

David honoured Muriel's passing

THE death of David's wife Muriel helped inspire one of the state's leading philanthropists to donate to the cause of medical research.

David Gunn was born to Ron and Ella, his father a marine engineer.

With the outbreak of war Ron, who was a reservist, joined the Navy, and the family moved to Melbourne to be with him. David became injured to shifting to new schools. At a school in Ivanhoe, he was handed a slate board and chalk where previously he had graduated to pens and inkwells.

In the 1950s, David joined the Long Range Weapons Establishment and worked on the Canberra bombers' release mechanism at Woomera.

He worked in various engineering jobs, including at the University of Adelaide, while trying to complete his degree.

He had met his wife Muriel, a teacher, at a table tennis club, but when she contracted pneumonia, he shelved his study plans to look after her.

When she recovered, the two headed off for Britain in the search of work and adventure.

They lived in poverty in Earl's Court in London until Muriel was offered a teaching position at a school in Edinburgh.

David was taken on as a maths teacher on the strength of his engineering studies.

He also promoted the cause of philanthropy to the wider community

When they returned to London in 1965, they again searched fruitlessly for worthwhile employment.

One day they were caught in sleet and took shelter at the entrance to Canada House. They went inside for the warmth and soon found themselves being offered emigration to Canada.

For the next seven years, they lived and worked in Montreal. While they loved the lifestyle, the harsh winters - one year, instead of shovelling snow from the pavement David had to shovel snow from their room - convinced them to return to Australia.

In Canada, David had been introduced to spray-on polyurethane foam as a new form of insulation on an engineering project, and decided that it could be adapted for use here.

They established their business in Parafield Gardens. David was forced to take extra jobs and had to use the local pay phone to arrange business meetings.

He finally won industry endorsement when Yalumba hired him to insulate a wine storage warehouse. Soon all the wineries wanted the new



MILESTONES

DAVID RONALD IAN GUNN

Philanthropist

Born: March 31, 1934; Semaphore
Died: May 9, 2017; Goolwa

Education: University of Adelaide

Achievements: Successful entrepreneur, major donor to medical research in SA

Family: David and Muriel had no children

material, while a successful trial at the Lenswood Cold Stores opened up a new market in fruit storage.

The Gunns prospered. However, in 1980, Muriel was diagnosed with brain cancer and died after a short illness.

David decided to set up the Muriel Gunn Medical Research Trust Fund and donations began flowing to the cause of neurological research.

While David was modest

about his efforts, saying he simply asked his accountant how much money was available each year, his decisions on donations were carefully targeted across research institutions in SA.

He was up to speed on research and also promoted the cause of philanthropy to the wider community.

In particular, he felt that private individuals and companies had an important role

to play in supporting good causes, and that big and prosperous Australian companies should dedicate a slice of their profits each year, whether their particular interest lay in supporting the arts or science.

In all, David donated well over \$2 million to neurological research, with specific gifts including \$500,000 for a neuro-surgical microscope at Flinders Medical Centre and grants to many organisations, notably \$1 million to the SA Health and Medical Research Institute.

Other beneficiaries include the NeuroSurgical Research Foundation, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Research Fund, the Australian Brain Foundation, the Bone Marrow Registry and the Hanson Centre for Brain Research.

It is understood that the bulk of his considerable fortune will also go to SAHMRI.