When I arrived at Birmingham University in 1972, ‘Mac’ was one of two great economists there in the wake of Hahn, Gorman and Alan Walters. The other was Terence Hutchison (1912-2007), whom Mac predeceased by exactly 2 months. Terence was for me merely a magisterial presence. It was Mac, Professor and Head of Mathematical Economics, 1965-1976 (after promotion to a Personal Chair in 1963), who enthused me and countless others to remain students of Economics forever. He was charismatic. Nanak Kakwani, lecturer at Birmingham in the 60’s, with whom Mac ended his own career at New South Wales, described Mac as ‘extraordinarily brilliant’. Richard Baillie noted that Mac ‘had a piercing type of intellect which […] cut through the chaff and focus[ed] on the essence of a problem, which made him a very stimulating companion. [H]e must have been a truly great teacher.’

Mac was born in Birmingham in 1926 to Charles McManus, an engineer’s mechanic, and Blanche Powell McManus (née Walter), a housewife. Like others of similar background, his upward mobility was boosted by passing the 11+. Mac went to George Dixon Grammar School for Boys, then a leading Birmingham school (attended nearly 30 years later, coincidentally, by this author). He left in July 1944 with a Higher School Certificate showing passes in Pure and Applied Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and German. He graduated from Birmingham University in 1950 with a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) Upper Second Class Honours and the G Henry Wright Prize for best BCom student.

Mac undertook PhD research at Birmingham from 1950-52 with a Graduate Student Scholarship, finishing his PhD (‘Studies in the Theory of Rationing and General Equilibrium Analysis’) in 1959 supervised by Hahn. He soon had to mix studying with gainful employment as he got married (to Ida) in March 1951. He took a series of short-term, part-time posts, starting with an evening lectureship, Birmingham College of Commerce, 1951-52. He then joined Leeds Economics Department as research assistant and tutor, 1952-55, combining this with part-time posts as Evening Lecturer at Leeds Technical College (1952-53) and the College of Commerce, Bradford (1953-55). At Leeds, he intersected with the great econometrician, J Dennis Sargan.

Mac headed for the US from Leeds in 1955, first (1955-57) as instructor at MIT and then (1957-58) as lecturer at Minnesota. He was now rubbing shoulders with the likes of Samuelson, Solow, Arrow and Hurwicz and making his mark as an economic theorist. His PhD still uncompleted, he had 8 actual or forthcoming publications, including in *Metroeconomica, Southern Economic Journal*, and 2 in each of *Review of Economic Studies, Econometrica* (one with Arrow) and *Yorkshire Bulletin*, when he returned to the UK as lecturer at Aberystwyth in 1958. However, his loyalty was to Birmingham, where he was visiting lecturer in 1959-60 while still at Aberystwyth. He returned to Birmingham in 1960 for the major part of his career, first as lecturer, then, 1963-1976, as Personal Professor. Local folklore claimed that, having lost Hahn to Cambridge in 1960 and Gorman to Oxford in 1962, Birmingham promoted him quickly to avoid losing him too.

Mac contributed seminally to stability analysis (including a classic short 1958 *Econometrica* paper with Arrow), oligopoly theory, social choice and welfare economics. His best-known paper, ‘On equilibrium, number and size in Cournot oligopoly,’ in the obscure *Yorkshire Bulletin* in 1964, testifies to his ingenuity. Previous proofs of the existence of Cournot equilibrium rely on a special assumption (quasi-concavity of firms’ profit functions) that implies reaction functions are continuous. This allows use of standard ‘fixed point theorems’ to prove existence. But quasi-concavity and, thereby, continuity of reaction functions, is obviously violated in realistic scenarios. Mac showed that, if the nonconcavity derives from the demand function and firms are identical, then the discontinuity in reaction functions still allows equilibrium to exist. He had wry satisfaction from his results being rediscovered and published over a decade later in the field-leading *Journal of Economic Theory* by Roberts and Sonnenschein, two top theorists of the next generation. They subsequently wrote to the *Journal* to acknowledge his priority.

