

Eric Heine b. 19 January 1920 d. 15 July 2009



Profile

Eric was a gentle and unassuming man who was one of the coterie Engineers who on returning from World War Two made his mark in the Power Engineering profession particularly in the Ministry of Works. Their collective contribution, humble and unrecognised publicly to New Zealand was very significant.

In his career, he worked in Dam Design, Construction and Estimating and Energy resource assessment. He was an early Secretary to NZSOLD and after retirement served on the Conference Committee.

Early years and Education – Bernard Heine, Eric's Brother

Eric was the oldest of five children, with four brothers and one sister, and brought up on a small mixed farm in a quiet valley in Upper Moutere. The community was a very close, traditional Lutheran one and both his parents were closely linked to the many German families. Therefore, we were surrounded by a close and integrated community, and many relatives, including many young cousins with whom we could play games, especially cricket.

Our household was somewhat unusual in that although our mother's family farmed further up our valley, our father had been brought up in Wellington where his father, Augustus Heine, had been deputy head of Wellington College. Augustus had left the rural life in Upper Moutere to train as a teacher, in part in Australia, and became an impressive figure with an emphasis on intellectual pursuits and learning. Good education was believed to be crucial and anyone who was bright was encouraged to aim high and, if possible, go on to university. Our home was filled with books, provided often by my father's sisters who were teachers, and reading was a constant preoccupation in the family. Eric attended our local primary school at Upper Moutere consisting of two rooms only with about 40 pupils overall. At Eric's time, the headmaster was a Mr Ralph, a strong disciplinarian who emphasised the value of hard work and good grammar. Our parents approved of that

Later: The nearest secondary school was Motueka High School, which Eric attended for a couple of years and travelled to by bus. The level of teaching was not high. All that changed as our grandparents, Augustus and his wife, on retirement moved to Nelson to live. Thus Eric, staying with them, began at Nelson College; later he was a boarder for a period and enjoyed that. Eric was obviously bright, reaching the Upper Sixth and winning a National University Scholarship. Surprisingly, he told me he had great difficulty in understanding maths until; about the age of 13 - 14 years, an older cousin who also taught at Nelson Girls College gave him some tuition. "It was a revelation," he said, and "opened the world of maths to me". He also had a first rate maths teacher at Nelson Boys College.

So, apart from his abilities and first-rate critical brain, this teaching must have been critical and he retained this quality of critical investigation for the rest of his life. That could lead to impatience with 'liberal' worldly thinking but it was with the ideas and never personal.

World War Two – Alan Peart, Reg Hermans, Bernard Heine

Eric served with the 7th Field Company, NZ Engineers, in Italy.

Immediately Post War - Public Works Department and Ministry of Works and Dams – Trevor Jones and Alan Peart

After the end of the war (c. 1946), he joined PWD and was posted to the Cobb hydro construction. He was well acquainted with the Cobb area, which was well known to him as in his teens he, his brother Roland and local friends would go deer shooting in the Mt Arthur range and Cobb Valley. While at Cobb, he spent leisure hours tramping with family and colleagues in the same area, always a great enjoyment to him.

Eric left the Cobb in 1949 to work in the Power Design Office, where he worked on Ohakuri and other projects until in 1957 he was appointed to Resident Engineer Timaru where he stayed for five years before transferring back to Head Office as Construction Engineer Power under Chief Engineer Bill Duncan. This was a time when New Zealand was investigating Nuclear Power. In the late 60s he visited England to report on the newly established nuclear power stations in England and was constantly amused by the restricted planning laws in England, the consultation needed, the rights of individual owners compare with what he saw were the sensible approaches in New Zealand.

He retired in 1979 as Chief Estimating Engineer (Power) having been seconded to both the fledgling Ministry of Energy Resources and Treasury for periods.

In summary – all the above and Jean Jefferson

Eric was a rather retiring sort of person but had highly perceptive and analytical abilities, which had him held in high regard. He had a most likeable personality and was never heard to say a bad word about anybody. One was always struck by his insatiability with and loyalty to his engineering colleagues and how very much he had enjoyed a profession, which suited his mind and temperament and the necessity of a critical and scientific approval.

Derek Wilshere
Secretary NZSOLD