



# St Vincent's Hospital Medical Alumni Association

## Welcome to the Winter 2020 e-newsletter of your association

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#### **Where are you? Please help us**

Keeping track of our members is a big problem for our secretary. Every time our e-newsletter goes out, we find a few members who have not notified us of a change of email address. How can we possibly locate them? One way is for every member who reads this newsletter to pass it on to one other colleague or friend who is known to be or thought to be an alumnus of St Vincent's Hospital. So **PLEASE** do us a big favour by taking a few moments to pass this newsletter on to at least one medical friend and suggest that they

provide their email address to Sue Mabilia ([Susan.MABILIA@svha.org.au](mailto:Susan.MABILIA@svha.org.au) ). Alternatively, if anyone is unsure about their membership, they can register with the Association on our web site at <http://stvincentsmedicalalumni.org.au/>. Membership of the Association is free! For members wishing to visit the Association Office, please note that Sue Mabilia is located in the Senior Medical Staff Office, Level 2, Building A (Inpatient Services Building) at St Vincent's. Her phone number is 9231 2304 (Mon-Thurs).

PS. If you are an alumnus (i.e. any medical graduate who was a medical student at St Vincent's or who has worked/is working now at St Vincent's Hospital), you are eligible to sign up as a member of the Association. There are no membership fees – simply go to our website: <http://stvincentsmedicalalumni.org.au/> .

## **Medical Alumni Association Annual Golf Day, 2020**

Sadly the 2020 Annual Golf Day was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the first time the event has not been played since World War II. A booking has been made for 2021 at Green Acres Golf Club in Kew for Friday 19 March.

## **2020 Cocktail Party and Historical Address**

This year's Annual Cocktail Party and Historical Address planned for Sunday, 26 July, 2020 has been postponed to a date to be determined. It may yet be possible to hold the event in 2020 but it is more likely to be scheduled for a date in July next year. Your committee is sorry to disappoint members in this way but in view of the uncertainty about the pandemic and its associated regulations, it was deemed wisest to not proceed with the July date this year.

## **Queen's Birthday Honours**

We congratulate the following St Vincent's Hospital Medical Alumnus who was awarded an Australian honour on Queen's Birthday, June 8, 2020:

### **Dr Christopher BAKER AM**

For significant service to medicine, to dermatology, and to professional medical colleges.

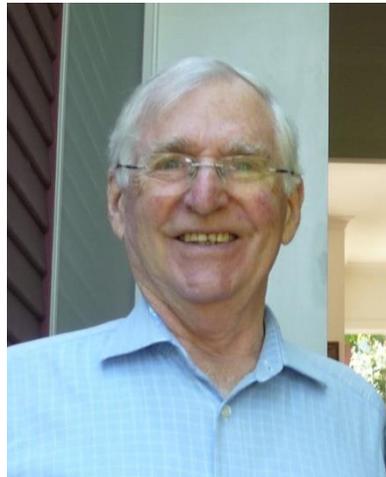
## Obituaries

### Joseph Gerard Joyce MBBS, FRACS

11/4/1932- 20/12/2019

Gerry was born in Ararat, Victoria on 11 April 1932 and was educated by the Brigidine Sisters in Ararat and the Christian Brothers at St Patrick's College in Ballarat where he was a boarder. His father was a general practitioner in the Ararat district but died very young in 1939. Many of Gerry's extended family were on the land in the Western District and the Wimmera, wool growing and cropping, and he developed a strong interest and many skills in agriculture, as well as formal training in wool classing at the Ballarat School of Mines where he attended Saturday classes as a schoolboy. He was often called on by his uncles and aunts to look after their farms in their absence. He was a family man in so many ways from a young age, shouldering responsibilities within the family to support his mother.

For Gerry the transition to the University of Melbourne, and especially Newman College, marked a happy turning point in his life: he always called it a relief after the trauma of boarding school. He enrolled in Medicine and proceeded through his course with slight obstacles in the form of rowing, billiards and a theatre performance in second year. Graduation in medicine at St Vincent's Clinical School in 1957 was followed by two years as a resident medical officer there and in 1960 a further resident year at the Royal Children's Hospital.



