2004 PEARCEY MEDAL
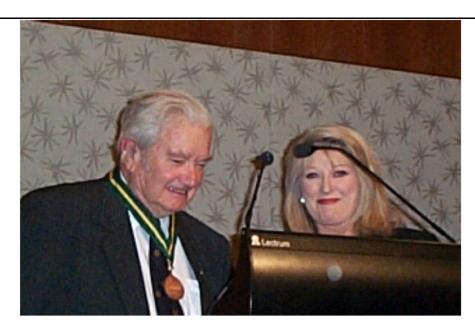
The 2004 Pearcey Medal was presented to Emeritus Professor John Bennett AO by Senator the Hon Helen Coonan, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, before a distinguished audience of over 200 State and Federal Ministers, senior politicians, bureaucrats and I.T.T professionals, Pearcey Medallists and Pearcey Award winners, from every State and Territory, at a celebratory Dinner at the Australian Technology Park, Sydney, on 4 November 2004.

Minister Helen Coonan and John Bennett

The 2004 Medallist, John Bennett, is an outstanding pioneer in computing; in 1949, he was one of the developers of EDSAC, (which was the first stored program computer in the world in regular use) under the tutelage of Professor Maurice Wilkes at Cambridge University.

John Bennett had completed his first engineering degree in Brisbane in 1941. He spent the years 1942-46 as a radar officer in the RAAF and returned to complete two further engineering degrees after WWII. While on the staff of the Brisbane City Electric Light Company he was given the job of predicting electrical load flows armed with a desk calculator. By chance he had heard about the ACE computer being developed by the National Physical Laboratory in London so he applied for a research studentship to work on this project; the outcome was the job on EDSAC.

After three years at Cambridge, Bennett was recruited by Ferranti Limited to work on the Ferranti MK1, the first stored program machine to be built by industry. His job was to build up a group to program likely user applications and to recommend changes to the MKL1's architecture to make programming easier.

In 1955, John Bennett returned to Australia as the country's first computer science professor at the Basser Computer Laboratory at Sydney University.

In Sydney John Bennett's career (until his retirement) in 1987 covered a wide variety of academic and industry contributions including the construction of SILLIAC, international activities with IFILP and work with the Australian Computer Society of which he was the Foundation President.

The Commonwealth Government DCITA, the NSW Government Dept of State and Regional Development, Multimedia Victoria, The Australian Information Industry Association, and the Australian Computer Society, were the major sponsors of the 2004 Pearcey Medal.

PEARCEY PATRONS

Minister Coonan receives her Pearcey Fellows Certificate and Lapel Badge from National Pearcey Chairman Ian Dennis.

Speaking at the Medal presentation, Pearcey Foundation National Chairman, Ian Dennis, said,

"Election campaigns tend to emphasise the divisions of opinion in our society, but one of the reasons that Australia is the envy of many other nations is that there are far more things upon which we agree, than there are that divide us.
One of those "things" is support for the Australian ICT industry and profession. This support transcends Party lines, and it transcends State and Federal boundaries.

We were very pleased that IT Ministers Lara Giddings of Tasmania, and Trish White of South Australia, accepted our invitations this year to become State Patrons of the Pearcey Foundation in their respective States, and I am very pleased to announce that Senator Helen Coonan and NSW Minister John Della Bosca have also now accepted our invitations to them to become Pearcey Patrons, and are therefore now Pearcey Fellows as well".

PEARCEY NSW STATE AWARD

The Pearcey Dinner also saw the 2004 NSW Pearcey Award presented to Hugh Durrant-Whyte, by Loftus Harris, Director General of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, on behalf of Minister John Della Bosca.

Loftus Harris congratulates Hugh Durrant-Whyte

Hugh Durrant-Whyte has built the world's 2nd largest Field Robotics and Autonomous Systems centre, based at Sydney University, but also involving UNSW and UTS. The centre has over 130 research staff and PHD students. As its entrepreneurial leader, Hugh has led the centre to secure a total of $30m funding, mainly from competitive selection sources and industry. Hugh has published over 270 papers and personally supervised over 50 top class PHD students, many now noted academics, engineers and business personnel. Amongst his voluntary activities, Hugh teaches robotics at Primary Schools. A Federation Fellow, Hugh has achieved many citations and awards for his academic achievements - but this is not why Hugh was short-listed for the Pearcey award. What impressed the judges was the way in which Hugh, as a leading ICT researcher, engaged with industry. The judges felt Hugh was a role model for NICTA, CSIRO and other leading ICT research centres in NSW, to ensure that business productivity and economic activity result from the publicly funded research work undertaken. Hugh's centre is successful because it interacts and is driven by industry. The centres clients and commercials partners read like a "who's who" - the Australian Army, British Aerospace, Comalco, Komatsu, Patricks, UK Ministry of Defence, US Air Force and Navy, Western Mining. In addition, Hugh has been instrumental in 2 successful technology startups.

PEARCEY HALL OF FAME

National Pearcey Chairman, Ian Dennis, also announced the Pearcey Hall of Fame recipients for 2004. They were:

Ormond Browne, founder of International Programming, one of Australia's first software companies; Ormond unfortunately died earlier this year, so his Award is posthumous.

Emeritus Professor Ren Potts, Rhodes Scholar, Order of Australia, Ren was one of the first to learn to program and use the Weapons Research Establishment Digital Automatic Computer (WREDAC) in 1956, and was responsible for establishing at the University of Adelaide Computing Centre and was the inaugural President for the South Australian Computer Society in 1961, and

Bob Bishop Chairman and chief executive officer for international IT company Silicon Graphics (SGI) since 1999, where he looks after $US 842 million Revenue and 2600 global employees. Bob Bishop is an elected member of the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences, serves on the international advisory panels for National ICT Australia and for the Multimedia Super Corridor in Malaysia, and is a member of the Executive Committee for the Council on Competitiveness in Washington, D.C.