

## Dr Laurie Piper



**Honorary Research Fellow**, CSIRO Agriculture and Food - Livestock and Aquaculture Program. First President Robb College JCR 1960.

BRurSc, UNE, 1962. PhD, University of Edinburgh, 1972.

Research and Research management career in CSIRO Animal Research Divisions from 1962 to 2004. Seconded to the CRC Program as Director of the CRC for Premium Quality Wool 1993-1998.

Recognised nationally and internationally in the field of quantitative genetics and sheep breeding. Research studies focused on wool production and quality, reproduction, parasite resistance and in more recent times on aquaculture. The results have made a significant contribution to the development of national breeding programs for improving economic performance in wool and meat producing sheep. Of particular importance has been Laurie's work in the area of major genes and, with Bernie Bindon, he will be remembered for identifying the Booroola gene in Merino sheep. This gene is a major gene affecting ovulation rate and litter size in sheep. The discovery changed the prevailing view of the nature of quantitative genetic variation and has been followed by the discovery of major genes affecting a wide range of economically important production and reproduction traits in all of the domestic livestock species.

The quality of Laurie's research achievements has been recognised by the award of the Helen Newton Turner Medal in 1995 for outstanding contributions to the genetic improvement of Australian livestock, and by the award in 1997 of the Cheilain Medal for contributions to the wool industry. He was the A B Chapman Memorial Lecturer at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 2000. He is an elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technology, Science and Engineering (ATSE), the Australasian Association of Animal Breeding and Genetics (AAABG) and the Australian Association of Animal Sciences (AAAS).

### 1. **What does Robb College mean to me now, why it is important to keep it going?**

Robb was the second men's college established at UNE and commenced operations in 1960. Under the leadership of Ben Meredith and all subsequent Masters it established a strong ethos of excellence in academic and sporting pursuits. This proud history, significantly extended in scope when women joined the Robb student body, is a rock which has anchored many successful careers in agriculture, business and academia both in Australia and overseas.

### 2. **Why supporting Robb Scholarships is a good thing to do.**

In my days at Robb the students were either supported by their parents or by Commonwealth or State Government Scholarships. These Government Scholarships have now been replaced by the HECS system which leaves many students with significant debts when they graduate. The Robb Scholarship Program eases the level of debt for at least some of the students and is therefore very worthy of our support.

### **A story from 60 years ago**

In 1960, not long after we moved into College a new pastime known as corridor cricket was initiated in the upstairs corridors. This involved bowling at speed with a tennis ball to a batsman located about 15 metres down the hall. Fieldsmen were located strategically along the corridor and of course there was a wicket keeper. One day the noise became unusually elevated and the upstairs resident tutor, Mr Donald Bewley, emerged from his room and received a painful blow to the groin region from a well hit straight drive. We were roundly admonished and the next day a notice appeared on the downstairs notice board advising the residents that “Robb College students will no longer be permitted to play with their balls in the corridor”.

### **A story from 59 years ago**

In 1961, at the request of New Rugby Union Zone administrators, UNE entered teams in the local competition from each of Robb and Wright Colleges. This development necessitated each of the colleges turning out in a new uniform different from the previous UNE strip. Bernie Bindon and myself were charged by Ben Meredith to develop a proposal for the new uniform (jerseys, shorts and socks). Following a late evening discussion and several trips to the Top Huts for female advice on colour schemes, we decided on a complicated design of stripes and V's in black and white. We proudly submitted this proposal to Ben Meredith for approval the next morning, He studied the proposal for fully 10 seconds and replied “Yes bottle green would be fine...”

Thus was born the Robb uniform of bottle green jersey, white shorts and bottle green and white socks.