In 1962 at the time of the revolution in the Belgian Congo, Gerry volunteered to work as a surgeon with the Red Cross and was mostly based in Bunia on the eastern border where, instead of 37 doctors looking after the approximately one million people, there were now two – Gerry and Jim Lawson. He was awarded the Royal Red Cross award for his service there. In his letters home to his family he expressed his admiration for the nuns who stayed and cared for the people, undertaking the role of giving anaesthetics as well as providing nursing care.

Back in Australia, in 1962 he returned to Newman College to study for his Fellowship in the Royal Australian College of Surgeons, while tutoring in Anatomy at the University and the College. In 1963 he renewed his connection with St Vincent's Hospital, drawn by the vision of the Sisters of Charity and the challenges of training to become a urologist.

After his appointment as a Consultant Urologist at St. Vincent's Melbourne in 1967, his surgical career flourished. He helped develop the first kidney transplant team which began at St Vincent's in 1968. He shared rooms with Dr Leonard Murphy, an esteemed and scholarly urologist and author of the definitive History of Urology. Gerry would give a copy of this book to all the young urologists he trained. He encouraged and mentored a number of young surgical trainees who have gone on to be compassionate doctors and superb urological surgeons. Gerry was also the urologist for the Mercy Hospital for Women for 25 years and also the urologist in charge at the Preston Hospital for 25 years.

Gerry was the embodiment of the caring and compassionate physician and his example helped make St Vincent's Melbourne a unique environment in which to learn the art, and practice the science of medicine and surgery. He modelled caritas to his patients and his students. His patients adored him. His primary commitment was to patient care and he demonstrated a gentle manner for all patients, whatever their status in life. It was his surgical skill and exemplary manner as surgeon that inspired many young surgeons to become urologists. He relished the craft of urologic surgery and was a very skilled surgeon in both open and endoscopic surgery. He was a kind and patient surgical teacher for residents and medical students.

He was above all a family man. The primacy of family was evident to all, as he would often wax lyrical about the achievements of his wife Marie, his five children and his multiple grandchildren. Among his other passions was farming as he was a very successful sheep farmer for many years after he began practice in urology. A drive with Gerry to Ararat to inspect the sheep was a hazardous experience, as despite his obvious surgical skills this did not translate into his ability to pilot his beloved Jaguar motor car. In retirement he was a bibliophile, such an energetic reader, who always had a 'must read' ready for you. He was a lover of red wine, particularly the big reds from western Victoria. He was a wonderful friend and a marvellously entertaining companion at lunch or dinner for those who had the privilege and pleasure to be with him at those times. Vale Gerry.

*Contributed by Dr Marie Joyce, Gerry's widow, and Dr Tony Costello, urological surgeon and St Vincent's Alumnus.*

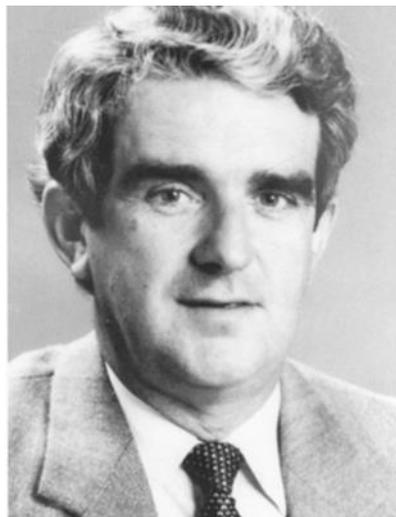
## **James Thomas Cummins MBBS, FRCS, FRACS**

15/11/1934 - 23/2/2020

When, on the 23rd of February 2020, James Thomas “Jim” Cummins died, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne lost a good and faithful servant. Jim was born in 1934 in Warrnambool. His mother, Anne, was the homemaker and his father, James, was a secondary school teacher. He had 3 siblings, Isobel, Mary and John. To them and his whole family he was always devoted. One of his favourite aphorisms, which he shared with his trainees, was “Family First”, long before it had political overtones. The last 3 years of his secondary schooling were undertaken at Assumption College Kilmore where he was a boarder with a number of other students who became St Vincent’s Alumni.

