

**George Gordon Bennett – Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)
Australia Day Honours List 2006**

George served as lecturer, senior lecturer and Associate Professor at the School of Surveying, University of New South Wales, from 1959 to 1986. In his teaching he was always most meticulous, and instilled in his students the need for extreme care in both the observational and the computational phases of the task – skills fundamental to the profession of land surveying. George’s lectures in Positional Astronomy, and the associated evening practicals (often on cold winter’s evenings) were without doubt the most memorable experiences for the undergraduates who passed through the degree course during George’s tenure. Indeed, many regret the coming of satellite navigation and GPS at the expense of positional astronomy because of the great satisfaction they derived from finding location and directions from one’s own observations to the natural phenomena of the stars.

Throughout his career George has had a real passion for astronomy and, in 1980, co-authored a book on practical astronomy which became the standard for teaching Positional Astronomy in Australia and beyond. His research work enabled him to contribute to the opus of the Nautical Almanac Office of the Royal Greenwich Observatory. His interest in *navigational* astronomy led him into yachting where, in 1977, he won the inaugural Navigator’s Trophy in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. He later developed computer programs for the reduction of observations and for generating almanac data, and taught these courses widely to yachtsmen. He has published articles in the American and British Journals of Navigation. In 1998 McGraw-Hill published his book titled “The Complete On-Board Celestial Navigator”, and this is now in its second edition (2002), and receiving very favourable reviews.

George was also active in serving the broader community. He was a member of the Board of Surveyors (New South Wales) for 15 years and served a term as the President of the Institution of Surveyors (New South Wales). In recognition of this service, and of his contribution to navigation, he was made a Fellow of both the Institution of Surveyors in and of the Institute of Navigation.

In his retirement George has continued his contribution to the University, and to the wider community. In 2000 he designed and managed, from concept to finish, the construction of The Millennium Sundial at the University of New South Wales. This is now regarded as one of the great assets of the University. It both enhances the teaching of fundamental concepts for positioning in the BE (Surveying and Spatial Information Systems) program, and adds beauty to the Quadrangle Building at this University. However, his contribution extended well beyond this amazing convergence of scientific and artistic endeavour, as he subsequently very generously gave back his payment for this work to the School, to establish a Prize for the top-performing student in the first year of study in the School of Surveying and Spatial Information Systems. This prize now bears George’s name in his honour.

George’s contribution has thus continued from his earliest days as a surveyor with the National Mapping Division, supporting the development of the fundamental national geodetic infrastructure in the mid-1950’s, right through to, and including, his retirement. Forty years down the track, George is *still* using his love of, and knowledge and expertise in, Positional Astronomy in the service of the community.

26 January 2006

School of Surveying & Spatial Information Systems, UNSW