

Obituary By Rod Westhorpe OAM

NOEL MORRIS CASS
10th June 1927 – 2nd May 2017

Noel Cass enjoyed a rich life that embraced many fields of endeavor, always with little fuss and great humility.

Noel was born and educated in Perth, moving to Melbourne to study medicine, following in his father's footsteps. He then proceeded on an illustrious career as an anaesthetist that embraced teaching, research, and service to medicine.

Noel was elected Dean of the Faculty of Anaesthetists in 1968, at age 41. By that time he had already served as chairman of the Victorian Sections of the Australian Society of Anaesthetists, and the Australian Society for Medical and Biological Engineering, and had published papers on hyperbaric medicine, radiotherapy and cardiopulmonary anaesthesia. He had published the first of several editions of his much loved textbook of pharmacology, later to be jointly rewritten with his daughter, Lindy, also an anaesthetist. As a keen pianist, he had also established a jazz band, the "Jazz Doctors", that continued to play until the time of his death.

He began his association with the Royal Children's Hospital in 1958, and was Deputy Director of anaesthesia from 1975 to 1988. He established a unique research collaboration with the Monash University Department of Electrical Engineering and Professor, Doug Lampard, who also happened to be the banjo player in the band, and others, they developed a computer based anaesthesia system with feedback loop control. He wrote an editorial in 1972, discussing the place of computers in anaesthesia - long before most people had considered the possibility.

While at RCH, Noel was a key figure in the Ski Club, deftly managing its finances for many years, while indulging his love of skiing. He was president from 1973 to 1988, and continued to be an active skier until some 18 months before his death, having to give it up due to failing eyesight.

He was awarded The Royal Children's Hospital President's Medal in 1985.

One of Noel's great attributes, that he taught and embodied was professionalism. He was a gentleman, a mentor, and a sympathetic advisor.

These qualities were crucial to his long involvement with the Medical Defence Association of Victoria, where he was a councilor for 25 years and Vice-President for 10. Noel was awarded their Gold Medal in 2002.

There were numerous awards bestowed upon Noel.

The Robert Orton Medal of the Faculty of Anaesthetists, the highest honour of the now Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists.

The Australian Society of Anaesthetists awarded him the prestigious Gilbert Brown Medal in 2016, having already received the Ben Barry Medal in 2000. This latter medal recognized his contribution to the Society's Journal, Anaesthesia and Intensive Care. With 44 years on the Editorial Board, he was possibly the longest serving active member of an editorial board of any major scientific journal.

He was passionate about the preservation of the history of medicine, and served both the Medical History Society of Victoria and the Australian and New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine. He served as MHSV president, and was treasurer of the ANZ Society for 13 years, being honoured with life membership in 2012.

Noel's interests outside medicine, history and music, included tennis, sailing, skiing and golf, all pursued with the same rigour and enthusiasm that he applied to his professional life.

Noel's wife, Brenda predeceased him, and he is survived by his three children, Peter, Anne and Lindy, and their families.

Noel touched many of us and we are the richer for it.