



OBITUARY - PROFESSOR LLOYD SMYTHE

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I learnt not to split my infinitives when Professor Lloyd Smythe reviewed my Ph.D. Thesis on “Lead Burden of Sydney Schoolchildren” in 1980. Despite being Head of the School of Chemistry and the Head of The Department of Analytical Chemistry at the University of New South Wales, he still made time to closely interact with his large research group. As a mature age student who had returned from 8 years in industry, with management roles, I was impressed particularly at his ability to recognize the large social issues of the time and apply his research management skills for creating important solution contributions.

Sydney had developed as the smog capital of Australia, predominantly due to pollution from motor vehicles using leaded fuel. He recognized that the solution to emissions pollution problems using catalytic converters could not be solved using leaded fuel. But most pressingly, from overseas research, lead emissions into the environment were affecting the physical and mental health of children so he obtained a NHMRC grant to mount a major study on the “Lead Burden of Sydney Schoolchildren”. I was fortunate to be selected to run the project as part of my Ph.D studies and hence work closely with Professor Smythe, his department and his extensive networks. Children at Gardeners Road, Mosman and Winmallee Primary schools were surveyed to demonstrate the blood lead burden associated with vehicle emissions. Despite intense debate and expenditure from the lead, motor, oil industries and State health regulators, unleaded petrol became available in 1985.

My wife Halina and I were fortunate to meet and socialize with him and his wife Anne who provided the background strength needed for his various roles. His innate impish humour and knowledge of good vintages made him personable and great social company.

Professor Smythe, the first Chair of Analytical Chemistry in Australia, created and left a legacy of studies and specialists in advanced measurement for providing factual data on issues critical to Australia, such as transforming the health and environment of Australia by removing lead from petrol. I have been proud to have joined with Professor Smythe in achieving this environmental milestone.

Vale, Lloyd Smythe.
