

UWAASA Philippa Maddern Award 2015 (Posthumous) – Professor Geoffrey Shellam

Geoff Shellam was Professor of Microbiology at UWA from 1985 until June 2015. In this time he coordinated units and routinely taught undergraduate and postgraduate students, especially in the areas of virology and emerging infectious diseases. He was an innovative educator and initiated the teaching of molecular biology in 1987.

With the aim of equipping students to contribute to the understanding and control of existing and emerging infectious diseases around the world, in 2007 he established a very successful Master/Graduate Diploma and Combined Masters/PhD degree in Infectious Diseases. Students from more than 35 countries have completed these qualifications.

Geoff also supervised many Honours and PhD students and provided gateways to further post-doctoral research. He took particular pleasure in identifying students or researchers with aptitude for further studies, and many of his successful students were personally identified and encouraged by him. He was always an enthusiastic attendee at Graduation ceremonies, and visibly glowed with pride at the success of his students.

Geoff loved interacting with students and was always genuinely interested in their lives and their families. He interviewed all candidates for the Masters course personally and spent many of his last days at UWA doing this. He also devoted many hours helping students to establish their families in Perth. He held parties for them and delighted in all of their successes. He was warmly loved and held in exceptionally high esteem by them.

Geoff was involved with many professional societies, particularly the Australasian Society for Immunology. He is credited with formalising State branches and acquiring the Society journal, *Immunology and Cell Biology*, now one of the Nature.com group of journals.

Geoff was also a wonderful supporter of the Faculty of Arts. He had a keen interest in books, particularly Australian literature music and drama, and even nurtured a desire to establish a Harold Bailey Chair in Historical Linguistics. Geoff was Chair of UWA Press from 1991 to 2006. His interests were wide and his judgement and political instincts always sound, enabling him to guide members of the Press Board as they considered the publication of books in a range of fields.

In the mid-1990s, UWA Press faced possible closure by the then Vice Chancellor. Geoff, as long-serving Chair of the UWA Press Board, pushed a trolley into the Academic Board meeting that was deliberating the Vice Chancellor's motion to close the press. It was heaped high with scholarly books published by the press. Such incontrovertible evidence of the value of scholarly publishing to academics and the university saved the day.

Geoff continued to support the Press vigorously as an award-winning academic publishing house that produces books that provide a unique, unparalleled, and rich source of information about the natural and cultural landscapes of Western Australia.

Geoff was one of those rarest of rare birds: a research and teaching enthusiast, an academic citizen who did not shirk administrative burdens, a busy person who nevertheless always made time to talk to all seeking counsel or knowledge - a remarkable and great humanitarian whose life was characterised by curiosity and compassion.