

Denis James Hogan, QSO, Hon. FNZIC, 1927 - 2006



Denis James Hogan devoted his life to serving his fellow chemists in New Zealand. Following service on the Canterbury Branch committee in the 1950s, he became *Registrar* of the Institute (a formally incorporated professional society) in 1961 and relinquished the task only in 1988 when he foresaw that the duties of a Registrar would no longer be needed with NZIC moving from its professional era. Fol-

lowing retirement from his Deputy Government Analyst position in DSIR in April 1989, Denis took on the role of Editor of *Chem NZ*, the NZIC magazine that is freely distributed to all of the country's secondary schools. It was his calm and persuasive nature, his ability to relate to the breadth of the membership, and his facility to remember names, places and events that secured his remarkable service to the Institute; it spanned the tenure of 45 Presidents, 6 Honorary General Secretaries [14 years with Dr W. E. (Ted) Harvey], and 6 Editors of this Journal. Denis's contribution was recognised by election as Honorary Fellow in 1989, a Queen's Service Medal in 1990, the Marsden Medal of the NZAS, and, in 1999, an RSNZ Science and Technology Bronze Medal for services to chemical education.

Denis Hogan was born in Methven on February 10, 1927, son of a Gallipoli veteran invalided home. When Denis was 10 he was diagnosed with polio, spent his next 2 years as an in-patient at Christchurch hospital followed by 6 months as a daily out-patient, and most of his life with leg braces that allowed him to use walking sticks. In later life, crutches and, in the last few years, a wheelchair was needed to provide him with mobility. Denis never let his disability interfere with his plans to get on with life and he was passionate about his career and his interests in science, music (he learned violin in primary school, and played and maintained an active interest in music), sport – especially cricket and rugby, politics, theatre, and (very importantly) his family.

Educated at Addington Primary School and Christchurch West High, he entered Canterbury University College graduating with a BSc in Chemistry in 1948 that took longer than normal because he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis in his 3rd year. He started a Diploma in Industrial Chemistry in 1949 but the practical demands involved were too high. In 1949 Denis was offered a 3-month trial in the Christchurch Section of Laboratory of the Government Analyst and after 2 years he applied for and was accepted on to the permanent staff. He spent 1952 at Massey Agricultural College taking courses in Dairy Chemistry and Dairy Microbiology where, he said *'I grew up a lot that year'*. During this period Henry Langford resigned from the Wellington Dominion Laboratory and Denis was told to fill the Sydney Street position. In 1954 his father became seriously ill and, as Ruth Lightfoot

married and left a vacancy for the chemist in charge of microbiology in the Christchurch laboratory, Denis applied for and was transferred back to the facility where he was third chemist to Pat Alcorn and Les Wilkinson. He remained in Christchurch for the rest of his career gaining expertise in a wide-ranging field of water, food, and toxicological analyses, performing almost all of the post-mortem toxicological testing for a long period; his last employment activity was as a TELARC Assessor registering laboratories from Invercargill to Whangarei. He retired in 1989.

Aside from his service to chemistry in this country, Denis provided support for fellow polio sufferers from about 1980 when post-polio brought on new problems. He joined the (then) fledgling *NZ Post Polio Support Society*, helped get it firmly established, and was editor of its *Polio News*. He was its President from 1991 to 2006, appointed its NZ Life Member, and a force behind the efforts to have post-polio recognised and addressed medically, using his overseas trips to gather information.

To this Institute, Denis was an icon who served his profession with gentle persuasion, holding firm values, and getting the right people to do whatever job needed doing at the right time. He was a natural communicator who played a major role in developing the chemical education scene in Canterbury to be the driving force that it is today. He was responsible for gaining teachers, such as Alan Wooff and Terry Hitchings, into NZIC membership. It is due to him that *Chem NZ* is the viable teachers' magazine that it is circulated by the RSC as a component of its *Education* package; he became *Editor* and retained that role until his death. Throughout his career, Denis played a major role in NZ chemical education. He actively promoted the *Chemistry in Action* lecture series and arranged its subsequent publication and distribution. He was a leader in the formation of the Canterbury Junior Chemical Society and provided the initial idea and impetus for NZ representation at the Chemical Olympiads. He co-edited, with Bryce Williamson, *New Zealand is Different: Chemical Milestones in New Zealand History*, which tells something of the historical contributions that chemistry has made to NZ's industrial, cultural and social development, and which found a major market in high-school libraries and as high-school chemistry prizes.

That Denis received the 2006 NZIC Chemical Education Award is small recognition for his efforts in this area, that this is henceforth the *Denis Hogan Chemical Education Award* is entirely appropriate, and that he was accorded Honorary Fellowship a mere token of gratitude that the chemistry profession in New Zealand past, present and future owe to him. To the Past-Presidents that he served on Council, Denis was the record holder and the knowledge bearer (no small part in his head) with the strength and the sanity that made the tenure so much easier and the more enjoyable. Whatever the words, none can be adequate to express the gratitude we owe to him.

Denis is survived by his wife of 49 years, Helen, and sons Timothy and Seamus and their six children.

Compiled by Brian Halton (Editor) from material provided by Helen Hogan, Harry Stone, John Packer, and the Christchurch Press (9 Dec. 2006).