

Distinguished Professor Lee Parker: a biography

Abstract

Distinguished Professor Lee Parker was inducted into the Australian *Accounting Hall of Fame* in 2020. He has made a significant contribution to interdisciplinary accounting research through his role as joint founding editor of the *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, his prolific publications, his periodic Qualitative Research Colloquia and exemplary mentoring. Narrative research conducted with an oral history approach drew on interviews with Lee, his colleagues and family members. Lee's story highlights how his willingness to learn from others, grasp opportunities, reflect and adjust, as well as his generous, giving spirit have contributed to his considerable global influence. Understanding his philosophies and motivators provides a rich canvas for researchers wanting to interpret his many publications. His story also provides insights and inspiration for those interested in an academic career and leadership.

Keywords: academic; accountant; biography; mentoring; mentors

Introduction

Lee Parker's academic career has been prodigious, spanning in excess of 45 years ... As an early researcher in the interdisciplinary accounting movement, he has developed a reputation for prominent leadership of key developments within this community. (The University of Melbourne, 2020b)

Distinguished Professor Lee Parker is well known amongst accounting scholars globally as the joint founding editor of the *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal (AAAJ)*¹, along with James Guthrie. At the time of writing, the journal is now in its 34th year of publication. In 2020, Lee was inducted into the Australian Accounting Hall of Fame which honours accountants whose achievements have 'been significant and whose impact on the discipline has been profound'² (The University of Melbourne, 2020a). Shelton and Jacobs (2015) argue that, due to the uniqueness of the award, such inductees are worthy of biographical study. Lee has received numerous other awards and recognition. For instance, in 2004, Lee received the Hourglass Award of the Academy of Accounting Historians (American Accounting Association, 2020). In 2016 he was awarded Hall of Fame membership with the Australasian Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting. He was also a founding member of the Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research at the University of St Andrews, in Scotland.

This paper takes readers on a journey that reveals a personal look at Lee's life and career from graduating university to becoming world renowned in the sphere of interdisciplinary accounting research and beyond. Academic life and particularly that of accounting academics has been a subject of ongoing interest to researchers (Carnegie and Napier, 1996; Watty *et al.*, 2008; Pop-Vasileva *et al.*, 2014; Bond *et al.*, 2021). An understanding of Lee's successful career was gained

through employing an oral history research method. The findings presented draw on interviews with the subject, his colleagues and family members.

The study reveals how Lee balanced and excelled in the various aspects of an academic career: teaching, research, administration and professional service. Mentors played a significant role in Lee's story (van der Weijden *et al.*, 2015) and he has been intentional in passing on the benefits of mentoring to others. Insights from this study will be of relevance to researchers in interpreting his many publications and other key contributions. Additionally, the study shows how Lee drew on his strengths and recognised and followed up on opportunities.

A chronological approach is used to relate Lee's career story, supplemented by a timeline providing a summary of his career and achievements. Lee's approach to work-life balance, his reflections on the changing academic landscape, the growth and acceptance of qualitative research and the values that have driven his career are covered in other sections. The paper ends with reflections and conclusions.

Method

To understand contemporary accounting, it is necessary to study the 'key personalities who have contributed to accounting development' (Carnegie and Napier, 1996: 21). This project is well suited to narrative research which focuses on the stories of individuals and how they see themselves and how others see them. Stories are gathered from different forms of data and

incorporate stories that occur in specific situations. They are analysed using a variety of strategies, including thematically. Often, they include turning points and transitions (Creswell and Poth, 2018) which are convenient for retelling past events and uncovering past facts. Historical events may be conceptualised as naturally unfolding narratives (Funnell, 1998). Czarniawska (2017) predicts that narratives will become more important in accounting research. They assist in understanding the world and are a most effective means of persuasion. Oral history is one of several approaches to narrative research (Creswell and Poth, 2018) and a means to generate new knowledge (Collins and Bloom, 1991; Hammond and Sikka, 1996). Its main aim is to acknowledge the 'agency' of the person who is being researched (Hammond, 2017) through an individual's reflections on the causes and effects of events (Plummer, 2001). Oral historians acknowledge upfront that they seek individual perspectives and their preconceptions shape their research (Hammond, 2017). The subjectivity of oral history is also its strength through providing otherwise inaccessible insights as a variety of perspectives are shared. Generalisability is not overstated and there are no claims that findings are complete or that absolute truth has been uncovered (Hammond, 2017).

In adopting a narrative research approach, I conducted a series of seven face-to-face interviews with Lee at his office at RMIT University, Melbourne, during 2019. Several follow up phone calls ensured clarification as this paper was developed and written. A further three Zoom interviews were conducted in 2021. In preparing for the interviews, I thoroughly reviewed Lee's curriculum vitae (more than 80 pages). After each interview with Lee, I listened to the audio recording in preparing questions for the next interview. I interviewed Gloria, Lee's wife of 30 years. Additionally, I interviewed several of his colleagues, his two current mentors and two of his

children. All interviewees signed consents to be interviewed and agreed to their names appearing in this paper. They were given an opportunity to read and comment on the draft of this paper prior to public circulation. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Each transcription was checked by listening to its audio recording and each interview was read several times and segments of text were coded according to various aspects of Lee's career.

Lee and I formally met at the Accounting and Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand conference held in Adelaide in 2009. He was my doctoral supervisor at the University of South Australia from January 2010 to June 2014. We have published two papers together (Daff and Parker, 2020; Daff and Parker, 2021). The positive experience of my doctoral project no doubt influenced me to highlight Lee's distinguished career and admirable traits (Daff, 2012). When Lee read an earlier draft of this paper to provide a fact check, he commented that I had 'portrayed him as a saint', so I followed his suggestion to interview his children and his two current mentors. While knowing Lee and working closely with him has influenced my telling of his story, it has also enabled me to ask pertinent questions, which indeed might not have been posed by someone who did not know Lee from this privileged position.

Biographies of accounting academics

Biographers of accountants have considered accounting academics who are inductees of the Australian Accounting Hall of Fame: Allan Barton (Shelton and Jacobs, 2015), Ray Chambers (Clarke *et al.*, 2019; Persson and Napier, 2014; Whittington and Zeff, 2001), Lou Goldberg (Parker, 1994), Reginald Gynther (Whittington and Zeff, 2001), Alex Fitzgerald (Goldberg *et al.*,

1996), Russell Matthews (Whittington and Zeff, 2001) and Edwin Nixon (Cobbin and Burrows, 2020). They have also studied other influential accounting academics: Robert Gibson (Carnegie, 2016) and Michael Gaffikin (Cortese and Wright, 2018). The current study is similar to these studies with one notable exception; aside from the study of Lou Goldberg, all of these studies have been undertaken posthumously. Only one of the 14 studies in the ‘Editors’ Choice: Accounting Biographies’ featured in *Accounting History* (Carnegie and West, 2020) incorporates interviews with the subject of the study (Bocqueraz and Walton, 2006). Samkin and Schneider (2014) suggest that research about accounting academics continues to be a fertile area for research. Undertaking biographies of leading accounting academics can assist in understanding how they have navigated and contributed to the ever changing academic and research landscape.

Historical background to Lee’s career

Lee’s career has spanned a time of substantial change in academia. The period is characterised by significant growth in the number of academic institutions and students enrolled³, along with an ongoing focus on positivist research by many accounting academics (Baker, 2011). Prior to the 1970s there were minimal scholarly accounting journals (Baker, 2011). However, in 1976 Anthony Hopwood became the founding editor of *Accounting, Organizations and Society* (AOS) and this journal helped move accounting research beyond economics and statistics (Chapman *et al.* 2009). Australian higher education institutions came to rely heavily on international students. Funding models changed and there was an escalating focus on the evaluation of research and teaching. The academic freedoms of the 1970s were replaced by monitoring, ranking and evaluation. At the start of Lee’s career, there were few journals publishing qualitative accounting research. In 1988 there

were 40 English language academic accounting journals (Zeff, 1996). By the new millennium, accounting academics were vocal in describing the stresses and pressures they faced in their workplaces as they struggled to meet research targets and balance teaching, administrative and service demands (Bellamy, Morley and Watty, 2003). Biographies of prominent accounting academics also reveal their struggles in promoting and establishing accounting as a discipline. While the number of accounting research publications grew over time⁴, accounting research using positivist approaches continued to dominate (Merchant, 2010). The universities whose accounting disciplines received the highest rankings in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) evaluations predominately used positivist research approaches (O'Connell *et al.*, 2020). Appendix 1 provides a timeline of Lee's career. The next section shows how Lee developed his interest in accounting.

