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Tribute to Ken Pearson: A Life Well-lived

We are saddened to inform you that Ken Pearson -- a much-beloved member of the GTAP family -- passed away in his sleep last night. He had been battling cancer for quite some time.

Ken lived life to the fullest. He was, first and foremost, a family man. He was a devoted husband to his wife Helen, a father to four lovely and talented daughters: Kristen, Vivienne, Suzanne and Claire, and a highly engaged grandfather for nine energetic grandchildren. Ken was also a talented musician and a long-time member of the choral society. He was a keenly competitive bridge player and never passed up a game of golf or tennis. All of this before even mentioning his professional contributions!

Ken Pearson began his career as an outstanding mathematician -- earning a PhD at the young age of 23! He quickly rose through the ranks and became Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at La Trobe University, before being introduced to Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) analysis by Peter Dixon. The rest, as they say, is history. Peter lured Ken to Melbourne University and then to Monash where he joined the Centre of Policy Studies (CoPS). He conceived, and nurtured development of GEMPACK -- a software suite specifically tailored to large-scale CGE analysis.

Ken was active in the GTAP Network since its inception, developing material for, and teaching in, the GTAP courses. They would not have gotten off the ground without his contributions. He also played an important role in pushing out the frontier of CGE modeling and analysis through his continuing development of specialized utilities within GEMPACK to solve practical problems confronted by the modeling community. Perhaps the most famous of these is AnalyseGE which has made all of us far more productive and greatly deepened the quality of analysis undertaken by CGE modelers. For his many contributions to the network, Ken was selected as a GTAP Research Fellow in 1996 and was later named to the GTAP Hall of Fame in 2007. In 2014, a scholarship was established in his name. The Ken Pearson Memorial Scholarship provides support for promising young scholars seeking to present their work at the Annual Conference on Global Economic Analysis.

Those of us who had the privilege of working closely with Ken count our collaborations with him as among the most stimulating and rewarding of our careers. Ken's keen intellect and his background in theoretical mathematics allowed him to quickly grasp the essence of whatever modeling challenge we posed. And teaching short courses with Ken was always an invigorating experience. He was prepared to do whatever it took to make the course a success, whether it was sitting in on 'dry runs' of the lectures and labs, stuffing notebooks, developing new course material, or organizing social outings.

Today we mourn the loss of a good friend and colleague. We also celebrate a life well-lived! Ken Pearson has left us with many wonderful memories and we will miss him deeply.