

Swinburne, Truman George (1907-1967)

Truman George Swinburne (known as 'George') was born at Wangaratta in 1907, the second of three children. He lived at Bobinawarra and attended the local State school, after riding ten miles to school daily. He early showed an interest in country affairs, which was to stay with him for the remainder of his life. He subsequently came to Melbourne in 1919, where he attended Melbourne High School; he matriculated in 1924, and commenced his studies at the University of Melbourne in 1925, entering Ormond College in 1926.

His medical course was distinguished by his interest in work, and he showed ability to apply himself to the work in hand. He was enthusiastic at football, lacrosse and athletics, represented Ormond College over a number of years and played for the University Blues football team. He was also a very competent rifle shot. During his university years he was able to maintain his place both at the University and at College by his success in winning scholarships.

His university years were completed in 1930, and he went to the then Melbourne Hospital, where he first met Dr. G. C. Scantlebury, who was to initiate him into ear, nose and throat surgery. He completed his senior year in 1932, at the height of the economic depression, and medical practice offered only locum-tenens work over the next year; but this enabled him to save sufficient money to proceed to London. There he lived for two years at London House, while he completed both parts of the examinations for Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, England. During this time he attended the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital, Gray's Inn Road, and received his basic training in his future specialty. In 1935 he went to Birmingham, where in the industrial midlands he had extensive surgical experience.

In February 1936, he married Enid Stobie in London, and he returned to Melbourne in August, 1936. He commenced practice in Melbourne, and rapidly built up an extensive practice until 1939, when he enlisted in the A.I.F., and subsequently went overseas with the 2/12 Australian General Hospital. During the war years he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and at the termination of hostilities he was in charge of the 2/16 Field Ambulance.

On completion of his war service he resumed specialist practice, was appointed to the Central Hospital and was also an assistant surgeon at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. During the next ten years he established his association with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, where he was for many years (1949 to 1962) examiner in oto-laryngology. During this time, he wrote extensively on his specialty, with particular regard to aspects of special pathology.

Enthusiasm and intense application were seen in all his activities - the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the National Health & Medical Research Council, the Council of the World Medical Association, the Rotary Club, and especially a dream very much his own—namely, the acceptance by the authorities of the University of Melbourne of the establishment of a chair of oto-laryngology. He was involved in the early developments in surgery of the stapes bone of the ear, procedures which were to revolutionize the lives of hundreds of deaf people.

He was elected to both the Council of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association and Federal Councils of the Association. He was President of AMAV in 1956.

George Swinburne was survived by his wife and four children, two daughters and two sons.

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Sources: Obituaries, MJA 1967, p.793

