Physics & International Science School Alumni

November 2009

The University of Sydney
School of Physics

Alumni UPDATE

• Physics Solves a Murder

• News from the Alumni Council

• Farewell to Dean of Science

Dates to Remember

17 Nov Graduate Connections Breakfast
at the QVB, 455 George St. Sydney
with Prof. Andrea Hull AO speaking
on the arts. For more info or to
purchase tickets ($45 for alumni &
uni staff $50 for guests) visit:
www.usyd.edu.au/alumni/breakfast

19 Nov Evidence for Murder Free
Public Talk. Full story page 2

25 Nov Under the Radar Book Launch
– the story of Ruby Payne-Scott
the world’s first radio astronomer
and an alumna of the School of
Physics. RSVPs essential to
a.muir@physics.usyd.edu.au.
6pm-8pm The Great Hall, Main
Quadrangle. This is a free event
supported by the School of
Physics, CSIRO and The
Women in Science Project.

ALUMNI COUNCIL Dr Diana
Londish, Physics Representative

The University of Sydney Alumni Council membership comprises 36 members
elected by graduates on a Faculty basis), five Fellows of Senate and nine
members of executives of alumni associations/chapters. Prior to 2006 the Alumni
Council was known as the Standing Committee of Convocation. In 2006, as well as
changing its name, the Alumni Council began developing a strategic plan. Central
to this was establishing a mission statement: namely that the Alumni Council should
play a pivotal role in building a life-long partnership between the University and its
more than 225,000 living alumni worldwide, in order to reach, engage and represent
them in the life and work of the University. A valuable new tool in attracting and
maintaining engagement by all alumni is the recently launched Alumni Online, a
new University of Sydney alumni online networking community. If you are not
already registered, go to www.alumni.sydney.edu.au and start connecting!

Key issues of alumni engagement with which I have been involved are the Lost
Alumni Sub-committee and development of ideas to implement a mentoring
program. Visit the Alumni Online website and sign up as a mentor today. This is a
simple and very valuable way of “giving back” to the university. Developing a
program of mentoring in the Faculty of Science between new students and
Honours/Postgraduate students is a further aspect of the mentoring program that I
wish to pursue during my new term on Council. It has been my experience that
academically gifted science students often feel isolated, as they don’t always have
the time or the personality to socialise freely with other students on campus. Giving
such students a network of familiar, friendly faces amongst the older members of
the student body in their School will help smooth the transition to university and
ensure these talented students continue to excel at their studies.

Farewell to Dean
Professor David Day (left) will leave the University
of Sydney and his role as Dean, Faculty of Science, on 30 November
2009. Professor Day, a molecular biologist, has been an avid supporter of
science education and an advocate of women working in science. The
Women in Science project was an initiative fully endorsed by the Dean.
Professor Day leaves to take up the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Research, at Flinders University in South Australia. The School of Physics
& Science Foundation for Physics wishes him the greatest success.
EVIDENCE FOR MURDER

When he was initially contacted by police about the body of a young woman found at the notorious Gap at Watson’s Bay, Professor Rod Cross (pictured above with detectives and prosecution lawyers) concluded that it was more than likely a suicide. It was only when the late Caroline Byrne’s father, Tony Byrne, insisted that her boyfriend, Gordon Wood’s story was too inconsistent that the police re-opened the case. Cross once again was brought into investigate. He still thought she jumped, until he was advised by the police that they had given him the incorrect landing point. The correct landing position was five metres further out. “There’s no way she could have jumped a fence-on a dark night at that particular part of the cliff. And, given her landing position she would have needed to dive head first.” Cross, used female volunteers from the Goulburn Police Academy who dived and jumped as fast as they could into a pool and their speeds were measured. “We used women of the same height and weight as Caroline (who was a model). It became evident that the only way that Caroline could have landed so far out was to be thrown by someone.” Wood denied any foul play and spent years in the UK evading justice. That changed when Australian police swooped on his London residence bringing him home to face court. The physics evidence proved conclusive and he was found guilty of murder. Evidence for Murder is Rod Cross’ book about the case. On Thursday 19 November from 6.30pm, The Footbridge Theatre, Rod will give a free public talk. Book your place now by calling 9351 3472 or outreach@physics.usyd.edu.au

GET CONNECTED: Did you know the University of Sydney’s Alumni Online community offers opportunities for mentoring and business networks? To find out more visit alumni and supporters at www.usyd.edu.au