interaction with the Minister of Education and the ministry on the introduction of "Tomorrow's Schools", in the development of the core curriculum review, and on other ministerial committees. For these and other services to education Dean was honoured by the award of a New Zealand 1990 Commemoration Medal by Queen Elizabeth.

However Dean's retirement is only partial. After a relaxed holiday in Europe with his wife Anne, Dean is returning to Massey on a part time basis. As well as continuing his research and some teaching activities, he will retain his role as the Deputy Head of the Institute of Fundamental Sciences, a grouping that incorporates mathematics, physics and chemistry. And of course, there's that textbook to be completed.

I will remember Dean especially for the mentoring role he provided me during my initial two years at Massey University as a Junior Lecturer and also for the significant guidance and support throughout our shared time later here. His ability not to be swayed under pressure when he stood ground on sound principles, his knowledge of correct and effective procedures, his unswerving enthusiasm for the benefit of students, together with his personal interest in the welfare of all around him, will always be with me. I value Dean's friendship and collegiality and look forward to many more years of working closely with him.

Mike Hendy