Early career before academia

Lee's interest in accounting and business initially developed when he began working, during his summer holidays at the age of 14, in the ledger office of the Myer Emporium in Adelaide. He worked there for five summer holidays and developed an interest in business which led him to enrol in a Bachelor of Economics at the University of Adelaide. Lee was the first in his extended family to attend university. As part of his programme, he took some accounting subjects. His enjoyment of the subjects plus his prior interest in business led to his decision to undertake a major in accounting during his second year of undergraduate study. At the end of the same year, a friend asked him what he would do after university finished and suggested he 'ought to join one of those big accounting firms'. The next day, he rang the Adelaide office of Price Waterhouse and he was offered work there for the rest of the vacation. After completing his final year at university in 1969,

he returned to the firm full-time, working in the audit division. While securing his first full-time position was relatively easy for Lee, he has observed that he faced discrimination at the start of his career. In professional public practice accounting firms, those who had attended State schools were 'extremely unusual'. While 'the discrimination was unconscious', Lee felt he 'was definitely not part of the club'.

In his second year at Price Waterhouse, he 'hit a mini crisis point'. When Lee was advised of his salary rise, he commented, 'That's nothing and I don't seem to be getting much training'. Lee's response was not well received and he was called to a meeting in the partner's office. The partner said he would give Lee a job to test him. Lee concluded that he did not want to continue to work in such a culture. A colleague's husband worked in another firm and Lee secured a job there in 1972. During the same year, Lee and Susanne Townley were married⁵. Their friendship had blossomed through getting to know each other at school and church.

Starting out in academia to becoming a senior lecturer

During 1972 and 1973 Lee undertook part-time tutoring in first-year accounting at the University of Adelaide and he enjoyed the experience. Lee first developed an interest in teaching while in primary school. He recalls instances at school where 'the teacher had left the class to do something and I felt morally obliged to entertain the class at the back of the room – for which I got a thrashing from the teacher in the good old days'. Recollecting his first tutorial at the University of Adelaide to part-time mature students, Lee states:

I was so scared ... All the guys were older than me. They all acted terribly knowledgeable and sophisticated and my hands were shaking so badly, that I had to keep them under the tutorial table. But after about half-an-hour, I started to realise that they looked like they knew everything; but actually, they didn't know anything. And, I could tell them the moon was blue and basically, they'd have to believe me. So, then my hands stopped shaking.

Lee and Susanne wanted to travel and began exploring the possibility of working in Britain. They visited the university library at night and viewed the university calendars. Lee then handwrote letters to 15 British universities. A positive reply was received from the University of Glasgow. He describes his move to Glasgow in 1973: 'It was completely serendipitous. I knew no-one at Glasgow ... I just turned up.' Once he got into academia full-time, he realised that he 'really enjoyed performing ... and engaging and getting an audience reaction' and decided to continue in academia.

Lee's decision to initially pursue research was his understanding that 'if he was going to be a serious academic' he needed a Masters and wanted to do a research thesis. He discussed his first idea for his Masters topic with Professor David Flint (previously a president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland): 'invent[ing] new principles of accounting'. Lee reflects 'he let me down very, very kindly'. During his undergraduate course, Lee wanted to study a subject in Industrial Sociology, but he could not fit it into his programme. Using readings he found from the course, he sat in his Glasgow office reading them and 'having a wonderful time'. Some of his colleagues asked, 'What are you doing reading that? You've got to go and get a proper thesis topic.' His response was, 'I don't care anymore.' Douglas Briggs came past his office and said, 'Well, if you really like that stuff, you might as well read this' and gave him Hofstede's (1968)

Game of Budget Control. As he began reading, he realised he had discovered his topic and ‘almost nothing [was known] about the way managers react to budgeting’.

While working at the University of Glasgow, Lee attended the Methodist Church with his wife. At the University Staff Club one day, Lee recognised a man whom he had seen at church. At the next church service, he introduced himself to Professor John Eldridge. Lee said, ‘I’m trying to do this study about behavioural budgeting. Would you know anything about that?’ Later, Lee discovered that he was one of the most prominent and best published industrial sociologists in Britain. John replied kindly, ‘Well, I might know a little bit’ and then he invited Lee to his home and started building him a reading programme, which was ‘just out of personal interest in me’.

Teaching management accounting has been Lee’s specialisation. While at the University of Glasgow, he was initially horrified when told he would be teaching management accounting as it had been his least favourite undergraduate subject. However, Lee was working with Douglas Briggs who taught management accounting in an engaging manner that encompassed ‘managerial decision-making strategy, planning [and] control’. Lee found it fascinating and had a ‘great time teaching it’. It also became a research interest.

A major decision point about his academic career arose while at the University of Glasgow. At that time, in the mid-1970s, inflation was running at 25 per cent in the UK and Lee was ‘going broke’. While attending a British Accounting and Finance Association (BAFA)⁶ conference Lee met RH (Bob) Parker from the University of Dundee. Lee and his wife had calculated the salary

they needed to survive and Lee discussed this with Bob; he was offered a one-year contract at the University of Dundee, starting in 1974 (it was extended for a second year).

When Lee transferred to Dundee University, the ‘real start’ for Lee’s interest in research occurred, with Bob Parker as his professorial mentor:

[H]e started teaching me his research values, the philosophy of why we as academics do research. He connected me to Anthony Hopwood⁷. He sent me to some conferences and he also encouraged me to start thinking about publishing.

Lee says, ‘Bob put a lot of work into sitting with me, hour after hour over coffee, talking about values and our role.’ During his time at Dundee, Lee completed his literature-based Masters degree which ran to 511 pages. Lee and Susanne’s first child, Karen, was born in 1975 while they were at Dundee. After completing his Masters degree, Lee decided he wanted to be based in Australia, so the family returned there in 1976.

Upon returning to Australia, Lee took a lecturing position at Monash University in Melbourne. When Lee began as an academic staff member at Monash University, he was given the choice of teaching either management accounting or financial accounting; he chose management accounting. Lee recalls the closing lectures in second-year undergraduate management accounting at Monash, jointly taught with Paul Sutcliffe. The lecture theatre would be packed out, with only standing room available. Many students who were not enrolled in the subject attended because the lectures had gained a reputation for lots of frivolity, including all sorts of jokes, as Lee recounts:

I can remember students starting to throw paper planes while Paul was at the board ... [but] we didn't react. I would just walk over and pick up the planes and line them up on the bench. And then at some point, I'd throw them all back.

To get students' attention and keep them engaged, Lee 'used every trick' he could envisage. He had seen New York University's Professor Joshua Ronen, walking up and down the aisle of the lecture theatre as he gave a lecture and Lee tried that approach too. Lee emphasises the importance of 'personal engagement with students ... [The students] always laughed with me because they knew I was quite happy for them to laugh at me'. Lee introduced videos, guest speakers and did 'a lot of storytelling'. He found his consulting work was valuable in supplying a 'wonderful reservoir of anecdotes, examples, cases and stories' that could be anonymised and used in lectures. Many of his 'student evaluations made direct reference to the power of the consulting examples which they found, not only instructive; but they found really exciting and engaging'.

While at Monash, Lee commenced his doctorate in 1977 and he was the second person to enrol in an accounting PhD at Monash. In the same year, Lee and Susanne's second child, Jay, was born. He studied for his doctorate on a part-time basis while working full-time. The PhD started with investigating 'the underlying reasons why managers behave dysfunctionally in response to budgets'. As he did his literature review, he found 'that there was an over-emphasis on control compared to planning'. Through his literature review he discovered numerous concepts of control and his supervisor advised him to explore further, leading Lee to write 70,000 words. It was given to the economic historian, Keith Trace, who concluded Lee had 'a potential history PhD'. The topic morphed to address the 'development of control concepts in management and accounting research over a 100-year period'. Keith helped Lee restructure and refocus his thesis and became a supervisor for a time; the other supervisors were Mike Knowles and Graham Pierson.

Susanne and Lee's third child, Rhys was born in 1978. Rhys and Karen recall fond memories of their childhood times. Rhys recounts, 'He was the Dad who would wrestle on the ground. He would get injured first. He had that teenage mentality of the indestructible teenager ... he would keep coming back for more.' Lee would make it a priority to come home from work in time to take the children to the park. Rhys reflects that he wanted to maintain 'strong family relationships' and have 'an element of non-work in his life'. Karen agrees, commenting on the trips to the park, 'I suspect that he was taking intentional moments with us; he was always connecting with us.' The main family holidays were returning to Adelaide for Christmas periods and staying with relatives. There was an occasional camping holiday.

Karen comments that Lee's 'work was central to our lives, and we were all in on it in one way or another ... We would sit at the dinner table and listen to him speak about his work'. Although he worked at a frenetic pace, she never felt he was inaccessible. Karen recalls Lee working at his desk at home:

He had a chair set up by the desk, which we nicknamed "the watch-work chair"... It was velour with the studs around the outside; it had a spring base that you could rock back and swivel on. As a child, it was comfortable to sit in ... I would go and talk to him ... you could sit and read a book with him ... We would prattle away to him about all sorts of inane kiddie stuff ... We were always welcome to sit there and be present with him in the watch-work chair; we loved it. It was a special spot where kids fitted into his world.

