**John William McKenzie Upjohn OAM MBBS, FRACS, FRCS (Eng).**

31 March 1931 – 1 August 2022

John was the second child born to William and Norma Upjohn. He had an older sister Rosemary and later a brother David and younger sister June. His brother David had cerebral palsy and died at the age of fourteen, a tragedy that probably made him sensitive to those less fortunate than himself and perhaps influenced his decision to study medicine.

John matriculated from Melbourne Grammar and at the young age of sixteen went off to Melbourne University to study Medicine at the Mildura Branch, which had been set up to accommodate all the returning soldiers from WW2. Graduating in 1953, he pursued post-graduate training at The Royal Melbourne Hospital where he worked under many of the local doyens of surgery before heading to England, in 1958, for three years. The journey to England was as a ship’s doctor with responsibility for the ship’s crew, which at the age of twenty-seven he evidently handled with calmness.

Importantly, whilst in England John gained his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (England) and gathered General Surgical experience at the Wittington, Barnet General, Peppard and St Helier hospitals. He returned to Melbourne in 1961, once again working his passage as a ship’s surgeon.

Back in Melbourne life became busy, as like many other young surgeons of that era, he held a number of Honorary Assistant Surgeon positions at numerous city teaching hospitals (RMH, Austin, Repatriation General and Queen Victoria hospitals), whilst seeking a permanent appointment. It was at the Austin that he first worked alongside John Fethers and in 1969 he was appointed Assistant Surgeon to Dr John Fethers at PANCH. John had now found his surgical home. Upon the untimely death of John Fethers in 1988, he became Acting Head of Unit for nearly two years until Hamish Ewing’s appointment as the inaugural Associate Professor of Surgery to PANCH in 1989. John worked tirelessly at PANCH in this unit until his retirement in 1996.

John Upjohn was a great team player, known for his gentlemanly manner, considered surgical opinion and meticulous and cautious technical skills. Ever polite and respectful to all, but firm with his patients – he was always their advocate.

The quirky side of John would appear via his eclectic general knowledge and humorous anecdotes, delivered with a straight-face and usually followed by a short but joyful laugh; characteristics for which he is fondly remembered by the staff of that era.

John’s loyal service also extended to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade where he served as Brigade Medical Officer for over thirty years. He was appointed to this position in 1964, following in the footsteps of his father Sir William Upjohn (a RACS Foundation Fellow). John is remembered by the MFB as ‘a quiet man but with an understanding of firefighters’. He would say of his firemen patients: *You have to understand that if your house is burning down, they don’t say: I’ll see you next week, so if they have a medical problem then they need to be seen now too*. His life-long service to the MFB and medicine was recognised in 2003 when he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM).

Across the generations the Upjohn family has made a commitment to the armed services with John serving as Medical Officer with the Army Reserves. In the early ‘80s this led to him taking a break from his Melbourne surgical practice to be the surgeon at RAAF Butterworth airbase in Malaysia. He reprised this service in the 2000’s, but this time in the Solomon Islands where he made several trips to Honiara as a doctor with Aspen Medical, which provided health services to the Peacekeeping Force there.

In amongst the busy times establishing himself as a young surgeon, John met young Brenda Doggett and in 1963 they were married the Melbourne Grammar Chapel. Their enduring marriage produced four children: Debbie, Ian, Suzi and Edward, and eleven grandchildren. John was immensely proud of their family.

John’s son Edward summed up his father beautifully: *I know that sometimes I should try to emulate his special way of speaking less and listening more, of thinking longer and acting with a little less haste, if I do that then I might have some of his wisdom and patience*.

Fittingly, John’s final journey was atop a vintage fire engine, surrounded by his loving family, friends, colleagues and many members of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

A true gentleman, John will be missed and remembered by so many.

(Tribute compiled by Hamish Ewing his longtime PANCH colleague with help from Edward Upjohn.)