

OBITUARY

LAURENCE PATRICK LEE (1913-1985)

It is with regret that we record the death of Laurence (Laurie) Patrick Lee on 28 January 1985 at Wellington.

Born in England in 1913, he came to New Zealand at an early age with his parents and settled in Auckland. There he attended Sacred Heart College and went on to University, studying for a BSc degree.

Laurie began his working life as a clerical cadet in the Public Works Department in Whangarei in 1934. January 1936 saw him transfer to the Department of Lands and Survey as a draughting cadet in the Auckland District office. Laurie's mathematical aptitude led him to move to the Department's Computing Branch at Head Office, Wellington, in 1941. He remained in this Branch for the balance of his career, being promoted to Assistant Chief Computer in 1956 and Chief Computer in 1964. He held this position until retirement ten years later.

Laurie was deeply interested in map projections and became a world authority on this subject. He published many papers and developed many new ideas and methods of computation.

After retirement, Laurie continued to work as a consultant to the Department, being employed on special projects. His ability to meticulously research material and write clear and concise reports was a great asset in undertaking this work.

Laurie joined the Royal Astronomical Society of New Zealand in 1948. He assisted with the compilation of data for 'The Observatory Handbook', an annual publication of the Society, from 1949 to 1951. Laurie took over the Directorship of the Computing Section of the Society in 1954 and held that position for eighteen years. Laurie also served on Council from 1964 to 1972. In 1974, he became a 'caretaker' editor for Southern Stars, a duty he was to undertake for three years.

Laurie was also involved in a number of other organisations. He was elected an Honorary Member of the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors in 1971 and was the contributor of a number of articles to that Institute's Journal. Laurie was a founder member of the New Zealand Institute of

Draughtsmen and edited their Journal from 1947 to 1950. He was also a foundation member of the New Zealand Cartographic Society and represented New Zealand at two International Cartographic Association meetings. Laurie also had a keen interest in films and belonged to the New Zealand Film Society. He edited their monthly bulletin from 1956 to 1970. He also assisted with the compilation of the annual catalogue of films, to the benefit of every Film Society in the country. Laurie was also a founder member of the Friends of the New Zealand Film Archive.

Laurie will be remembered by those who knew him as a gentleman; friendly, always helpful and very knowledgeable, but above all, as a most unassuming friend.

A life-long bachelor, he is survived by a brother in Kaitaia and a nephew in England.

G. H. Rowe

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