

***Wallace S. Read's Opening Remarks At The
Commemorative History Session At PES In Singapore
Presented: Tuesday, 25 January 2000***

The history of IEEE, its members and the technologies we represent is a fascinating story and one which the History Committee is dedicated to preserving. The discovery of electricity and the application of this miracle force in all of its forms is without doubt the greatest single achievement in the lifetime of humankind. It is a story of science and engineering, of visionaries and entrepreneurs, of successes and failures but above all it is a story of the tremendous contribution we have made to the well being of society in the 19th and 20th centuries. By any benchmark, we have measured up to the challenge and can be proud of our efforts.

History is most often regarded as just a record of the past, but I always like to think of it also as the future, yet unwritten. Winston Churchill, that grand old man that had a wonderful way with words, once said "The further backward you look, the further forward you can see", and I believe in that. Such a belief will sustain all of us and help guide us through the new 21st century which we are entering.

This morning we have two excellent historical presentations for you, one on opto-electronic technology and the other on the electric light and power industry, but before we get to that I would like to take a few minutes to describe one of the IEEE programs that I think does an outstanding job worldwide in publicly recognizing major achievements in our field. I refer to the History Center's Engineering Milestone program.