While doing his PhD at Monash, Lee first experienced informal mentoring. Neil Lewis, a senior lecturer, was doing some research assistance work for Lee and took on a fatherly figure role:

When I was down, or the supervisors had beat me up, he would come and sit with me and say, 'There, there, you know, it'll be okay'. And he was fantastic for me; because he was an older person than me. He had a lot more experience.

Another person at Monash was Ian Urquhart, a senior lecturer, teacher and consultant, who did not appear to be interested in research. One day he stopped Lee in the corridor and asked, 'How's that PhD of yours going?' Lee mumbled a reply, 'Oh well. Oh yes. No, it's going – yeah, it's sort of going alright.' Ian invited him to have a cup of coffee to discuss it and Lee was surprised as to why he had made the offer. When they met, he asked Lee about his topic, what he had done in the last couple of months and what he was planning to do in the next month. Ian responded with 'Well, good, let's do another coffee then.' Lee explains that Ian became a 'disciplinary motivator':

I knew he cared. I have no idea to this day why he did. I owe him everything. Because every month I'd think ... I can't disappoint him. What am I going to say to him at coffee; if I haven't done this? I had better work.

While undertaking his PhD at Monash, Lee would take 'a holiday from the PhD' and would work on another project and have a paper published. He would then return to his PhD studies. His first refereed publication was in *Abacus* (Parker, 1976). Lee had 15 solo-authored published papers before completing two jointly authored papers, both with Neil Lewis and Paul Sutcliffe (colleagues at Monash) (Lewis *et al.*, 1984a; Lewis *et al.*, 1984b). The papers addressed reporting to employees and some funding was received from Coopers and Lybrand. Regarding receiving help in getting published, Lee says he 'just went and learnt by doing'. Now, he has in 'excess of 250 books, book chapters, professional journal articles and publications in almost all of the leading international accounting journals' (The University of Melbourne, 2020b). When Lee started his PhD, there were only a few accounting professors in Australia. They were 'writing textbooks ... there was hardly anybody to turn to who was an experienced research journal publisher'.

In 1979 Lee received his first award for his writing and it was from the UK Association of University Teachers of Accounting for best research published in Volume 9 of *Accounting and Business Research* (Parker, 1979). The quality of his writing has led to numerous high commendations and best papers awards. At High School, the subjects Lee enjoyed immensely were English Literature and English language. He did not like Mathematics and Science and reflects that ‘in some way, the writing and research really fitted my pre-dispositions’ and he acknowledges, ‘If you are a natural writer then, as an academic researcher, that’s a huge plus.’

Lee chose to take the qualitative research pathway because qualitative methods interested him far more than quantitative methods. It allowed him ‘to engage more directly with people in the field’ and he could research subjects that he ‘found to be a lot more important and much more appealing’. His attributes align well with the requirements for achieving success as a qualitative interdisciplinary accounting researcher. Conceptual and language skills are needed along with interpersonal skills because you are ‘dealing with people in the field at the coalface’. Empathy is necessary ‘because when you’re listening to people, or you’re reading what they wrote ... you need to try and put yourself in their shoes and try and understand from their perspective’. Good writing skills are essential as through the analysis and writing the findings, further discoveries are made. Learning to think conceptually is ‘being comfortable with dealing with theories, concepts [and] seeing patterns and relationships ... the big picture storyline’.

Lee's research interests have developed through various means. He describes himself as 'intellectually curious about particular issues and subjects'. Research interests are sparked as he observes 'certain trends or events happening in society' with an 'accounting-related issue'. For example, his current work on offices came about through noticing changes in the workplace, 'the movement to service industries away from manufacturing' and the city 'becoming the new multi-story factory of offices'. Ideas for research are also generated through 'reverse engineering' as this overcomes problems in gaining access to research sites. He suggests that people look at the organisations with whom they are already involved, sport, education, welfare, health, family and, using pre-existing connections, talk with people in those organisations and seek permission to undertake a research study. Non-profits have been the most accessible form of organisation as they 'tend to be more open and welcoming'. Once admitted to an organisation, there is an opportunity to observe the issues and find something significant to research. Lee has enjoyed and encouraged co-researching because 'it opens up new perspectives on a project, it brings in additional expertise [and] it's great fun to work on a project in a team'.

His research interests are particularly broad: social and environmental accounting; corporate governance; strategic management and management control; accounting and management history; communication in accounting; public sector accounting; non-profit sector accounting; qualitative and historical research methodology; the office; and university commercialisation and corporatisation.

In 1981 Lee was promoted to senior lecturer shortly before completing his doctorate in 1982. His second major decision point occurred while he was at Monash. After finishing his PhD, he understood that academic salaries were falling a long way behind the profession. Quite a lot of his colleagues were leaving academia to work in professional practice and commerce. Lee gave himself 'a 6-month moratorium period' to decide whether he would stay in academia and he reflects on his conclusion at the end of the six months:

I really, really liked being an academic ... With that decision came a second stage decision ... and that was, 'Well, if I'm going to stay in academia, and if I'm going to do what I want to do – and I'm not going to make my first million – then I'd better do what I really want to do regardless of the risks.' ... I want to do qualitative research on topics that really engage me and I have fun doing it.

Although there was a possibility that remaining a 'career senior lecturer' may not progress his career, once he had made his decision, he was determined to accept the decision and 'never look back'.

While undertaking a sabbatical at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1984, Lee gained another mentor. His host, Gary Previts, was the 'Premier Accounting History Professor in the US':

He mentored me enormously and set physical examples to me. I watched what he did, how he talked to people, how he worked his way around a conference.

During his time at Monash, Lee's first supervision occurred when he was given the job of helping a Masters student with major revisions. He says, 'I had never supervised anything in my life. So, basically, I was thrown in at the deep end.' Since then, Lee has supervised 26 higher degree

research students to completion, with two of his students receiving prizes for their theses: one received the University of Adelaide Medal and another received the University of South Australia Business School Best Thesis Award. Four of his students have become professors and four have become associate professors. Lee becomes very committed to the students and their projects and he likes to develop a one-on-one relationship with each student:

They're not some remote person ... I say to my PhD students, "You are a number one priority for me, compared to anything else that's going on in my institution. Here is my phone number. You call me – I don't care how small the question is – when you need me, you call me and you will get me; or I will call you straight back because you are my number one priority."

A structured approach is used with regular meetings and lots of feedback. He likes 'to be walking with the person step-by-step, all along the way'. Candidates trigger the meetings and then send some brief minutes within 24 hours of the meeting to ensure that there are no misunderstandings. Even though he has supervised numerous students, when they obtain their PhD, 'There's a great feeling of achievement and satisfaction.' He has won and been a runner-up for postgraduate research supervisor of the year awards. Jana Schmitz, a recently completed doctoral student, comments on his supervisory approach:

Lee has this really positive attitude ... He is always available. He always gives you the feeling that you can call him at any time ... he would always make time for you and makes you feel important. It doesn't matter whether you're "only" a PhD student or a professor ... Lee genuinely cares about others and often puts other people's needs first. In fact, I would describe Lee as very selfless. He definitely believes in something which triggers this very selfless and caring behaviour ... He criticises you in a constructive way and helps you to grow.

Before Lee will co-author a paper with a doctoral student, he likes them to convince him why his name should be on the paper and what work he will do to earn a place as a co-author and the value that he will deliver. He is quite happy with the students developing networks and new co-authors. In fact, he notes, ‘There are actually quite a few PhD graduates of mine ... [with whom] I never published.’

Lee chooses co-supervisors by finding others who have subject-area expertise along with research and PhD completion expertise. Some co-supervisors are chosen even if they are not necessarily experts in the topic as Lee can also mentor them. The co-supervisors can observe how Lee works with students and evaluate which aspects of his practices they would replicate and which they would change.

Professorship and beyond

Lee moved from Monash in 1985 to take up his first professorial position: Professor and Foundation Chair of Accounting at Griffith University. He was very aware of the key performance indicators that needed to be addressed to become a professor: teaching, research and administration. In order to focus on these, he did not undertake any consulting prior to becoming a professor. The advantages of being active in consulting are the professional stimulation it generates through engagement, networks and potential research sites. However, consulting needs to be managed as, if it grows out of proportion, it can impact teaching, research and university administration. Rather than accounting, Lee’s consulting is focused on strategy. When seeking promotion through the hierarchy, Lee felt he faced discrimination due to his background of

studying in Adelaide and working in Melbourne. The ‘rising stars’ of academia at the time were based in Sydney and Brisbane and he was regarded as an ‘outsider’. He observed ‘some consternation’ from his ‘peer group in Sydney’ regarding his seemingly fast appointment to professor.

