

**OBITUARY**  
**DENIS MILES KING**  
**24 FEBRUARY 1930 – 4 JULY 2023**  
**ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON**

Denis King was born in Palmerston North to Cyril King, a general surgeon and later general practitioner, and Rena Craig, a registered nurse. A sister, Robin, was born two years later. Early education was by home schooling and Denis commenced at Huntly Preparatory School, Marton, in 1940. He attended Whanganui Collegiate School as a boarder 1943-47 where he competed in athletics and swimming and became a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> XV. Following Rena's death in 1942, Cyril married Margaret (Marnie) Buckland and a brother Christopher was born in 1945.

In 1948 Denis successfully completed the medical intermediate examinations and entered the Otago Medical School. He was a member of the university rowing eight and was awarded his MB ChB in 1954. Denis worked as a house surgeon at Palmerston North Hospital 1954-55 and the following year travelled to the UK as a ship medical officer to pursue a surgical career. There, over a five-year period, he worked as casualty officer or surgical registrar in several London hospitals gaining Fellowships of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and England. During this time he met and married Norma Cook, a New Zealand registered nurse. A daughter, Amanda, was born shortly before Denis and Norma returned to Aotearoa New Zealand (AoNZ) in 1960 following his appointment to a full-time orthopaedic surgeon at Middlemore Hospital, Auckland. A second daughter, Diana, was born the following year. During 1962 Denis obtained his FRACS.

When Norma became unwell requiring numerous hospital admissions, Denis changed his employment, in 1966 to a part-time role at Middlemore Hospital alongside private practice. Just four years later Norma died. In 1981 Amanda, who had developed a severe mental illness, took her own life. The following year Denis met Joan Pettman, a medical secretary originally from the UK, and they married in 1984.

Working at Middlemore Hospital and in private practice Denis was involved in the introduction of hip and knee replacement surgery, arthroscopic meniscectomy and below-knee total casting for tibial fractures. This mode of treatment pre-dated the evolution of internal fixation for this injury. Bryan describes Denis as "a gentleman, very polite and somewhat quietly spoken – qualities which persisted throughout his life".

Denis presented a number of papers at scientific meetings and had several papers published. Offices held included president of the Auckland Orthopaedic Society and editorial secretary for *The Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery* (JBJS) for the New Zealand Orthopaedic Association.

Denis retired from his Middlemore position in 1987 and with Joan travelled to Saudi Arabia where they each worked at a hospital in the Asir province for 18 months, taking the opportunity to enjoy trips to the Red Sea coast for camping, swimming and snorkelling. Inspired by the fascinating local scenery he resumed an interest in oil painting. Returning to AoNZ, Denis took up a part-time position at Gisborne's hospital with some private practice in addition, remaining there until 1990. Next, living on the northern shore of Lake Rotorua, Denis held a position as part-time visiting orthopaedic surgeon at Whakatane Hospital. He ceased surgical practice in 1995 and spent the next four years travelling to and from Australia completing medico-legal reporting.

In retirement Denis and Joan had a new home built by Lake Tarawera and together established an Art and Craft Gallery. Denis expanded his interest in painting, becoming a well-known landscape artist with inspiration from the local scenery, the Coromandel and the South Island. Other interests included gardening, tramping, trout fishing, overseas travel and the entertaining of many visitors. In 2004 Denis and Joan moved to a lifestyle block in Rotorua where, despite Denis' health issues which included prostate cancer, they continued their numerous activities. In 2010 they moved to Papamoa, Tauranga.

Denis King is survived by his wife Joan, daughter Diana, brother Christopher (Kester) and five step-grandchildren.

This obituary is based upon a self-penned obituary by Denis, with subsequent contributions by Bryan Thorn FRACS and Joan King.

**Dr Allan Panting FRACS**