



SYMPOSIUM TO CELEBRATE THE LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS OF
PROFESSORS EMERITI TOM PAULAY AND BOB PARK

**A salute to
Professor Emeritus Tom Paulay**

George Butcher

I first met Tom nearly fifty years ago, soon after he had completed his degree at Canterbury and joined the office of Don Bruce and Associates consulting engineers in Wellington. We found we both lived on the Western hills in the Lower Hutt suburb of Normandale. I came to know him for his great sense of humour, his fund of stories, his work ethic, and his robust love of life.

To go back a step, Tom arrived in New Zealand a few years after the end of World War 2. One of his early jobs was working in a track gang on the New Zealand Government Railways in the Oamaru region. It was here that he first experienced the feelings of being accepted in New Zealand. With his background of architectural degree studies in post-war Hungary interrupted when he had to leave the country in rather a hurry, he was accepted at the School of Engineering Canterbury and in terms of the old cliché ‘the rest is history’.

The years in Wellington helped Tom develop his self-confessed addiction to concrete structures, something which continues to this day. It also stimulated his interest in torsion in buildings which is also almost an addiction. Some of the projects Tom was involved in at that time include, the MLC building in Gisborne, the Sun-Alliance Insurance building in Featherstone St Wellington, and the Freyberg pool in Wellington, all of which had innovative structural features.

In the early 1960’s he joined the staff of the School of Engineering, moved back to Christchurch and Canterbury had to come to terms with the ‘Tom Paulay Style’. Students of that period still recall the Drawing & Design Workshops where they were subjected to a furious and relentless two hour lecture which necessitated spending the rest of the period recovering from the onslaught! Graduate students recall Tom as a genuine father figure who became a grandfather figure when marriages occurred and there was a likelihood of offspring.

Tom has always regarded himself as a practising engineer. In a moment of madness I once called him an “Academic” in a letter This drew an immediate, vigorous, if not furious denial. I will not make that mistake again!.

A very close relationship has existed in New Zealand over many years between practising structural engineers on the one hand and academics and researchers in earthquake engineering on the other. Many engineers and academics visiting New Zealand have expressed their envy that such a close relationship exists. I must admit that it all seemed perfectly natural to me and I took it for granted until I went to Mexico as a member of the NZ earthquake reconnaissance team after the earthquake in 1985. While the size of the profession in NZ is undoubtedly a factor, and others have played their part, Tom Paulay and Bob Park by their personalities, approachability, enthusiasm, technical contributions, hands-on participation in workshops, and their continuing familiarity of current practice in design offices, have made such a close relationship possible and workable.

Tom's capacity to produce papers and to comment on papers and articles does not seem to have diminished. I am filled with awe and admiration for the papers that have appeared over recent years in the publications such as the SESOC Journal and the Bulletin of the NZSEE. I read with great interest and some nostalgia his latest paper on coupled shear walls in the March 2003 Bulletin.

Tom and I both have military backgrounds so it was natural we would discuss our experiences. I found his service in a Hungarian cavalry regiment in WW2 an intriguing and moving story. It is unfinished business and I look forward to more reminiscing when he has the time available.

After almost fifty years of friendship and comradeship I prefer to use the old fashioned but meaningful Australasian term cobbler in referring to my relationship with Tom.

In concluding, may I also salute Herta and the Paulay family for their love and support of Tom.

And finally Tom, I salute you, for what you have done for earthquake engineering and particularly concrete structures, not only in New Zealand, but throughout the World; for being an International figure in earthquake engineering and a loyal New Zealander; and on a personal note for being a good cobbler.