While at Griffith, Lee was approached by James Guthrie to be a co-editor of the interdisciplinary accounting research journal *AAAJ*. James and Reg Matthew’s work on the *Social Accounting Monitor* had caught the attention of MCB University Press and they had discussed the possibility of a new academic accounting journal to address under-represented fields. The first issue was published in 1988. *AAAJ*’s story has been discussed in Carnegie and Napier’s (2017) study of 30 years of *AAAJ* editorials along with Lee and James Guthrie’s 30-year reflections of *AAAJ* (Guthrie and Parker, 2017). James and Lee faced significant resistance to the new journal and some academics refused invitations to join the editorial board because James and Lee were not well known and did not ‘have a track record’. There were also senior professors who held ‘the view that there were enough accounting journals’ and there was not a need for any more accounting journals. Some academics made derogatory remarks such as ‘*AOS* had already arrived’ and *AAAJ* ‘would merely publish their rejects’. However, as James and Lee’s proposal to MCB outlined how *AAAJ* was ‘filling a niche that was not being filled’ and there was ‘lots of room to do more in that space’ there was no pressure from the publisher to model *AAAJ* on US journals. The appointment to the *AAAJ* editorial board was Lee’s first editorial board appointment; since then, he has been on more than 30 editorial boards.

Lee describes *AAAJ* as his ‘super hobby’. James and Lee have assisted in the cultivation and wide dissemination of interdisciplinary accounting research through, not only the growth and prominence of *AAAJ*, but also through the establishment of such initiatives as the Asia-Pacific Interdisciplinary Research in Accounting (APIRA) conference in 1995 and its attached Emerging Scholars’ Colloquium in 2001 (The University of Melbourne, 2020b). Most years, since the inception of *AAAJ*, Lee and James have written detailed editorials that have had a significant impact on directions in accounting interdisciplinary research (Carnegie and Napier, 2017). Furthermore, *AAAJ*’s special issues have provided a forum that has encouraged new research topics and methodologies (Carnegie, 2019). James and Lee have been co-mentors to each other and Lee observes that they are both ‘big picture people’ who moderate each other⁸.

Susanne, Gloria and Rainbow Shum (*AAAJ* administrator) are acknowledged by Lee as being pivotal to *AAAJ*. On this topic, Lee comments, ‘We often forget the people at the administrative core of the operation. But they get to know a lot of people. They give you a lot of advice ... without them, there is nothing.’ Steven Ogden (a current mentor to Lee) observes, ‘Gloria is a great companion ... and she will be both supportive and frank with Lee.’ Karen Colebatch, Lee’s daughter, adds:

For Dad to achieve everything he has, he has relied heavily on that support [from Susanne and Gloria] ... He’s got a very creative, artistic strength to him ... The women in his life have been awesome at grounding him.’

In his third year at Griffith, the Vice-Chancellor appointed Lee as the Dean of the Business School. Describing his academic leadership approach, Lee says:

There are some decisions where I'll make it strategically because I think someone's got to bite the bullet and then I'll make sure I explain it to everybody, and I get their feedback. There are other decisions where I will put out a preferred scenario for consultation and advice ... I've been in situations where the things that I wanted to do [were put] to the vote, and I lost. Okay, fine. So, I'm a bit of a blend of the two things.

The administrative roles have been enjoyable because 'you can make things happen ... you can have a really direct influence on school profile programmes [and] people's careers ... I don't mind the cut-and-thrust of the committee and the sort of debate'. He observes that it is unusual to meet professors who enjoy teaching, research and administration as most people are usually more suited to and favour one or two of the academic roles. Rainbow Shum, the *AAAJ* administrator since 2003, provides some insights into working with Lee: 'He is very clear, very detailed ... very well organised ... very helpful ... [and] always giving good advice'.

After three years at Griffith, Lee was offered a professorial position at Flinders University in Adelaide, which he commenced in 1988. Several reasons prompted the move to Flinders: it was an opportunity to be based at his home city and Flinders was a young university, with 'a very strong research profile'. At Flinders, his research interests expanded as he 'metamorphosed ... [and] introduced quite a few management subjects ... [and became] very interested in strategy and corporate governance'. While at Flinders University, Lee was approached to be a pro-vice-chancellor at another university; this prompted Lee to consider whether he wanted to pursue an administrative role. Shortly afterwards, Lee met with Professor Ron Weber when they were both visiting the Nanyang University of Technology in Singapore. Ron challenged Lee to decide between the 'very real potential' of moving into senior university administrative leadership or

‘aiming to be a significant research and teaching professor’. At a second meeting with Ron, Lee chose the latter because he was ‘fascinated by the research’, he could choose the topics he wanted to investigate and as a teacher-researcher, he had ‘a lot more freedom’ in terms of where he went, with whom he associated and the conferences he attended. He would not have such freedoms as an administrator. While he admits that the salary he could earn as a university administrator is much more than he would receive as an accounting professor, he rarely thinks about it:

I’ve had absolutely no regrets and, in fact, my belief in the rectitude of that decision has grown and grown and ... [it is] even stronger now than even five years ago, because I’ve had so much fun.

In 1990, Lee became the first non-US person to become the president of the Academy of Accounting Historians. Garry Carnegie, a colleague of Lee, comments that the appointment indicated Lee’s significant contribution to accounting history and he describes Lee as ‘a trail blazer’.

Susanne, Lee’s wife passed away in 1991, after a courageous battle with cancer. Lee’s friend from school, Gloria Bonnett, reached out to offer her condolences. Their friendship was rekindled following their reacquaintance and Lee and Gloria married in 1992. Gloria had been working for more than 20 years when she married Lee. She had begun her career teaching Science and Mathematics and then moved into Telstra⁹, occupying a variety of middle management positions, including implementing computerised telephone accounting, computer coordination and market analysis. For 18 months prior to their marriage, Gloria had been working ‘two days a week in Adelaide and three days in Melbourne’. She tried to get full-time work in Adelaide after their

marriage but was not able to find a suitable position. Gloria had extensive experience in strategic planning facilitation and Lee put forward the suggestion of starting a consulting company. In addition to consulting, Gloria has supported Lee in his career while also maintaining her ongoing commitments, which include non-profit board and committee work and volunteering roles.

During 1995, Lee took on his longest ongoing Associate Editor position with the *Accounting Forum* journal, which he still holds.

In 1997, Lee left Flinders University as the university had gone through significant leadership change and lost a lot of the research momentum and a sizeable portion of accounting staff. An appointment was offered to Lee at the University of Adelaide as the Chair in Management in the School of Commerce. The appointment led him to teach management subjects which tied in well with his research interests:

It has always had a strong management edge; because I just find that important, impactful, engaging ... it's part of my cross-disciplinarity. You know, I keep running backwards and forwards between those two [accounting and management].

Concurrently, between 1998 and 2008, Lee was an Adjunct Professor at the Macquarie University Graduate School of Management. He developed and delivered a qualitative methods course for Doctor of Business Administration students in Sydney and Hong Kong. Lee enjoyed it immensely as he had the freedom to do as he liked within the broad boundaries of the key course objectives. The student evaluations were outstanding, with some classes giving a 'perfect score'. While he

was pleased with the results, Lee says, 'But I still didn't apply for a teaching award', explaining that:

If the students survey results were good – which they were – and if I felt like they were getting a good education, I was doing a good job; I'd rather spend the time on ... another piece of research and publish it.

Two influential mentors in Lee's life are clergy: Steven Ogden and Gillies Ambler. Deeper connection with each of them occurred while Lee was at the University of Adelaide. Gillies and Lee had known each other for a long time, and they met again as Gillies was embarking on his doctorate. Lee became a co-supervisor for Gillies' doctorate in 2002. Lee declares that both Steven and Gillies have been 'hugely significant in my life and my career'. He is often in weekly contact with each of them. The relationships thrive on frankness, with no-one being afraid to ask uncomfortable questions. Gillies outlines that he takes on three roles when mentoring Lee:

Life coach – focus – Lee's wellbeing ... work-life imbalance and mentoring by means of humour.

Spiritual director – focus – faith/spiritual life, relationships, meaning and spiritual wellbeing, exploring ways to love self.

Headmaster – focus – setting and grading 'student' Lee's homework ... supervision to achieve a reduction in Lee's overwork load and challenging Lee to help enhance his way of life.

Lee met Steven while Steven was a chaplain at Flinders University and later Lee became an unofficial supervisor for Steven's doctorate. One day Lee and Steven were speaking on the telephone and Steven said, 'I can tell you're pretty stressed', to which Lee agreed. Steven proceeded to say, 'You know, you need a spiritual director.' Lee asked him to explain the role of a spiritual director. After Steven explained that he was helping several business people, Lee asked

Steven if he would become his mentor. They met once a month for mentoring conversations between 2003 and 2008 with Steven playing a supportive role, being a sounding board and helping Lee to look honestly at himself. The mentoring involves identifying: ‘What are you on about, what are your values, what kind of person do you want to be and are you committed to implementing [those values in your life]?’ The key aspect is understanding who you are and what you are ‘going to do about it’. Steven comments, ‘I did that kind of work with Lee for a few years and he took off like a rocket’:

Lee always conducts himself with honesty and transparency; he’s an open guy ... who is grounded in a commitment to a Christian ethic and praxis of being honest and transparent, acting with integrity.

