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Raymond John Chambers

The following is a eulogy delivered by Dean Peter Wolnizer of the University of Sydney at the funeral of Professor Raymond John Chambers. The recent death of Professor Chambers marks the end of a lifetime devoted to an understanding of the role of accounting and accounting information in human affairs. He was the foremost accounting theorist of his generation, and contributed significantly to the history of the development of accounting thought. His written work remains as a permanent reminder of the need for accounting theory to support practice, and an enduring influence on the work of accounting scholars and practitioners. The Academy has lost one of its most significant members. It is hoped that a fuller appreciation of Professor Chambers will be published in a future *Notebook or Journal*.

Tom Lee

Eulogy delivered at the funeral of Raymond John Chambers 17 September 1999

by

P. W. Wolnizer

Born on 16 November 1917 in Newcastle, Australia, and educated at Newcastle Boy High School and The University of Sydney, Raymond John Chambers will be remembered with great respect and affection as an eminent and engaging accounting educator and scholar. A university scholarship enabled him to enroll as a part-time student in economics; he graduated in 1939. After 10 years of experience in government, commerce and industry, he joined the staff of the School of Management of the Sydney Technical College and devised what was possibly Australia's first program of management studies.

In 1953 he became the first full-time lecturer in accounting in The University of Sydney and was appointed to the University's first Chair of Accounting in 1960 - a position he occupied with great distinction for twenty three years until his official retirement in 1983. He continued to serve his University as an Emeritus Professor with dedication; and, as Adjunct Professor, contributed mightily to the academic work and professional development of colleagues in Deakin University over a decade from 1989.

During his career, he was invited to be a visiting professor in twelve leading universities.

Professor Chambers wrote a dozen books and well over two hundred articles, monographs and reports on accounting, financial management and law which have been published in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Europe, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. As an internationally renowned expert on accounting and financial management, he has for more than 50 years challenged the conventional thinking about accounting matters. Importantly, those contributions were not made in isolation from the problems of the work-a-day commercial world, for throughout his illustrious career he was in demand as a consultant to business firms, government agencies, professional organizations and educational institutions.

In the hope of eliminating observed defects in accounting practice, he set out to devise an accounting based on up-to-date money equivalents of assets and liabilities and income calculated in dated real terms: he called the system "continuously contemporary accounting," known internationally by the

acronym CoCoA. For that rigorous, scholarly work, Ray Chambers earned the degree of Doctor of Science in Economics of The University of Sydney, was awarded a gold medal by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, received three citations from the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, and was elected as a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. While its general thrust remains controversial, many elements of CoCoA have been, and continue to be, absorbed into accounting doctrine and practice, and taxation and other laws requiring the determination of wealth and income.

In 1976, Professor Chambers became the first person from outside North America to be appointed as the Distinguished International Lecturer in the United States by the American Accounting Association; and, in 1991, to be awarded the most prestigious award of that Association - the Outstanding Accounting Educator Award. In the same year, he was inducted into the Accounting Hall of Fame in the Ohio State University. For his service to commerce and education, particularly in accounting and business management, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1978.

Internationally honoured and respected by academic and practising accounting communities alike, Professor Chambers was one of the very few academics to head a major professional accounting body. He served as an officer of his professional association, the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, for some 15 years, was its National President in 1978, and was honoured as a life member in 1979. The motto of the Society is 'integrity' - a quality personified with dignity and grace by Ray Chambers in his intellectual, professional and personal pursuits and conduct.

One of the early academic accountants in Australia, Professor Chambers was elected as the Foundation President of the Accounting Association of Australia and New Zealand in 1960, made a life member

in 1983, and in 1996 received that Association's inaugural award for outstanding contributions to the accounting research literature. Always seeking to enrich the dialogue between academic and practising accountants he established the Sydney University Pacioli Society in 1962. In 1965 he became the founding editor of *Abacus* - Australia's leading international academic journal of accounting - and led the development of that journal as editor until 1975, and supported it as consulting editor since then.

Several of Professor Chambers' students now hold professorial chairs in Australian and overseas universities. Three of those universities have conferred upon him an honorary doctorate - of Science (by the Universities of Newcastle and Wollongong) and of Laws (by Deakin University). Over twenty six years, it has been my much treasured honour, great privilege and pleasure to be Ray's student and colleague - but most of all his friend. For Ray Chambers was far more than a great Australian, inspiring teacher, internationally eminent scholar, and highly esteemed colleague. He was a visionary whose ideas and ideals will yet beget the renaissance of accounting; whose personal strength of character and integrity will be the guiding spirit for many of his students and colleagues; and whose human love, passion and loyalty will abide forever in the hearts of his wife, family, and those of us who loved and respected him.

To his wife Margaret, daughters Margaret and Rosemary, son Kevin, grandchildren and all family members, I wish to convey to you the heartfelt sympathy and understanding of all here gathered - and, indeed, of the dozens of colleagues and friends of Ray who have expressed that wish this week from all around the world. In the words of St. Paul to those who mourn "May the God of all comfort give you His peace which passeth all understanding."

Ray, we thank you and we thank God for you.