This volume is a celebration for John Bennett’s 80th birthday. It was written with respect and affection from just a few of the many he has inspired over his long professional career. It also commemorates indirectly, 40 years of the Basser Department of Computer Science at the University of Sydney, of which he was the first Professor and Head.

Keywords: John Makepeace Bennett, Basser Department of Computer Science, computing pioneer

CR Categories: K.2 – History of Computing

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper does not purport to be a biography or even a summary of John Bennett’s (hereafter referred to as he himself does, as JMB) distinguished career. Rather it illustrates some of his many interests in computing and the work they inspired in others. Those readers desiring more details may find them in Bennett (1990; 1994; 1998).

While taking a leading role in the inception of the Australian Computer Society (ACS), of which he was the first President, he was also a major player in the development of the Australian Computer Journal, now known as the Journal of Research and Practice in IT. Thus it is fitting that this festschrift forms a special edition of the journal. As the papers will show, especially that of de Ferranti* and Deane*, putting research into practice has defined JMB’s life.

2. EARLY YEARS

John Makepeace Bennett was born in Queensland in 1921. After completing his schooling he graduated with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from the University of Queensland. He then joined the Royal Australian Air Force being posted to a radar unit. Ironically some of his lectures were held in buildings at the University of Sydney which were later to be inhabited by Basser. As Barry de Ferranti* recalls,

we had severally been students at the Physics School and received the benefit of Professor V A Bailey, though at different times. ‘Rusty’ Bennett was one of the WWII ‘Bailey Boys’, a much respected Radar trainee group, which still meets

(Names marked with an * are authors in this volume.)