Steven was pivotal in Lee’s decision to purposely take a greater focus on mentoring. Lee outlines the conversation with Steven that prompted his decision to focus on mentoring¹⁰. Lee was relating the work pressure he was experiencing and said:

The trouble is, I’m trying to get the real work done. I’m trying to get these papers finished and this stuff done ... I’ve got all these colleagues coming in needing advice that’s really important. I don’t like to turn them down, so my day’s gone. I get to 6 pm and I begin to think, “Now, I’d better start the real work.”

Steven challenged Lee, asking, ‘Do you think maybe, at your stage of career, that actually the stuff you think is an interruption, is actually the real game? And that’s your big, huge value?’ Lee reflected on Steven’s comments and at their next meeting, he said, ‘I think you’re right and it really appeals to me.’ Over the next six months, Lee considered how he could take on the role of being a mentor:

That was a huge turnaround for me because that set me on the path [of mentoring] ... The mentoring work probably accounts for 75 per cent of my time.

In 2002, Lee's first grandchild was born. Lee has six grandsons. Both Rhys and Karen agree that Lee makes time for his grandchildren. Rhys explains:

He is well engaged with the kids; he enjoys getting together with them. He enjoys having conversations with them and taking great pride in ... their achievements ... He loves the fact that he can get on text messages ... He absolutely loves the grandkids.

James Guthrie partly influenced Lee's decision to leave the University of Adelaide in 2008. He had observed the 'huge working pressure' that Lee was facing and he suggested that there were alternative opportunities. Lee was appointed as a Professor of Accounting at the University of South Australia in 2008 and he was pleased to be working in a younger university with a fair degree of autonomy and a research brief, as well as returning to being an accounting professor. The desire to remain in Adelaide was fuelled by family and lifestyle reasons. It was agreed by the Head of School that Lee could focus on mentoring although initially the primary objective was for Lee to publish, however, Lee decided:

I needed to help other people publish and some of them, to get their PhDs ... So, I then expanded that role myself ... that was the first time that my role as a professor ... became entirely research development focused at the grassroots level.

In 2008 he also formalised the Qualitative Research Colloquium¹¹.

New university management, a diminishing research emphasis and budget cuts prompted Lee's decision to leave the University of South Australia in 2014. Lee was able to negotiate to maintain his Adelaide base and lifestyle along with taking 'a research leadership role' and he decided to accept the offer of a fractional professorial post at RMIT University (initially 40% and then increasing to 50%). Alongside Lee's RMIT position, he also holds a second fractional role as a research professor of accounting. His first concurrent position was at Royal Holloway, University of London and, since 2016, he has held a fractional appointment as the Research Professor of Accounting at the Adam Smith School of Business at the University of Glasgow.

When Lee commenced at RMIT, he had no classroom teaching responsibilities; instead, he had individual meetings with academic staff and PhD students. Lee says, 'My role at RMIT is exclusively research and research development and I'm in my sixth year and they seem quite happy.' Garry Carnegie was the Head of the School of Accounting at RMIT and put forward the suggestion to appoint Lee as a research mentor; such an appointment was unusual at the time as RMIT had not recognised such roles nor had there been fractional professor appointments. Garry explains why Lee has been highly successful as a mentor:

Lee's got a great mind. I think he's one of the most brilliant minds in the game, that is, in the accounting discipline. I think he's got great enthusiasm and commitment. He likes to help people, support people and treat people well. He becomes an adviser for a lot of people. He indeed works hard. He's quite committed. He's normally available when you're wanting him to be available and quickly.

Lee endeavours to get to know all the school staff. He speaks to people at seminars and school meetings also he knocks on people's doors and introduces himself. Garry expands on how Lee meets the staff:

He just tends to roam the school corridors. He meets people, and he can chat a bit, you know, lots of topics football, art, archery ... [and he] aims to be helpful. He doesn't sort of walk around like he's the boss, he comes across as quite friendly, amicable and he's authoritative. He's also across a lot of fields of research, which means he can mentor a lot of different people working in various arenas.

Lee recounts how at the outset of his appointment at the University of Glasgow, he outlined to staff the topics that he discusses: time management, addressing a referee report, reviewing drafts of research proposals, curriculum vitae design and interpersonal problems with colleagues. He finishes the list by saying, 'If you want to talk about the weather, we'll talk about the weather ... because you never know where that leads.'

The mentoring starts at the non-technical level, where Lee builds relationships by talking about general interest topics, then it moves to advice regarding technical matters. Email and internet chats are used by Lee to be 'available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year' and he gives 'very quick feedback'. Demand for appointments with Lee 'can get pretty high'. For example, at a visit to RMIT¹², Lee had 23 meetings in five days. Some people book an appointment for Lee's next visit while at their current meeting. After such marathon weeks, Lee notes, 'They really want me, and I enjoy the role. It's physically taxing, but at the end of one of these weeks, I feel an enormous sense of satisfaction.'

In managing his visits to universities to meet with staff, Lee tries to schedule back-to-back meetings for half of the day and leave the other part of the day free for emails and attending to other matters. He maintains a rigorous schedule by giving himself 'bits of breathing space', such as by generally not taking appointments beyond 5 pm and keeping a break at lunchtime. He declares, 'I was always a high energy kid. Even at pre-school kindie, they had trouble getting me to lie on my floor mat for the compulsory nap time!' Rhys (Lee's son) confirms that he has 'always been high energy [with an attitude of] ... don't hold back ... put yourself out there anyway'. In later years the high energy has not changed; it has just manifested itself differently into 'joking around [and a] boisterous personality'. He averages six hours of sleep per night.

Lee finds that often people want some specific guidance on how to respond to a referee report. While answering their questions, 'much deeper issues' are discussed. People frequently talk about 'how they're feeling and how they're operating and what's happening in life':

[The process of] goal setting and strategising often involves a lot more reflection on your core values; the rest of your life; where these fit ... What happens to you in your career, as we know, very often is very heavily influenced by what happens to you in your life, how you're approaching it; the other things.

Regularly the topics of careers and career moves arise during mentoring and Lee suggests setting a deadline to make a decision and once the decision is made to not look back, even if it is not what you were expecting.

Laura Maran became the Deputy Head of Research and Innovation in Accounting while Lee was mentoring at RMIT. As part of her role, she worked quite closely with Lee and she makes some observations:

His enthusiasm, and also his ability to motivate people not to give up, even when they are struggling with finding the right direction for their papers, when their target journal isn't really interested in their contribution or they have received very negative reviews ... He never let me down and he gave me the motivation to keep going and try different possibilities whenever a door was closed ... This resilience was one of the main things I learnt from him.

RMIT's research culture has been enhanced by Lee's contribution through 'the number of projects that were put forward and the number of co-authored publications'. Laura notes that she has benefited from his advice on how to be strategic and how to effectively conduct her role and exercise leadership. Steven Ogden also tells how he benefited from Lee's ability to analyse an argument and he has also helped with thinking about ways to structure the argument. He sums up Lee's mentoring by saying:

One of Lee's great skills is working with people, identifying what the problems are that they are wrestling with and helping them work out a strategy for dealing with them ... It is very unusual, Lee's ability to mentor in a way that is respectful, insightful and enables the person to flourish.

Lee provides some advice to early career academics seeking a mentor. He suggests meeting as many people as possible in your school and finding out about them through the internet. As you 'start to get to know people and they get to know you' often there will be one person where you both have some chemistry and a 'relationship will emerge and suddenly, you've got a mentor'. Additionally, there are advantages to looking for a mentor outside the university setting:

It doesn't matter who it is. It could be a friend. It could be a relative ... somebody that you've got chemistry with, that is, someone who seems to care whether you stand up or fall down. They can be a really good mentor. They don't have to understand anything about university at all. In fact, sometimes it's an advantage. Because then they can ask you quite perceptive ... 'dumb questions' which are really appropriate and help you think about who you are; where you are; where you're going.

While Lee has taken such an active mentoring role in the latter part of his career, he reflects that he could have done more along these lines in his earlier career, where he would have 'tried to pay more attention to the social fabric of the academic teams' that he was leading and given 'more attention to the mentoring of individual academic staff'. Lee desires to support collegiality and to redress the problems that he observes in universities where no attention is given to 'developing the social culture of their working teams'. Targets are given and workloads are increased without fostering 'social relationships, motivating people or psychologically supporting people'.

