

G J (Geoff) Missen

Geoff Missen was born on 27 August 1935, in Sydney. He died on 30 May 2018 at Port Willunga, South Australia, after a long battle with cancer.

Geoff was a student at North Sydney Boy's High School, a selective state school, and in his final year he topped the state in Geography. He then studied at The University of Sydney, completing an Honours Degree in Geography. He proceeded to complete a Diploma of Education at Sydney Teacher's College in 1957. In 1959, he joined the exodus of young, intellectually ambitious Antipodeans and went to the University of Wisconsin where he completed an MSc in Geography. He then moved to the University of Washington and enrolled in a PhD program.

After two years at the University of Washington Geoff took up a Commonwealth Scholarship and enrolled as a PhD candidate at the University of Malaya as this enabled him to undertake more easily the field work he needed to do for his research on the land tenure of rural Malays in Selangor. As his Commonwealth Scholarship was due to expire in April 1962, he successfully applied for a lecturing position in the Department of Geography at the University of Melbourne, a position which he took up in May 1964. He was promoted to senior lecturer in 1972, and retired in 1996.

Geoff maintained his interest in South East Asia as a researcher and teacher throughout his career, an interest that later morphed into studies of the political economy of development and underdevelopment. Although his PhD at the University of Malaya was never completed—a situation that used to occur all too frequently when new, full-time lecturing jobs were started before the PhD thesis was fully written—he maintained his research and publication activity and was a regular participant in international forums and conferences. He was the author of the then-influential *Viewpoint on Indonesia: A Geographical Study* (Melbourne: Nelson) in 1972, which is still being cited in the 2010s; (with Rutherford and Logan) of *New Viewpoints in Economic Geography* (Sydney: Martindale Press) in 1966; and of numerous papers and commentaries (he was a very early contributor to *Antipode*).

Geoff was a generous and incisive supervisor of honours, masters, and PhD students. As the only member of the then-tiny Department of Geography at Melbourne with an interest in political economy, Geoff was in high demand. A measure of his intellectual flexibility and generosity was shown when he agreed to take over as PhD supervisor for Michael Sofer whose research was being carried out in Fiji. Michael's original supervisor left the university and Geoff took up the role, despite having no experience of Fiji. Michael, now Professor of Geography at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, reports his association with Geoff: "He extended himself beyond the usual supervisory role, by increasing his knowledge of my research area. He spent endless hours assisting and guiding me through the different stages

This is the author manuscript accepted for publication and has undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: [10.1111/1745-5871.12403](https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12403)

of my thesis, as well as assisting me to master the academic format of the English language. Geoff's contribution to the success of my thesis will never be forgotten."

Once the Melbourne Department of Geography began its modernisation program back in the mid-1980s, Geoff was the only member of the existing research and teaching staff in human geography who took an interest in the kinds of critical human geography then being promoted – which at that time in Melbourne principally embraced geographies of political economy and feminism. He became the leading intellectual driver of the first year foundation subject, *Famine in the Modern World*, a subject that, more than thirty years later, is still taught in the School.

At the University of Malaya he met Jennifer Thomas; they were married in 1962. Geoff and Jenny had two daughters, Kirsten and Katrina, who both now live in Adelaide.

Geoff was a keen and talented sportsman. In Sydney he played for the Gordon Club first grade rugby union team, and in Melbourne he coached (and sometimes played) for the Harlequin Club. The Harlequins visited Sydney in 1971 to play Gordon, and the history of the Club records 'Geoff Missen, a superbly fit athlete, surprisingly leaving the field mid-way through the first match because he felt tired'. His wife Jenny explained that he actually had concussion! By the 1990s, he was reduced to bemoaning the skill of the Wallabies; goodness knows what he would have made of the current team.

Geoff was a creative person, and throughout his life he sketched and painted. He left behind a number of sketch books, each one labelled with the year. They are a record of his life and the places he visited, and show his talents as a cartoonist. Not surprisingly for a geographer, many of his sketches and paintings are landscapes, some of the places he visited, but he also drew and painted people, especially family. He painted until the end of his life, and his last completed work was displayed at his funeral. Geoff is also remembered by his family and friends as an excellent cook, a garden and interior designer, a piano player and a lover of music from jazz to classical.

In 1999 Geoff and Jenny left Melbourne to settle at Port Willunga, south of Adelaide, where he remained until his death in 2018. Here he made a garden, designed a kitchen, and created a painting studio. Geoff is survived by his wife, Jenny, their two daughters, a grandson, a great-granddaughter and a great-grandson.

The distinguished American Geographer and Historian Professor Rhoades Murphey, Geoff's PhD supervisor at Washington State, made this comment about him: "He is a person of genuine intellectual imagination and great energy, and an outstanding lecturer. He is quick without being facile, and thoughtful without being indecisive." Murphey was right.

Ruth Fincher
Michael Webber
Brian Finlayson
Alaric Maude



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