



Obituary

David McDougall

24 November 1943 – 23 September 2010



David McDougall died on Thursday 23 September, having been diagnosed with cancer only five weeks earlier. David was a senior lecturer in the School of Engineering and Mathematics at Edith Cowan University until the end of 2006 when he opted to retire.

David was born in Hartlepool, England, into humble circumstances, the eldest of four children. When he was only 11, he and his siblings were placed in Catholic orphanages. His father was a shift worker and his mother, suffering from multiple sclerosis, was unable to continue looking after the young family. Within a year, David passed the 11-plus exam but, as an asthmatic, was regarded as being too sickly to travel the hour each way by bus from the orphanage to the grammar school. For the seven years at grammar school, he was fostered in the home of a widow pensioner. Following successful completion of Sixth Form he enrolled in a Bachelor's degree in mathematics at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, where he also completed his Master's degree in pure mathematics. David then moved to London for his PhD in group theory at the University of London, St Mary's College. His thesis, *The subnormal structure of some classes of soluble groups*, was completed in 1969 under the supervision of Derek John Scott Robinson.

David's academic career spanned 38 years. He spent 1968 lecturing at the University of Hull, Yorkshire, and then migrated to Australia, firstly for a postdoctoral fellowship with Bernhard Neumann at the ANU in Canberra, where

he also spent two years as a lecturer. His time in Canberra was followed by a two-year stint as a lecturer at the University of Tasmania, lecturing in mathematics in the first year of his appointment and statistics in the second year.

In 1977 he and his wife Kay, whom he met while at the ANU, moved to Perth where David spent the remaining 30 years of his career lecturing at the Secondary Teachers College, Nedlands College of Advanced Education, then the Western Australian College of Advanced Education and, since 1991, Edith Cowan University.

David's main contribution to mathematics lies in his commitment to mathematics education. He was a gifted and well-loved teacher who inspired his students (a lot of whom were service students) to regard mathematics as more than a necessary evil. Indeed some of them chose to switch to mathematics as a career because of his enthusiasm for mathematics and commitment to mathematics education.

Between 1994 and 2009, David was a tertiary entrance examiner; five years on the Discrete Mathematics panel, four as the Chief Examiner, then four years on the Applicable Mathematics panel as the Chief Examiner.

From 1997, David taught two classes per week of Year 8 school students in the ECU Mathematics Problem Solving Program. Over 14 years, more than 600 gifted and able school students benefitted from his mentoring.

David retired from ECU at the end of 2006. We will remember David for his integrity, wisdom, sense of duty, and the courage of his convictions. He generously supported his colleagues and his students with a strong commitment to mathematics and to education. Vale, David.

Ute Mueller, Edith Cowan University