In 2016, Lee was surprised to hear that he was to become one of RMIT's first Distinguished Professors. Lee did not know that RMIT was establishing the title of Distinguished Professors and that behind the scenes, the 'Deputy Vice-Chancellor of research ... had analysed all the metrics of their top academics'. The honour, bestowed for five years, acknowledges and rewards sustained, outstanding performance and considers excellence in research outputs, grants, citations, higher degree research completions, collaborative partnerships and development of early career researchers and research students. At the start of 2020, RMIT had 17 Distinguished Professors.

Work-life balance

Readers may be wondering how Lee has achieved his extraordinary success and what does he do for relaxation? Christopher Napier, a member of the *AAAJ* editorial advisory board for more than 20 years, observes that ‘Lee has massive energy and juggles so many things at the same time.’ He is very objectives driven and once he sets a goal for a project or a paper, he does not walk away from it. Lee describes himself as ‘very output focused’ and a quick decision maker. Additionally, he is very oriented on day-to-day task completion and he sets lots of little objectives as he ‘almost force[s] things to get done like in an exam. You know, pens down in ten minutes.’ Generally, he does not work past 7 pm and then he relaxes. Work is put aside on Friday nights, Saturday afternoons and Sundays. The following provides an example of Lee’s thinking while at work:

I’m going to run until 6:30 [pm]. Now, I’m going to get these jobs done and by golly, I’ve got to get them done. Because I want to have my other times off ... So, I do put in the hours and I probably work a lot faster than people think ... there are times when I set proper formal deadlines ... But it’s much more at the micro level, I think that’s the secret of me getting stuff done.

Lee’s work-related enjoyment oils his productivity as he is having fun and is fascinated with a lot of the projects. In qualitative research, ‘Half of your discovery is in the writing process.’ The writing motivates Lee as ‘I know what my initial results are, but when I start putting the story together, I know I’m going to see things that I hadn’t seen ... I find that an exciting process.’

When asked how he achieves work-life balance, Lee responds with a laugh, ‘Gloria, mentor, has just given me several speeches [about it] in the last 24 hours.’ Gloria actively encourages him to take time out. Lee recalls a time when he was asked whether it was possible to have both love and

a high-level career and he responded without hesitation, 'Absolutely yes.' He speaks about Susanne and Gloria saying, 'They supported me ... they grounded me ... I would not be here without them.' They have helped him think about life values and look 'at things from outside the academic bubble'. While Gloria continually encourages Lee to have some relaxation, she observes that he is 'working harder now than even when he was ... employed full-time'. He has 'more and more projects that he wants to be involved in ... it's just that he's really interested in the work he does and enjoys it and it's his hobby'. Gloria admits that she knew that Lee was very busy, although she had no idea that 'he was such a workaholic' until their marriage.

Church attendance plays a significant role in Lee's life. He states, 'our religious belief system and our practice really sustain me', as he explains:

It's a community that actually cares whether I'm standing up or falling down. It's much more than a sporting club or anything like that ... I can't do anything. Nobody can find me ... I'm not going to answer the phone, or the email or the text. I can't answer people's questions ... I just have to sit there. So, even if it seems a busy place ... it's really like a meditative retreat. ... I want to be somewhere that feels completely different for a brief moment in time. I find that enormously healing and re-energising.

Gloria usually accompanies Lee when he travels and while they tend not to take longer holidays in conjunction with travel, they do try to do a little sightseeing on the weekends. They enjoy work-night events, such as attending concerts, theatre or the movies. As they travel so much for work, Gloria comments that Lee 'doesn't take holidays except for a couple of weeks at Christmas'. Around the home, Lee and Gloria share the cooking and cleaning. Lee has enjoyed cooking from when he first left home after completing his university studies. The couple are keen supporters of

the Port Adelaide Football Club. Steven Ogden comments, 'I think Lee and Gloria have a rich life, they do creative things together ... They seem to be able to stop what they are doing and have fun.'

Karen comments that Lee's poetry, creativity and humour help him to counteract his workaholic tendencies. She says, 'He's always loved music [and] plays the bagpipes ... He has done a huge number of tapestries and long stitches ... Those creative outlets are a spiritual experience for him.' Prior to starting his academic career, Lee authored a book of children's poetry (Parker, 1972). Lee's children recognise their father's passion for his work and his desire to contribute in his academic career. Karen observes that he has 'appreciated what has been given to him [and] ... he just wants to give ... He is not going to leave someone high and dry... He just wants to help people and he struggles to say "No"'. Rhys believes work-life balance is 'not something he [Lee] achieved, nor was it something he aspired to achieve' because 'he loves what he does'. Furthermore, Lee's work-life balance is 'not anything about work or life; it is the two merged together that result in your achievement'. Karen expresses similar sentiments saying, 'He is defined by his work, he is entwined in it, personally and professionally there is not a separation.' Rhys sees Lee's life focusing on 'interacting with people and sharing information' and when he 'sees good things happen' he views life balance coming from those achievements.

Lee's two current mentors also comment on his approach to work-life balance. Gillies has observed Lee on the path to burnout and while others might recover by resting, he is energised by interactions with others. Steven has encouraged Lee towards his 'more introverted side of music

and poetry and solitude'. He notes that Lee sometimes runs himself 'into the ground ... [However,] I do think he's learnt to allow more space in his life for grace'.

Lee's reflections on changes in the academic environment during his career

In the 1970s and 80s 'there was a lot of freedom' as only a small number of accounting academics were doing research. There were virtually no citation or journal ranking metrics. Lee admits he entered academia at a time when 'universities just couldn't recruit enough accounting academics'.

He reflects:

Those of us who wanted to pioneer into research fields had enormous freedom in terms of what we researched, how we did it, where we published and we were generally evaluated in an informal or qualitative way and we were able to build community and networks; even as a junior academic you could do that.

At the start of his career, Lee observed that other accounting academics did not understand why he wanted to do research. They viewed 'accounting academia as a professional teaching focus discipline', but that gradually changed. Accounting academics until the 1990s were 'very obsessed with not being recognised and appreciated by the university community' and this led to the 'obsession with the quantitative tradition'. Lee considers these beliefs continue because 'deep down there's a lot of professors who think that the other disciplines look down on accounting as not being a proper academic discipline'. The focus on quantitative science-based research is accounting academics 'proving to the rest of the community ... [and] themselves that they're fit and proper people to be an academic discipline'.

Gradually as the community grew and more people did PhDs, research became much more 'regulated and formal' and a PhD was required. Academics needed to publish in specific journals, write their papers 'in a specific way' and their work 'started getting counted'. The metric system 'started to take over in the way people were evaluated and then ultimately tenured and promoted' and at the same time 'teaching evaluation scores ... became more and more formalised'. Lee recalls that in the 1970s through the 1990s, 'academic work was a much less stressful environment'. There was less volume of work and less pressure from performance measures and deadlines. In the recent decades, 'it has become a much more demanding and much more stressful environment, particularly for emerging scholars'. Academics have become 'much more instrumentally driven by performance metrics'. Many academics do research because it is required and 'they are measured by it' as Lee observes:

They pick topics that they think are safe; they pick journals that they think are highly ranked and they are more concerned with the scores they get than with what they might discover or contribute and that's been imposed upon them by the university performance measurement and management system.

The more experienced, successful researchers 'have often somehow managed to play the game while preserving their own interests and their own independence'. They select research areas they 'think are important and that interest them'. They manage 'how, when and where they publish so that they meet their own objectives and are seen to be ticking the boxes for the performance management systems'.

Lee has observed the shift over time that now 'there's virtually nobody coming out of the profession' to commence an academic career. The vast majority of academics, 'particularly the

emerging scholars, have no professional experience and no professional qualifications’ and ‘there’s a very, very significant gap now between the accounting profession and the accounting academe’ as he explains:

The academics are driven by metrics that have very little focus on professional engagement ... The performance measures that drive the academics, drive them away from the profession, despite whatever rhetoric the university management push out.

Another observation by Lee concerned the gradual expansion of gender and racial diversity in accounting academia, particularly from the 1980s onwards. Lee found himself ‘attracted to the variety of perspectives’ that diversity brought to both teaching and research. Such change brought ‘a great opportunity’ as Lee worked with people of various nationalities and gender. He became a mentor and ‘supporting referee, particularly for female academics’ and this has continued throughout his career.

The growth and acceptance of qualitative research

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lee found ‘it was a huge battle’ to publish as there were very few people doing qualitative research and there were limited journal outlets. Most journals were ‘mainstream and largely quantitative’. Qualitative researchers had to ‘fight to get their papers accepted into those journals’ and they were a small group of people ‘who found each other’ and started to form ‘informal mutual support networks’. Lee’s early publications were ‘strongly management accounting’, so they ‘had a fairly traditional image’, which helped them get published. Additionally, he moved into emerging topic areas such as behavioural budgeting, reporting to employees, communication, accounting history and social and environmental accounting. These

topic areas were ‘all new growth areas that were attracting editors’ attention’. Not many accounting journals existed when Lee began publishing. However, only a small number of accounting academics were submitting articles to academic journals. Lee was very persistent. He ‘quickly learned to submit, revise and, if rejected, revise [and] submit again and again’. He did not give up until his papers were accepted.

