

PROFESSOR EMERITUS PETER NUMA JOUBERT

Professor Peter Numa Joubert has had a long and distinguished academic career. He was first appointed a lecturer in Mechanical engineering at the University of Melbourne in 1953, specializing in fluid mechanics. In 1954, he visited MIT where he built and tested high-speed catamarans in a towing tank. When he returned to the University of Melbourne he was responsible for the construction of many wind tunnels and supervised much of the initial research conducted in the fluid mechanics laboratory – mainly in smooth and rough wall turbulent boundary layers. He has also designed innovative wind tunnels such as a rotating wind tunnel to investigate the effects of rotation on the evolution of turbulent boundary layers. In the early years, Professor Joubert recognized the importance of fundamental research in fluid dynamics and encouraged distinguished academics such as Professor George Batchelor to visit the University of Melbourne. He also stressed the importance of publishing in quality journals and the impact of citations, long before the use of the ISI Scientific Citation to measure the importance of research publications. Peter laid the foundation for many successful research programs at the University of Melbourne and it is his inspired vision, which has made the Walter Bassett Aerodynamics Laboratory an internationally recognized center for fluid dynamics research.

Peter Joubert was a World War II fighter pilot and saw the role that seat belts could play in saving lives while on active duty in Papua New Guinea. This led him to be widely sought out as a consultant on road safety issues, and he often acted as an expert witness in road accident cases. He has been an advisor on road safety to the commonwealth and state governments. He chaired many specialist committees with surgeons and is credited with being the instigator of legislation leading to the compulsory use of seat belts in motor vehicles, now adopted in all major countries, and proven to have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. He was awarded the Order of Australia in 1996 for his contributions to road and yacht safety.

Peter Joubert is also well known for his yacht designs and there have been more than a hundred yachts built to his designs. He has been an annual competitor in the Sydney to Hobart race for many years and, mercifully, survived the storm of 1998. In 1993, he was awarded the Commodore medal of the Cruising yacht Club of Australia for outstanding seamanship after his crew rescued eight survivors from a sunken yacht at night in a strong gale.

Peter has authored over a hundred scientific papers, including 24 papers in the Journal of fluid mechanics and 10 papers in the Journal of Ship Research. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. He was awarded the AGM Mitchell medal by the College of Mechanical Engineers in 2001.

Peter Joubert retired in 1989 but has continued his research as an Emeritus Professor at the university. His recent work includes the study of separating flow about a submarine body while engaged in a turning manoeuvre. He has also been advising the Department of Defence and senior naval officers on the shape of the new hull for the Collins class submarine.

This award is to be made to Peter Numa Joubert for his outstanding contribution to the Engineering profession and engineering research.