

OBITUARY

**MR JOHN KENDALL FRANCIS FRACS
GENERAL SURGEON
15 FEBRUARY 1927 - 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

Kendall will be remembered for three things, his skill as a surgeon, his enthusiasm as a teacher and his compassion for those less fortunate than himself.

His initial schooling was at the East Kew State School and then at Ballarat High School. He earned his pocket money doing an early morning paper round. He started medicine at the University of Melbourne in 1944, graduating with honours in all subjects in 1949. He obtained his Master of Surgery degree in 1953, and went to Korea and Japan with the Australian Army Medical Corps.

Following this he sailed to England and obtained his FRCS in 1954. On his return to Melbourne he gained his FRACS and was appointed as a consultant to Footscray Hospital which had only just opened, and to Prince Henry's and continued as a member of the senior medical staff of both Hospitals until 1991. In 1967 he led a Prince Henry's Hospital civilian Surgical Aid team to Vietnam. The team worked at Bien Hoa, a local provincial hospital 20 Km out of Saigon. There was no political motive in Kendall's service in Vietnam. He regarded it as part of his calling as a doctor to serve those less fortunate. In Vietnam he demonstrated his surgical skill, his organisational skills as a leader and motivator and his compassion for the Vietnamese civilians. He subsequently showed those same skills during a secondment to Timor-Leste.



At Prince Henry's Hospital, he and his close friend Bob Marshall, with the support of Vernon Marshall set up a surgical unit of the highest standard. At Footscray Hospital (later Western Hospital) he similarly established a general surgery unit of the highest calibre. In the days before super-specialisation he was a master of General Surgery. His abilities in trauma surgery, honed in Korea and Vietnam, were further enhanced by the considerable trauma from the Geelong Road and the industrial area around Footscray. One colleague recalls Kendall's alacrity after a horrific collision on the Geelong Road, when he calmly sorted out the mess and prioritised the operation list.

In the 1980s the Labour State Government pursued a new plan to transfer some of the inner-city Teaching Hospitals to the expanding outer suburbs. Queen Victoria was the first to transfer to Clayton adjacent to Monash University. The next proposal for transfer was Prince Henry's when Kendall and Bob Marshall, both senior clinicians, started a hostile public campaign to try to block the transfer of Prince Henry's, initially proposed to be a new Hospital at Sunshine and later changed to join the new Monash Medical Centre at Clayton. For most of a year Kendall and Bob kept up a newspaper campaign to thwart the efforts of Tom Roper, the Labour Health Minister, to force the transfer. The staff were somewhat divided but eventually the Government plan was adopted, and Prince Henry's moved to Clayton in 1991.

Kendall joined Western Hospital Surgical team in 1956 three years after its opening. He was incidentally the young recruit to the surgical team having grown up with a working-class family background living later in Eleanor Street, Footscray not far from the future hospital's site. He observed it was a great training ground for surgical development because of the work volume and range of material. His talents initially covered all aspects of surgical technique from the abdominal region to the head and neck and upper and lower limbs. Kendall continued in this vein of a surgical service not forgetting the need for educational tuition and mentoring support for a whole stream of emerging surgical graduates. His contributions to the welfare of the hospital in a political sense meant he was on countless committees, supervising and overseeing its surgical welfare. The Kendall Francis Prize in Surgery established in the latter part of his career was for Research and Clinical commitment, and so named thanks to Dr Arlene Wake who was Western Health's Director of Community Integration. This prize became the focal point for up-and-coming surgical entities and at the annual presentation, these clinical meetings merely became a reflection of the master's talent with Kendall's input acknowledging the art and craft of surgery at the West.

Kendall married Sue Spry in 1956 and they had a daughter Louise and a son Nick. He loved his family. Later it was Lynne who shared his life and they shared many happy years together. He was passionate about AFL football. He was a staunch South Melbourne supporter and faithfully followed them when they went to Sydney and became the Sydney Swans. He loved skiing, a passion he shared with his great friend Bob Marshall, going on many trips in Australia and overseas to ski fields. Having a bet at the City and Country Race Meetings can't be omitted from the story of his busy social life.

He will be remembered for his great love for his family, his patients and his friends.

This obituary was provided by Felix Behan, David Scott, John Royle, Trevor Jones and Graham Thompson