Over time, specialist journals started to be created by qualitative researchers to support their work. They wanted to ‘build qualitative researchers’ career track records’ to enable them to be promoted and to get into significant positions of academic leadership. These academics could then ‘influence selection committees, tenure committees and promotion committees’. Lee says, ‘We were quite strategic in how we got our community to grow itself.’ The number of journals and conferences grew along with increasing numbers of people in senior positions supporting the emerging scholars and building the community. He comments that as the qualitative community grew, ‘the quantitative community and the general academic community couldn’t ignore us anymore because we would not go away’. However, ‘we are still fighting those battles’ and the next generation of qualitative researchers need to be reeducated and keep doing the work of the founding qualitative researchers: build the networks, promote each other into senior positions and support the qualitative interdisciplinary journals. The reputation of qualitative research ‘has come a long way’ although there is a need for vigilance as there is ‘a tendency in the business academe to just go back to numbers’. Furthermore, Middle East, China and Southeast Asian business schools ‘have taken on the numbers fetish with even more enthusiasm than the North American originators’.

Taking the qualitative research route has not hindered Lee's progress, although he acknowledges he faced discrimination as a qualitative accounting researcher in Australia. Business school deans and many of the successful accounting academics used quantitative methods for their research and 'they looked to North America as their sort of Mecca - as their aspirational home'. Lee did not allow such negativity to stop him from pursuing his chosen course of action. He determined:

If I'm going to stay in academia ... I'm going to address the topics that I think are important and I'm going to use the methodologies that I think fit those topics and issues best and for me with the sorts of topics I choose, they are qualitative.

While acknowledging that some business schools would not be interested in him, he accepts that and declares, 'I'm not going to waste my time with them.' During the hiring process, one's research productivity, profile, network and impact will be evaluated. He still tells early career academics that by remaining true to yourself and passionate about what you do, you will produce a corpus of work that some school will find interesting. Lee concludes that adopting this strategy has been highly successful for his career. Furthermore, he has observed a 'rhetoric-reality gap' where universities may be advertising for 'quantitative capital market financial reporting specialists' but often they do not find suitable applicants and will appoint interdisciplinary or qualitative researchers 'with a really exciting record'. Lee declares that this gives 'young scholars some hope if they decide to stick to their passion if that happens to be qualitative, interdisciplinary'.

The values that have driven Lee's career

Lee sees himself as 'very focused on people' and this is reflected in his mentoring. He describes his research as the 'interface between accounting, accountability and people'. He is driven by 'a

huge research curiosity' and is 'always curious about new ideas and new topics and new developments'. Gillies provides an informative perspective:

Lee is highly creative and highly individualistic and really is a norm breaker. If there is a ceiling somewhere, then Lee will break it. If there is a concept somewhere that somebody is saying, then Lee will push the boundaries of it. If there is something in life, Lee will tackle it with enthusiasm, with 110 per cent energy.

Lee values 'taking risks and experimenting with the new and the different'. He has experimented with new or less used methodologies and pursued 'topic areas that often nobody else seems to be looking at'. His motivation to take risks and explore 'new and different things' springs from his desire to develop 'really significant new original knowledge'. A psychologist once described him as 'a conservative radical', who looks 'traditional and conservative'. However, once he gets 'inside a system or a process', he likes to challenge it, breaking it apart, turn it upside down and do 'something new with it'. He sees himself as 'a change agent' and gains immense satisfaction from 'motivating people':

I really enjoy watching people suddenly get enthused. The best researchers, the best teachers, the best students are not always the super brightest. They are the people that suddenly discover a passion for something and then they get highly motivated.

Lee likes structure and being 'highly organised' as he 'maps out steps and a process' for tackling his projects. He also tends 'to be quite pragmatic' and likes 'to see the mechanical steps' for achieving a project. Lee gets pleasure from 'how teaching and research relate to actual professional

practice and policy’. In his teaching, he ‘drew on both research studies ... [and] consulting practice’ as he found these fostered student engagement.

Part of Lee’s success comes from recognising the ‘fortuitous: being in the right place at the right time [and] meeting the right people’. He does not believe in ‘a preordained path’, rather he has learnt to recognise opportunities. As he has always been a ‘very quick decision maker’ and when opportunities have presented themselves, he has ‘taken the risk’. Lee believes the combination of hard work, his values, the relationships he has built and his contribution to the community and those around him have contributed to his career success. He is excited by his work. When Lee reflected on the interviews and discussions on ‘life values and personal philosophies’, he noted how they translated into his relationships and working life, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. Steven summed it up well, ‘I think Lee has a real vision of himself ... It is a deeply integrated thing of spirituality, values, people and praxis.’

Conclusions and reflections

Lee began his career at a time when academics had a lot of freedom to choose their research interests. His choice to be an interdisciplinary qualitative accounting researcher at a time when quantitative research was the dominant focus in accounting is evidence of his tenacity and willingness to forge a path for others. He has successfully navigated the continually changing academic terrain. An integral factor in Lee’s successful career is the alignment of his values with his practice, and his interest in people is the thread that binds his story.

There have been several turning points in Lee's career and mentors who have assisted him. At two points in his career, the level of academic salaries caused Lee to consider leaving academia. Just one year after starting academia, Lee's transfer to the University of Dundee provided a salary that met the family's needs. After completing his doctorate, Lee observed the higher salaries outside academia. Giving himself time for due consideration, he concluded that he enjoyed academia and while it may not be as financially rewarding as other careers, he would not look back. At another juncture, he decided he would be a researcher rather than an administrator. Although Lee has not willingly participated in formal mentoring or development programmes offered by his universities, he has been quick to identify and embrace offers of both formal and informal mentoring. Through his academic mentors and consulting, Lee's teaching and research interests have been shaped. Lee has sought out his two current mentors, Steven Ogden and Gillies Ambler. They have helped him to be reflective, identify his values and vision, acknowledge his contribution and care for himself. The move to the University of South Australia came at a critical juncture and facilitated Lee's desire to focus on mentoring.

Long working hours, productivity routines and writing skills have facilitated the high number of Lee's often cited publications. Curiosity and interest in new and different topics and methodologies have led to publications spanning a wide range of journals. Naysayers do not hold him back; in fact, they propel him to press forward. If a paper is rejected by one journal, he does not hesitate to revise the paper and submit it elsewhere. Not content to merely have many highly cited publications, he has proactively assisted and mentored incalculable numbers of academics globally. Lee's promotion of qualitative research, his numerous editorial roles and especially his ongoing role as Joint Founding Editor of *AAAJ*, have assisted in fostering his international

reputation. His characteristics, aptitudes and interests have served him very well in his academic career.

The reader might be wondering if Lee's career story is just another example of white male privilege. There is no denying that Lee's story has elements of being in the right places at the right times, and benefiting from a supportive spouse by his side. Certainly, he entered academia in Australia at a time when it was dominated by white males and PhDs in accounting were rare. He is quick to acknowledge that he could not have succeeded in his career without the continued support of both Susanne and Gloria. Lee grew up in a working-class suburb, attended government schools, and worked during the school holidays from the age of 14. He was the first in his family to attend university. Lee's integrity, congenial personality and willingness to help others have been factors in attracting people who have aided him in his career progression. It should be noted that only two of Lee's mentors were senior accounting academics: Bob Parker and Gary Previts. Other people who encouraged Lee in his career were his peers and his mentors outside academia. Due to his State school education, he faced discrimination when starting a career in public practice. His qualitative research focus led to discrimination from business school deans and colleagues who favoured quantitative research. Furthermore, the high regard given to Sydney and Brisbane universities reduced his promotion prospects as he had studied in Adelaide and worked in Melbourne.

Given the opposition Lee faced in his career journey, his story demonstrates his strength of character and perseverance. He has been blessed to pursue a career that enabled him to combine

his love of literature, his talent for analysis and his fulfilment through supporting others. Additionally, the immense enjoyment he derives from his work and his ability to have fun while working have contributed to his success. In closing, what would Lee say to his younger self in pursuing an academic career? 'Be prepared to take risks. Be prepared to back your intuition. Always pay attention to your relationships with people and work hard.' Garry Carnegie's summation provides a fitting conclusion to Lee's story to date: 'Lee has touched a lot of people around the globe in a positive way by means of astute advice and inspiration ... His impact is immeasurable!'

