

The life and times of Uwe Radok.

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As a young university student, Uwe Radok fled Germany as Nazism's grip intensified. He found himself working as an engineering draftsman in England before becoming interned, along with future Nobel Prize winners. As one of the "Dunera Boys", so well described by the author Cyril Pearl, he involuntarily reached Australia for a further period of internment and subsequent release on voluntarily joining the Australian Army in 1942. This decision entitled him to further studies in Meteorology at the University of Melbourne after the close of hostilities. Through his monumental PhD thesis under Dr. Fritz Loewe, another German refugee, he was that notable polar explorer's only higher degree candidate.

Radok's interests covered an enormous range of experimental and theoretical studies. Feeling isolated in the diminutive Meteorology Department of the University, he sought cooperation with research partners from many organisations, including the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority, the (then) Weapons Research Establishment and Antarctic Division. It was with the latter that he built up a remarkably successful programme in Glaciology, years before anyone else in the Australian meteorological community realised the significance of Antarctic land- and sea-ice as long and short-term climate indicators. In a country devoid of glaciers, many, including Prof. Bill Budd, were able to build their careers on Radok's pioneering ideas.

Following the University's access to digital computing facilities on CSIRAC, Radok continued to demonstrate his versatility as he and his student Dr. Dick Jenssen managed to wring out Australia's first numerical weather forecasts from a primitive system which ran with a 100 memory elements! Later he supervised the BoM's pioneers, including Ross Maine, in this important field.

Responding to problems experienced by higher flying civilian aircraft as passenger jets

commenced service in Australia, he cooperated with Prof. Elmar Reiter of Colorado State University and Kevin Spillane of the BoM, in clarifying concepts of clear air turbulence.

His support for and encouragement of students was enormous. When the University Radio Club sought help in building an antenna to receive the then revolutionary satellite images of the Earth's clouds, his decision to offer space and funds was rewarded by successful reception of images which greatly helped the BoM until it built its own receiving station.

In spite of his prodigious personal output of publications and a continuous stream of successful graduate students, circumstances were such that in 1977 he felt that he had no choice but to leave the University of Melbourne, which he had intellectually enriched for a quarter of a century. The U.S. benefited from his last decade of research.

Nevertheless, Australia remained home to Uwe Radok and he returned to retire quietly with his wife Anita. Even now, having celebrated his 90th birthday earlier this year, email enables him to remain in contact with his many friends, including former students and colleagues. Many of these students have made distinguished careers in Meteorology and they will applaud the decision by AMOS, facilitated by the generosity of some of them, to found the annual "Uwe Radok Award" for the best PhD thesis submitted at an Australian University.