(Professor Emeritus Howard Hadfield Eddey CMG
BSc., MB BS (1934), FRCS, FRACS, FACS
1910 - 2004

Howard Eddey was an eminent surgeon, teacher, administrator, and a caring and compassionate man loved and respected by his patients, colleagues and family. He ably served the medical profession in Australia and in South East Asia during a long and distinguished career.

Howard was born in Box Hill and after attending the local primary school, completed his secondary education at Melbourne High School. He was awarded school colours for rowing and held the position of Captain of Boats. He was a talented lacrosse player on the school team and at Melbourne University gained a blue for lacrosse and was also awarded an All-Australian blue in that sport.

Howard was very able academically and won many honours, exhibitions, prizes and scholarships on the way to gaining his medical qualifications in 1934. He achieved first class honours in chemistry, physics (he won the Physics Exhibition for Victoria in 1927), physiology, pathology and medicine. After completing his university training he became a resident at the Royal Melbourne Hospital with which hospital he was to have a long and happy association. In 1937 he travelled to England and studied at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. He gained his fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons and won their prestigious Hallett Prize in 1938. Howard became a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1941 and later a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in 1964. In between his studies and work Howard courted and in 1940 married the true love of his life, Alice, which was to be a happy union until her untimely death in 1987. Much of Howard's success in his most distinguished career can be attributed to the love, loyalty and support he received during his marriage.

Howard served with the AIF during the Second World War and was appointed Major, Surgical Specialist 2/13 Australian General Hospital. He was captured at the fall of Singapore and served in Japanese P.O.W. camps in Changi, Sandakan and Kuching. Showing strength in adversity, and obtaining the acquiescence of the guards, he was involved in making "kangkong" by the harvesting and the treating of a local wild vegetable, to produce a drink which was rich in riboflavin and vitamins. Howard ensured his fellow prisoners drank this frequently, as it reduced the incidence of beriberi and pellagra. During this time Howard and colleagues taught basic medical skills and he also wrote notes and drew detailed anatomical diagrams on scrap paper that was provided to him by a guard who was sympathetic to the prisoners' situation. This was a draft of a text book on anatomy which became the basis of a key anatomy text for medical students. Howard gave evidence at the war crimes trial of a guard, who had treated the prisoners humanely, and his evidence, together with evidence from other prisoners of war, resulted in a favourable outcome for the guard.

After the War Howard returned to the Royal Melbourne Hospital as an Honorary Surgeon

and also held appointments at Prince Henry's and the Alfred Hospitals.
Howard practised as a general surgeon with a special interest in diseases of the neck and mouth. He was the author of many publications in medical journals, particularly in relation to diseases of the salivary glands and cancer of the mouth.

Howard was always interested in the education of doctors. Among his many appointments, he was Independent Lecturer in Surgical Anatomy, University of Melbourne (1950-65) and Dean of the Royal Melbourne Hospital Clinical School (1965-67). Howard's interest in medical education included his membership of the Council and Board of Examiners of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, member of the Medical Board of Victoria and member of Convocation, University of Melbourne. Howard was involved in medical education and training in South East Asia and he paved the way for much of the educational activities of the RACS in the region. He was Lecturer in Surgical Anatomy 1957-8 in courses held in Singapore for the Primary Examination of the RACS. This was the first educational activity of the College in South East Asia, and set the pattern for subsequent educational activities of the College of Surgeons and also of the College of Physicians. Between 1965 and1968 he was responsible for advising on teaching and examinations in surgery and anatomy at the Paduan Medical College, which contributed to the College being elevated to a Faculty of Medicine in the University of Papua and New Guinea. He was also responsible for the introduction of a surgical registrar secondment programme from the Royal Melbourne Hospital to the Port Moresby General Hospital, a teaching hospital of the University of Papua and New Guinea. In 1972 in recognition of Howard's work in South East Asia the Council of the RACS named the medal given to the student who obtained the highest marks in the primary examination for the College fellowship held each year in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, the "Howard Eddey Medal".

Howard held a number of professorial appointments including - Huntarian Professor, RCS, 1960, Visiting Professor, University of Singapore, 1962, Leverhulme Fellow, University of Melbourne and Visiting Professor of Surgery, University of Hong Kong 1973-4. In1967 Howard was appointed by the University of Melbourne to the first Chair of Surgery at the Austin Hospital with the addition of the Repatriation General Hospital in 1970. He was Dean of the Clinical School, Austin and Repatriation Hospitals 1971-75. As foundation Professor, Howard was able to overcome the many problems and difficulties faced in setting up the faculty and creating the situation for the smooth and efficient running of a large teaching facility. A newspaper report of the time said -"there was much to do. The physical standard of the wards was below par- sparrows were known to fly through some of the wards ". In 1968 there were 16 medical students and by 1976 there would be 194. Howard retired as professor in 1975 and in 1984 new operating theatres at the Austin Hospital was named "The Howard Eddey Operating Suite" as a permanent record of his contribution to the Austin Hospital as a surgeon, teacher and administrator. In recognition of his outstanding service to the University of Melbourne, the title of Professor Emeritus was conferred by the Council on Howard on 1 January 1976. For services to medicine The Queen appointed Howard to be a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (CMG) in June 1974. In

further recognition of his skill and standing, Howard was appointed surgeon to Prince Charles during his visit to Victoria in October 1974.

In the years prior to and after his retirement as Professor of Surgery, Howard was involved with medico-legal work and was highly regarded for his opinion and expertise in this area. The manner in which he prepared his medical reports was an example to all in the clarity of his writing, presentation and explanation of the issues involved and as an expert witness he was formidable.

While Howard had a distinguished medical career he never lost sight of the purpose of medicine. He was extremely interested in his patients' progress and their welfare and would take it "quite hard" if treatment did not proceed as planned. He was thorough in his operating mode and would not tolerate incompetence in any of the supporting staff if this prejudiced patient welfare. He kept in touch with many of the doctors he had trained and would not hesitate to travel into country Victoria or interstate if required to assist in an operation.

Howard and Alice enjoyed going to the football where he was a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club and supporting the Demons. Howard also belonged to the Kew Golf Club and Peninsular Country Golf Club but unfortunately his golf was nowhere as good as his surgery and he ceased trying to play some years ago.

Howard continued with his medico-legal practice until 1987 when he retired to Geelong following the death of his beloved wife Alice. Howard remained in good heath until the last few years of his life and he died peacefully on 16 September, 2004.

Howard will be fondly remembered by doctors he has trained, mentored and helped, by his patients and by his peers.

He is survived by his sons Michael and Peter and his daughter Pam, who did so much in his later years to make his life comfortable, and by seven grandchildren and his great-granddaughter. He will be always loved, respected and remembered.

Michael Eddey