Appendix One: Timeline of Lee's Career

Year	Description	Type of activity
1966	Completed secondary education at Findon High School, South Australia	
1967 - 1969	Bachelor of Economics, (with an accounting major), University of Adelaide	
1970-1972	Audit division of Price Waterhouse	
1972 - 1973	Taxation, audit and accounting work with Adelaide based firms	
1972 - 1973	Part-time Tutor, Faculty of the Professions, University of Adelaide, Australia	AC
1973 - 1974	Lecturer, Department of Accountancy, The University of Glasgow, United Kingdom	AC
1973 - 1974	Master of Philosophy, University of Glasgow (transferred to Dundee)	
1974 - 1976	Lecturer, Department of Accountancy, The University of Dundee, United Kingdom	AC
1974 - 1976	Master of Philosophy, The University of Dundee, United Kingdom	
1976 - 1980	Lecturer, Department of Accounting and Finance, Monash University, Australia	AC
1977 - 1983	Doctor of Philosophy, Monash University, Australia	
1979	Winner of the Association of University Teachers of Accounting UK's 1978/79 Walter Taplin Prize for the best research article published in Volume 9 <i>Accounting and Business Research</i> (Parker, 1979)	PR
1981 - 1985	Senior lecturer, Department of Accounting and Finance, Monash University, Australia	AC
1985	Fellow - CPA Australia	
1985 - 1988	Professor, Foundation Chair of Accounting, School of Administration, Griffith University, Australia	AC
1986 - 1987	Head of Accounting Department, School of Administration, Griffith University, Australia	AD
1986	Fellow - Chartered Accountants in Australia and New Zealand	PR
1986	Fellow - Institute of Managers and Leaders Australia and New Zealand	PR
1986	Certified Professional Manager - Australian Institute of Management	PR
1987 - present	Co-editor of the <i>Accounting Auditing and Accountability Journal</i>	
1987	Deputy Dean, School of Administration, Griffith University, Australia	AD

1987 – 1988	Dean, School of Administration, Griffith University, Australia	AD
1988 – 1994	Head of School, School of Accounting, Finance and Management, Flinders University of South Australia	AD
1988 – 1996	Professor of Accounting, Finance and Management, Flinders University of South Australia	AC
1988 – 2004	State Councillor for CPA Australia (South Australian Division)	
1990 – 1991	President Academy of Accounting Historians	
1992 – present	Distinguished expert adviser (honorary appointment), The Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research, The University of St Andrews, Scotland	
1993	Emerald Publishing Company Editor-of-the-Year award, 1993 (inaugural year of this award), for editorship of <i>Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal</i>	PR
1994	Emerald Publishing Company Leading Editor award, 1994, for editorship of <i>Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal</i>	PR
1994 – 1997	Adjunct Professor, International Graduate School of Management, University of South Australia	AC
1994 – 2007	Fellow, The Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research, University of Dundee and University of Glasgow, United Kingdom	PR
1996 – 2004	Director, Australian Institute of Management (South Australia)	
1997 – 2007	Head, Management Discipline, School of Commerce, The University of Adelaide, Australia	AD
1997 – 2007	Professor of Commerce, School of Commerce, The University of Adelaide, Australia	AC
1998 – 2008	Adjunct Professor, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University, Australia	AC
2001	Particular Merit Award from the International Federation of Accountants, Financial and Management Accounting Committee for paper published in the <i>Australian Accounting Review</i> (Parker, 2000)	PR
2002	Critical Perspectives on Accounting Conference, New York, Poetry prize for ‘The New Management Accountant’, 2002	PR
2002	Emerald Publishing Company Leading Editor award, 2002, for editorship of <i>Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal</i> , 2002	PR
2003 – 2004	President of CPA Australia (South Australian Division)	
2003 – 2005	Vice President International of the American Accounting Association	
2004	Hourglass Award of the Academy of Accounting Historians (American Accounting Association)	PR

2004	Deputy President, Australian Institute of Management (South Australia)	
2004 – 2005	American Accounting Association, Outstanding Educator Award	PR
2006	Emerald Publishing Company Outstanding Special Issue award (2006) for the special issue of <i>Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal</i> , “NGO Accountability”, Vol. 9 No.3	PR
2006 – 2015	Honorary Professor of Management & Accounting Control, School of Management, The University of St Andrews, United Kingdom	AC
2008	Commenced Annual Qualitative Research Colloquiums	
2008	Emerald Publishing Company Literati Network outstanding service award for 20 years of editing <i>Auditing, Accounting and Accountability Journal</i>	PR
2008 – 2013	Adjunct Professor of Accounting, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand	AC
2008 – 2014	Professor of Accounting, School of Commerce, University of South Australia, Business School, University of South Australia	AC
2009 – 2012	Deputy Director: Centre for Accounting, Governance and Sustainability School of Commerce, The University of South Australia	AD
2013	Postgraduate Research Student Supervisor of the Year Award, Division of Business, University of South Australia	PR
2013	Associate Head Research, School of Commerce, The University of South Australia	AD
2011 – 2013	Professorial Research Performance Panel Member, School of Accounting RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia	AD
2014	Best paper award, <i>Financial Accountability & Management</i> (Parker, 2013)	PR
2014 – 2015	Professor of Accounting (30% appointment), School of Management, Royal Holloway College, University of London, United Kingdom	AC
2014 – 2016	Professor of Accounting (50% appointment), School of Accounting, College of Business, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia	AC
2016	Inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Australasian Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting.	PR
2016	Best paper award, <i>British Accounting Review</i> (Leung <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	PR
2016 – present	Distinguished Professor of Accounting (50% appointment), School of Accounting, College of Business, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia	AC
2016 – present	Research Professor of Accounting (30% appointment), Adam Smith School of Business, University of Glasgow, Scotland	AC
2017	Visiting Professor of Accounting, University of Trento, Italy	AC
2017	Highly Commended Paper, <i>Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change</i> (Parker, 2016)	PR

2017	Highly Commended Paper, <i>Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal</i> (Parker and Northcott, 2016)	PR
2018	Highly Commended Paper, <i>Accounting History</i> (Baskerville <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	PR
2019	RMIT School of Accounting Research Award, Highest Quality and Quantity of 2019 Publications and <i>Accounting Auditing and Accountability Journal</i> A* ranking from Australian Business Deans Council	PR
2020	Inducted into the Accounting Hall of Fame, University of Melbourne Australia	PR
2020	Dean's Research Excellence Award, RMIT School of Accounting, Information Systems and Supply Chain	PR

AC – academic role, AD – administrative role, PR – prize/recognition

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Acknowledgements

Many of the interviews for this study were conducted while I was a visiting scholar at the RMIT School of Accounting; I would like to thank the School for hosting me. Thanks are also due to the University of Southern Queensland for granting me the opportunity to take research leave which enabled me to conduct the first phase of this study. This project was only possible due to Lee's willingness and patience as I asked him endless questions and the willingness of the other interviewees to share their insights.

¹ Under James and Lee's leadership, *AAAJ* has become a premier accounting journal and has been given the prestigious A* rating (given to approximately 7% of journals) in 2019 in the Australian Business Deans' Council Journal Quality List (ABDC, 2022).

² Since its inception in 2010, only 35 members have been inducted.

³ In 1965 there were just over 110,000 students enrolled in 13 Australian universities. In 1990 there were 485,000 students, which included 25,000 international students (Department of Education, 2001). By 2019 there were 43 universities with more than 1.6 million students enrolled and of these there were more than 500,000 international students. Between 1990 and 2019 students enrolled in commerce courses increased from nearly 105,000 to 400,000 (Department of Education, 2001; Department of Education, 2021).

⁴ In 2013 the Australian Business Dean's Council (ABDC) released their journal ranking listing. Under the heading accounting, auditing and accountability, 127 journals were listed. In the 2019 listing there were 156 accounting journals (ABDC, 2022).

⁵ Lee and Susanne had three children: Karen, Jay and Rhys. Susanne tragically died of cancer while the children were aged between 12 and 15 years. Lee later married Gloria.

⁶ At that time, it would have been the conference of the Association of University Teachers in Accounting (AUTA). This became the British Accounting Association (BAA) in the early 1980s and more recently the British Accounting and Finance Association (BAFA).

⁷ Anthony Hopwood was an examiner for both Lee's Masters and Doctorate and their paths crossed many times. Christopher Napier, Anthony's colleague, observed that Anthony was unsettled about the launch of *AAAJ*, which he appeared to believe may be encroaching on *AOS*'s territory.

⁸ The facets of this enduring relationship are beyond the scope of this paper.

⁹ Telstra is a telecommunications organisation. Previously it was called the Post Master Generals Department.

¹⁰ The conversation occurred while Lee was at the University of Adelaide, possibly in 2005.

¹¹ The Colloquia are a two-day intensive research development forum addressing a wide variety of qualitative research methodologies. They include both formal presentations and interactive forums. They are now held around the globe. The first international Colloquium occurred in 2015 in Italy. I have attended several Colloquia and I have observed many participants seeking Lee for advice on their projects and him enjoying providing the advice they are seeking. The Colloquia have been temporarily suspended due to Covid 19.

¹² Lee is based in Adelaide and made regular trips to RMIT and Glasgow (pre-Covid 19).