Social choice theory dominated Mac’s later professional life. His last major publication, ‘Some properties of topological social choice functions,’ was fittingly in *REconStuds* (on which Editorial Board he served, 1959-1965) in 1982. His interest in social choice was first stimulated by visiting the US in the 1950’s and contact with Arrow, but his ideas only came to fruition from the early to mid-1970’s. Nick Baigent writes, ‘Mac’s papers in social choice theory typify the fearlessness with which he confronted notoriously challenging problems. The ubiquitous assumption of given preferences was thoroughly transcended in his paper on “intertaste consistency”’. Furthermore, he published an early paper in which continuity is recognized as a property of aggregation with important implications. Interest in continuous social choice eventually led to the distinct area of topological social choice. Unlike other contributors, he extensively related the implications of continuity to previous concerns in social choice theory. Indeed, there is nothing like section 6 of Mac’s 1982 *REconStuds* paper in topological social choice theory in particular and little that is like it anywhere in social choice theory. But what is remarkable is that Mac was one of the first in an area that many, but of course not Mac, found very intimidating. I count myself lucky that he was the first to teach me social choice theory.’

If greatness is measured merely by number of publications, then, arguably, Mac did not fulfil his early promise.
Paradoxically, this is perhaps because he came to realise there was more to life than economics. By the mid-1960’s he was already known as ‘a famous party animal.’ Norman Ireland says ‘life was never dull around him.’ Divorced from Ida in 1971, his swinging 60’s were not succeeded by a sober-suited 70’s. His love of partying inspired many wonderful anecdotes. One, enshrined in ether space in the history of the Economics Department at Hawaii (http://www.economics.hawaii.edu/history/modern-2.html), recalls that ‘the unforgettable Maurice McManus […] liked Hawaii so much that he stayed on far past his appointment. Maurice finally left Honolulu after the Department gave several farewell parties for him.’

Mac’s greatness is perhaps best measured by his greatest legacy: the legion of students that his pedagogic brilliance inspired to pick up the economics baton professionally. His effectiveness as a teacher was legendary. Andrew Chesher recalls ‘Mac arrived for his Birmingham undergraduate Mathematical Economics lectures with a cardboard box from which he pulled exercises originally set for his graduate students at Stanford. They were brilliant exercises, elegantly posed and easy to answer only if you thought like an economist — as was Mac’s aim for all of us. His lectures were magical and won me over to Economics totally. He would pace the room, a ball of energy, hurling questions around — I recall a discussion of units of measurement: ‘X is a hundred Y. Which is pence? Which is pounds?’ — infuriated when there was no, or worse, the wrong answer, banging our desks, sending pencil boxes crashing to the floor, relieving the tension by suddenly grabbing the beams supporting the ceiling in our 1960’s Strathcona lecture theatre and performing 20 chin-ups while we struggled to answer a particularly knotty question. Of the 6 or 7 students on the tiny Mathematics, Economics and Statistics degree that graduated in 1970, 3 of us ended up in economics chairs, set on that course by the passion for economics that Mac planted in us.’ Likewise, Nick Baigent remembers, ‘Mac’s weekly commute from Birmingham to UCL to teach in 1968-9 always provided the highlight of my week. His teaching was electrifying and often terrifying. If you were taught by Mac, you stayed taught.’

Mac went to a Chair at the University of New South Wales in 1977, joining luminaries like Murray Kemp and Kakwani, but maintained a two-continent existence until the last few years of his life, when arthritis and infirmity after a stroke gradually overtook him. When he retired from NSW in 1987, his life was far from done. Alongside extended trips to England and work on his family tree, he revisited many old haunts, such as Hawaii. He had remarried in January 1986 and opened a new chapter, including producing a second daughter. Former colleague Alessandro Cigno recounts how Mac met his second wife, Anna: ‘Mac had a long correspondence (lasting, if I remember rightly, several years) with her before they actually met. Mac told me that he had sent several letters to a colleague at some African university (or other institution). These stayed unopened for a long time as the intended recipient had left. Eventually, a young secretary opened them and, charmed by Mac’s eloquent prose, she started to write back. The rest is history.’

Mac was physically small but much larger than life. He prided himself on being physically as well as mentally fit and played badminton, squash and tennis ferociously. Kakwani recalls, ‘I played Mac at badminton and tennis. Though much younger, I could never win. He was a perfectionist in everything. This is also evident from his publications. He would publish papers only when totally satisfied about their quality.’

Mac was a great man. His life showed that Economics, far from being a dismal science, was actually great fun. He was someone of whom it could truly be said that, instead of having his friends mourn his passing, he would far rather they had a party to celebrate his life. He was a very serious astronomer who deserves his place among the stars. He is survived by his wife Anna, their daughter Amanda, and his daughter Melody from his first marriage.

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— with contributions from Anna McManus, Nick Baigent, Andrew Chesher and Bill Schworm.