He began his medical undergraduate course at Melbourne University in 1953. In 1956 he signed up with the RAAF as a cadet which committed him to 4 years’ service with the armed forces after his residency. This was a decision which he never regretted. After graduation in 1958 he became a junior resident at St Vincent’s Hospital and the following year he married the love of his life, Anne, whom he had met while still a student at Assumption. One of the highlights of his undergraduate years was his being part of the Olympic torch relay team which carried the flame from north to south. It was not an uneventful journey.

From 1962 to 1964 Jim was stationed with his enlarging family at the RAAF Butterworth base in Malaysia. This was a very formative and happy time of their lives where Jim built his experience and confidence. When he returned to St Vincent's, he had already decided to pursue a career in neurosurgery having encountered Keith Henderson and, at that time, Tom King in the Neurosurgical Unit. He continued his neurosurgical training, first at the Repatriation General Hospital in Heidelberg and thence to the United Kingdom at a number of centres but most influentially in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and later at the London Hospital where Tom King had become the Head of Department.



Jim returned to St Vincent’s in 1971 and there had an extraordinarily productive career until his retirement in 1999 having become Head of the Department in 1988. Jim was an energetic and innovative neurosurgeon. He always rose to a challenge, the bigger the better. He had an individual style of operating with an emphasis on efficiency and minimalism. He had a very wide repertoire of surgery and his diverse experience made him a resource for younger colleagues to seek advice. He

embraced new technologies, in particular the adoption of the operating microscope in the 1970's with the support and encouragement of Keith Henderson. He made the trans-cranial anastomosis procedure his own, having perfected the techniques in the laboratory.

He was a very popular teacher. He was generally patient for a man who didn't like to waste time!! He would teach the most junior of scrub nurses, ward nurses and junior residents with the same ease as an advanced trainee negotiating a difficult operation for the first time. He was enthusiastic, forgiving, encouraging, supportive and practical in his advice. All who trained under his guidance remember him fondly and positively. Most memorably, he was approachable by anyone.

The collaboration with Professor Iain Clarke of Prince Henry's Medical Research Institute, (as it was known at that time) came about somewhat by chance, it is said, through the Billings, John and Evelyn, as a result of their interest in reproductive physiology. Jim's collaboration with Iain Clarke in researching hormone physiology of the hypothalamic-pituitary axis was a golden era in his career which spanned at least 10 years. Jim devised surgical techniques and animal models to examine this region and the results of this research were world recognised and contributed to scores of publications, many of which continue to be referred to.

Jim was multitalented. Not all surgeons are practical with their hands outside the operating theatre but Jim was a home handyman extraordinaire and, like his surgery, no project ever daunted him. In addition, he developed a deep interest in genealogy and the tracing of his family history. The other passion in his life was the North Melbourne Football Club which he followed loyally and supported generously.

Jim Cummins was a man who cared deeply and genuinely about other people. His family was first but his patients and those with whom he worked were always aware of his care. He pointed out the importance of knowing about the patient as a whole rather than just their illness and in doing so was well placed to assist them through difficult times frequently evolving into friendships which outlasted the medical episodes.

Having such diverse interests, Jim's life after retirement from neurosurgery was very productive and happy. He and Anne regularly indulged their love of travel and he was very happy to give advice about destinations but what was most important was their spending time together.

As his daughter Jillian said in her eulogy, Jim "was always keen to get on with a job and get things done and dusted." His final illness had the same qualities. It was abrupt in onset but gave him enough time to prepare his family. His last words as he was taken to the operating theatre were to his wife: "Give me another kiss, Anne".

