

PETER GYNGELL

The passing of Peter Gyngell in Woollongong last week really is the end of an era. An ebullient Welshman, Peter joined the Ford Motor Company at Aveley in UK on graduating, Ford (Aveley) had installed LEO II/4 in 1958. From there he was recruited by LEO specifically to establish a subsidiary in Australia in 1961. As the first General Manager of LEO Australia, Peter was an enthusiastic and charismatic leader who was highly motivating to the small team that he initially established in Sydney. In January 1963 this team was Peter plus 4 plus 1 secretary/admin person in a very small office in Miller Street.

His impact on the embryonic business computing market was sensational. By the end of 1963 his little company had installed a major mainframe LEOIII/8 with Tubemakers of Australia, sold a LEOIII to replace a major IBM punched card system at Shell Australia, sold a LEOIII to replace ICT at Colonial Mutual Life (CML) and signed up HC Sleigh, a significant Australian Company which included shipping and Golden Fleece Petroleum. This all created a shock wave in the industry, Peter Gyngell was a legend.

This of course resulted in a period of strong growth in people in the company as expertise had to be provided to ensure the success of all the customers. It was also a period of consolidation in the industry in UK resulting in the formation of English Electric Leo Marconi Computers (EELM). In Australia, Australian Computers was formed with local electronics company AWA owning 40% and EELM owning 60%. Peter was appointed General Manager reporting to a local Board of Directors as well as to UK.

In late 1964 the SYSTEM4 range of mainframes was announced in Australia by Australian Computers. A number of major SYSTEM4 installations were sold and established, the largest being with the State Bank of Victoria in Melbourne. Three successive Commonwealth Government tenders were won with SYSTEM4, Department of Supply, Department of Civil Aviation and the Department of Customs and Excise. Other customers were RMIT, AWA and HC Sleigh.

This was an amazingly successful few years from a zero base, Peter excelled and was a true inspiration. It was the period that in many ways defined him. Those of us involved at that time have wonderful memories.

Peter was a man with many interests and enthusiasms, most notably his family. His boys both excelled at sport in which Peter gained a great deal of pleasure, and indeed led to Peter qualifying as a rugby referee. He was of course a passionate Wales and Sydney University rugby follower, at least until rugby went professional.

For very many years Peter ran a weekly radio programme on classical music, another of his life-long enthusiasms.

Later in life he continued to expand his interests, studying Law at University.

Demonstrating his great creativity, Peter developed his own Bridge system which he and I took to the renowned Canberra Bridge Club. The system worked well enough for us to win the tournament but we were then told not to come back until we played a published system!

A remarkable man.

Peter's wife Jean died nearly 2 years ago. They are survived by their 2 sons Julian and Stuart and their families to whom we extend our condolences.