



Douglas George Sneddon

07 June 1947 – 25 November 2021

By Allan Skirving and Dermot Collopy

Doug was an outstanding Perth orthopaedic surgeon. Born in Kurri Kurri, a small town in NSW, and later moving to Beresfield, outside of Newcastle, it was this country upbringing that fostered in Doug a lifelong love of nature and the outdoors.



After completing his schooling in Newcastle, he gained a cadetship with BHP and studied chemistry, graduating B.Sc Newcastle University in 1968. Seeking a more challenging career, he moved to Sydney, found a job at Boral Oil Refinery, and commenced first year medicine. He then took a year off to save some money and it was here he met the love of his life, Helen, at a Youth Hostels of Australia meeting. They married soon after, and the university years that followed were filled with hard work and fun. He remained lifelong friends with his medical student colleagues and regularly caught up with them on visits to Sydney.

He graduated MBBS from Sydney University in 1975, undertook intern years in Sydney, then relocated with Helen to Perth to start a family, soon welcoming daughter Bronwyn and son David. Here in Perth his interest in surgery and orthopaedics was realised, and he completed the WA orthopaedic training scheme 1983. After a 12-month UK stint as a locum consultant in Plymouth, he returned to Perth in 1986 and accepted the prized consultant positions at Royal Perth and Royal Perth Rehabilitation hospitals. It was here, at his beloved Royal Perth, that Doug forged a career as an orthopaedic trauma surgeon that spanned nearly 25 years and saw his skills recognised nationally and internationally.

Doug's dedication to orthopaedic trauma care was outstanding, with long hours spent in the trauma theatre. His interest was piqued when his colleague John Kagi introduced the Ilizarov technique to Perth in the early 1990s and it was here that Doug found his life work. He developed vast experience in the use of Ilizarov technique for complex upper- and lower-limb trauma, and was acknowledged as world expert, often invited to North American and European trauma societies to share his experience. His work saw him awarded the Evelyn Hamilton Trust Prize for the Best Scientific Paper at the 1996 Combined Scientific Meeting.

Out of the operating room, Doug had a great zest for life. He was an avid 4WD enthusiast, bushwalker, skier and family man. He loved everything about the outdoors, especially being in remote places in the bush seated around a camp fire surrounded by family and friends.

Sadly, soon after attending the 2021 August WA ASM, Doug was diagnosed with an incurable condition, and died peacefully surrounded by his family just a few short months later.

Professor Allan Skirving, Doug's HOD for 20-years, spoke of Doug at his retirement ceremony: "In any department, there are always some members who are reluctant to contribute to the workings of the department, even when requested. Then there are some, the majority perhaps, who will contribute but sometimes need persuasion. Then there are a rare few who never need to be asked" and you will not be surprised to hear that Doug Sneddon was one of those rare few.

Royal Perth Hospital prides itself on the motto, 'Servio' ... or Service, and none lived that ideal better than Doug Sneddon. Doug was a skilled surgeon and patient teacher and mentor who for over thirty years delivered world-class care to the people of Perth and WA. He was an acknowledged world expert on Ilizarov technique. He provided wise counsel to other surgeons in the most difficult cases, and every surgeon in Perth deferred to Doug. The standard answer to complex trauma cases across all Perth hospitals was: "Send it to Doug".



Vale Doug Sneddon. You will be missed.