His funeral, which fortunately occurred before COVID restrictions, was attended by a large number of people from all facets of his life. He would have been particularly pleased at the wake in the adjacent Greek Orthodox Church Hall which he would have described happily as a "bun fight".

A humble man of great accomplishments.

*Contributed by Dr Peter McNeill, head of neurosurgery at St Vincent's Hospital, assisted by Jillian Cummins, Jim's eldest daughter.*

## **Dr Leslie (Ladislav) Sedal, MBBS, FRACP, M Ed.**

4/9/1944 - 16/11/2019

Dr Leslie Sedal, highly regarded consultant neurologist at St Vincent's Hospital, passed away in November 2019 after a long illness.

Les, an only child, came to Australia as a young boy with his parents after the Second World War to escape communist rule in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, where his father had been a dentist. Life in Australia was not easy for the family, but Les was bright, attending Elwood High School and then Melbourne High School, where he proved to be an outstanding student, graduating with first class honours in most subjects. Les and I met when we were placed at the same desk in Form 3 on our first day at Melbourne High. We remained close friends ever since.

Les had a passion for music, evident during his schoolboy days, which remained with him throughout his life. At Melbourne High School he was the school pianist and played at every assembly. He was also involved in numerous musical functions for the school. In later years, his wife, Marie-Therese, joined Les accompanying him on the cello. Les also fostered a strong love of music in his sons, Tristan and Felix.

On graduating from Melbourne High, Les studied medicine at the University of Melbourne and at the Royal Melbourne Hospital Clinical School. During his medical student years, his mother became very ill and he provided her with constant nursing care during his final year. She passed away a few weeks prior to his final examinations. Despite this difficult loss, Les sat the final exams and achieved excellent results.



After graduation, Les worked as a resident and then registrar at Prince Henry's Hospital, Melbourne. While at Prince Henry's Hospital, Les met a young nurse, Marie-Therese Elz, and after his residency they married. He gained Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and took up a position as senior registrar in neurology at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. He undertook a further two years of post-graduate training in neurology

at Queen's Square Hospital for Neurological Diseases in London, interrupted briefly by the sad death of his father.

On completion of his time in London, he and Marie came back to Australia where Les was appointed consultant neurologist at Prince Henry's Hospital. He was also appointed to the neurology unit at Bethlehem Hospital Caulfield where he served as Clinical Director of the Neurology Unit from 1978-1993. On the closure of Prince Henry's Hospital, Les joined the staff in the Department of Neurology St Vincent's Hospital, where he served for the next 25 years. At St Vincent's, he established the Department of Neuro-Immunology. Both at Bethlehem Hospital and at St Vincent's, Les was highly regarded for his work in multiple sclerosis (MS). In 2007, Les was the recipient of the John Studdy Award, Multiple Sclerosis Australia's most prestigious award, given annually, in recognition of outstanding consistent and selfless provision of meritorious service to people living with MS.

Leslie was deeply interested in medical education, so much so that he gained a Master of Education degree at the University of Melbourne. He devoted much time to teaching undergraduate, post graduate and foreign graduate students.

In addition to his hospital appointments, Leslie built up a busy private practice. He initially shared rooms with Dr Arthur Schweiger in Collins St, then opened his own practice in Lennox St. Richmond and finally worked from the private consulting rooms at St. Vincent's Hospital.

Les was an exceptionally caring and kind man and he always had time for his patients, students and colleagues. It is for these qualities he will be most remembered. Les displayed these attributes of loving kindness from a very early age, beginning with the tender care he gave to his mother.

In the final years of his life, even whilst unwell, Leslie continued to work in his private practice, as well as in the wards and clinics at St. Vincent's to help his patients as much as possible. However, gradually his health deteriorated so he closed his rooms but continued to work at St Vincent's. He was no longer able to drive his car so he rented an apartment close to the hospital in order to walk to work. This most unselfish gesture was characteristic of Les.

