

Obituary

William Edwin (Ted) Hillis

9 February 1921 – 3 February 2008

The wood science community lost a great teacher, scientist and true friend with the passing of Ted Hillis from a heart attack in February. Born in Victoria, Ted was raised during the Great Depression, which made a lasting impression on his lifestyle. He studied industrial chemistry and biochemistry, leading to degrees of BSc, MSc and ultimately DSc at the University of Melbourne. His scientific career, resulting in over 200 publications, was described by Josef Bauch in *Holzforschung* **55**, 111-116, 2001.

His early work and leadership of a national program in the 1940s supporting the war-effort involved coal gas and tar, and isolation of manitol from tree exudates. A life-long fascination with tree exudates and wood extractives followed, culminating in his much-praised text-book *Heartwood and Tree Exudates* published in 1987.

From 1942 he worked at his beloved CSIR (later CSIRO) where he became Chief Research Scientist of the Division of Forest Products, and Visiting Fellow for many years after his retirement in 1986. During his career he rubbed shoulders with the giants of wood science and technology — H.E. Dadswell (Poppa), Stan Clarke, Alan Wardrop, Bill Gottstein, Jack Boyd and Huntly Higgins, to name just a few. He was one of the pioneers of forest products research in Australia, providing a solid scientific and technological foundation for the wood industry. From this national research base he built an extensive network of international collaborators, notably in the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Germany and China. Apart from wood and tree chemistry in which he was eminent, diverse fundamental and applied aspects of tree biology and wood science had his active interest. Botanical classification of *Eucalyptus* and *Nothofagus* species, thermal properties and the adoption of high-temperature drying of radiata pine, and the multipurpose applications of black wattle plantations in China are just a few examples. In addition Ted strongly supported and mentored younger staff and defended tenaciously the immense value of CSIRO's H.E. Dadswell Memorial Wood collection, later renamed the Australian Collection.

Among other academic appointments, Ted taught wood science as a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University in Canberra between 1974 and 1986. At this time, he also co-edited *Eucalypts for Wood Production* (1978, reissued in 1984 and 1988 and as a Chinese translation 1990), a book that correctly anticipated the subsequent significant expansion of eucalypt plantations in Australia.

Ted Hillis became very active in fostering international cooperation from the early 60s onwards. As a member of the IUFRO Executive Board and a co-coordinator of Division 5 Forest Products, he organised important general and thematic conferences between 1976 and 1983. His role as President of the International Academy

of Wood Science (1978–1982) was equally stimulating. Ted's significant contributions to wood anatomy were recognized when the International Association of Wood Anatomists (IAWA) elected him an Honorary Member in 1981. His holistic vision of tree biology, forestry, and wood science and technology as strongly interlinked fields made him very supportive of research on wood structure, and he always recognized the crucial role the latter played in understanding other wood properties.

He was a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (1980). Many other prestigious organisations honoured Ted in various ways; among them was the Institute of Wood Science that conferred the Stanley Clarke Memorial Medal in 1986, an honour with special significance for Ted as he had a profound regard for Stan, an earlier Chief of the CSIRO Division of Forest Products. In 2003 the Australian government awarded him the Order of Australia, one of the country's highest recognitions of outstanding achievement as a citizen.

Ted Hillis' scientific contribution lives on in his many publications which will have a lasting impact in tree biology and wood biochemistry. Ted Hillis, the friend and colleague, will be greatly missed because he was gracious, supportive and a true gentleman. We wish his children and grandchildren much strength to cope with this great loss.

Jugo Ilic
Melbourne

