

Professor Pat McKeown, OBE, FEng (1930-2026)

Announcement

It is with enormous sadness to report that **euspen** founder Professor Pat McKeown OBE, FEng has passed away at the age of 95. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his whole family, his wife Mary, his “boys” Jonathan, Jeremy and Nick, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Pat is widely acknowledged as the world leader in the research and development of high precision machine tools. For over 50 years, Pat was the Professor of Precision Engineering at Cranfield. He established the Cranfield Unit for Precision Engineering. CUPE became the World leading centre in the research and industrial development of high precision machine tools. Pat developed the “McKeown 11 principles of machine design” which has been used to train thousands of machine designers across the globe.

Pat’s research outputs are most strongly evidenced by the unique ultra-precision machines he oversaw for delivery to international blue chip companies and research institutes. Pat inspired numerous Cranfield spin-out companies, creating machine tool technologies having an enormous impact in the fields of microelectronics, astronomy, IC engines, large scale displays, UK national defence and more recently quantum devices.

He gained significant national and international recognition. Pat was awarded the Society of Manufacturing Engineers’ Frederick W. Taylor Research Medal in Philadelphia (1982), Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Engineering (1986), the Thomas Hawkesly Gold Metal by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (1987), an OBE in the Queens New Year’s Honours List (1991), the Faraday Medal of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (1999), the International Prize of the Japan Society for Precision Engineering (2003), the Georg-Schlesinger Preis from the State of Berlin (2006), the James Clayton Prize of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (2007) and the ASME / SME M. Eugene Merchant Manufacturing Medal (2009) and the General Nicolau award of CIRP (2019).

Pat was elected as a full member of CIRP (International Institute for Production Research) in 1974. He chaired STC “Me” (metrology), and with distinguished colleagues he guided its development into STC “P” (Precision Engineering). Pat chaired the UK organising committee for the CIRP General Assembly held in Harrogate in 1983 becoming the President of CIRP in 1988.

He was awarded Life Achievement Awards from the Japanese, the American and the European Societies for Precision Engineering. Pat was awarded Hon DSc, from both the University of Connecticut and from Cranfield University.

Those that knew Pat would recognise him as a charismatic gentleman who was both determined and approachable. In technical debate he was firm, clear and direct whilst always being polite. Debates were constructive learning opportunities and the basis for future engagements.

Pat made friends across the globe from the west coast of the US to the east coast of Japan. He was a proud British gentleman having a very broad international perspective. He was at home with the enterprise of the USA as he was with the methodical focus which he recognised in Japan. Pat was an enthusiastic European. He celebrated in the cultural breath of Europe. Early in his career he worked for the Société Genevoise d’instruments de Physique in Switzerland prior to becoming the Director of its UK factory.

His friendly and determined character can be recognised in the founding of **euspen**. During a lunch time break at a CIRP meeting, Pat and his friends, Professor Manfred Weck (Aachen), Dr Horst

Kunzmann (PTB) and Professor John Corbett (Cranfield) discussed whether a European precision engineering society should be formed to complement that of Japan (JSPE) and the USA (ASPE). From that lunch time discussion and an approach to the European Commission, the seeds of establishing **euspen** were sown. With engagement of leading Professors including, Ekkard Brinksmeier, Marc Bonis, and Alessandro Balsamo, over 80 companies were engaged to support the creation of **euspen**. Its first international meeting at Bremen was held in 1999 chaired by one of Pat's great friends Professor Ekkard Brinksmeier.

With 25 international conferences under its belt, **euspen** would not be here today if it wasn't for that friendly lunch time discussion. Many of Pat's friends went on to serve **euspen** as President, a commitment of six years. Pat's active role within **euspen** as an honorary council member and mentor to the past and present Chief Executives (Dr Deborah Corker, Dr Theresa Burke, David Billington and Dishi Phillips) was a special honour; sprinkled with laughter, grace and gentle, persuasive suggestions.

It is with deepest sadness from the whole **euspen** team that we publish this announcement.

We recognise Pat had a global network of colleagues and friends and would invite each of you to send in your memories so that we can share these with his family.