Les retired in 2016. As his illness progressed he could no longer manage, either in the apartment, or at home and finally moved into hospice care. He adapted particularly well to the hospice. He continued to play the piano and gave regular concerts, solo as well as accompanied by his friends. Les was loved by the staff and other residents in care.

Les accepted his illness and need for care with dignity and was always optimistic, stating that he intended to write further papers and hopefully return to his work, if and when he could. Despite his declining health, Les stubbornly refused to submit and accompanied the choir on the piano less than two weeks before he died. His final days were filled with music. He was devotedly cared for by the staff at CaSpa Care, Emerald Hill Residence, South Melbourne and the Palliative Care team from Bethlehem which he had helped set up during his time there.

His funeral was held at the Church of the Good Shepherd Convent in Abbotsford. Les would have thoroughly enjoyed the non-denominational service planned by Marie-Therese. Music was central to the service, played on his own piano, by a pianist mentor and friend. The service was attended by his family and a large number of his friends, many with life-long associations, former medical colleagues and his patients. Les was remembered by several of these people, including his two sons, in moving eulogies.

Les is survived by his wife, Marie-Therese, his son, Tristan, a barrister, and his wife, Kirsty and their young children Xavier and Alexander and his second son Felix, a doctor, and his partner Yui.

Rest in Peace Leslie.

*Contributed by Dr Arnold Singer, MBBS (Melb) FRACS FACS, urologist and St Vincent's alumnus.*

## **Dr Bryan Speed MBBS, MD, FRACP**

24/11/1944 - 26/2/2020

Bryan Speed passed away on 26 February aged 75, after a prolonged illness. Bryan was an excellent clinician whose expertise in infectious diseases was matched by excellence in acute general medicine. He, with Dr Jakov Kaldor, made significant advances in the aetiology of Guillain-Barré syndrome and with Dr David Dunt, in the epidemiology of cryptococcal disease as well as its treatment. He also made significant clinical and research contributions to the treatment of tuberculosis and HIV infection in Victoria.

Working with his second wife Barbara, the couple developed an archive of infectious diseases related historical artefacts and memorabilia at Fairfield Hospital which was later passed to the custody of the Museum of Victoria and the Australian War Memorial. Latterly some of the materials were exhibited at the Australian War Memorial as the Bryan Speed Collection.



As a young man, in the final year of high school, he was stroke of the winning eight at the Head of the River regatta held in 1962. Bryan was a seeker of science-based truth and the power of his mind was demonstrated when he graduated in medicine from the University of Melbourne via the St Vincent's Hospital Medical School in 1968 as the equal top student for the entire university cohort. Sadly his early retirement led to many years of ill health through which he was intensively supported and cared for with great love by Barbara.

Bryan was at one time secretary and treasurer and later a life member of the Australasian Society for Infectious Disease. He was a foundation member of the Doctors Reform Society and the Medical Association for the Prevention of Nuclear War. His children Luke and Madeleine have fond memories of holidays with Bryan and their mother Margaret at Wilson's Promontory. His children credit their shared love of the natural world to Bryan's passion for the wilderness and will be forever grateful for his role as loving father and academic mentor. His legacy being the precious gift of his passion and thirst for knowledge. Bryan enjoyed reading to his grandson Jules (11) and it is to be hoped both he and Vincent (3) will have some memory of him.

For those who knew him, Bryan will be remembered as a modest, idealistic man of integrity, a trusted confidante and good friend with a wry sense of humour, as well as a loving father and clinician par excellence.

*Contributed by Dr Brian Dwyer FRACP FRCPA, infectious diseases specialist and St Vincent's Alumnus.*

## **News from St Vincent's Hospital**

For up-to-date hospital news please go to the St Vincent's website  
<https://www.svhm.org.au/>.

**PS If you have read this far, please don't forget to send this newsletter to a colleague and tell that person about free membership of the Association as well as about our website (<http://stvincentsmedicalalumni.org.au/wp/>).**