



Obituary



John Roy Mackay Miller 26.06.1921 ~ 09.10.2014

It is difficult to condense Roy's 93 years of achievement and distinctions. Born in Croydon south of London in the UK on June 26th, 1921 his undergraduate training took place at King's College Hospital, London. His interest in surgery coincided with the outbreak of World War II and his surgical training was expedited during the early 1940's, such that he was able to do part of his surgical training while still a medical student. Some of this took place in Glasgow, Scotland. During his time at King's as a junior doctor he literally bumped into his future wife, Mary, one night in 1943 during the black-out when she was still a medical student. Married two years later Roy's training included East Grinstead where he worked with the father of modern-day Plastic Surgery, Archie McIndoe, a New Zealander, Roy being awarded the FRCS in 1946.

Called up to do his British military service in his capacity as a surgeon, he was sent out to Kenya. Having spent two happy years in Mombasa he became a Provincial Surgeon and was posted to several small hospitals serving large populations with very little support in the way of lab facilities or X-rays. Serving together in Kisumu in north-western Kenya for eight years Mary first developed her interest in Anaesthetics, often working with Roy on operative cases. In 1958 he was recommended, by his senior colleague Bill Kirkaldy-Willis, an orthopaedic surgeon, for a post as Consultant Surgeon in Nairobi. Cliff Braimbridge, in particular, was his surgical mentor early on, and Roy was promoted to Senior Specialist in 1972, spending 28 years at the Kenyatta National Hospital and Nairobi Hospital, ultimately appointed Chief Surgeon for Kenya, and personal surgeon to the



founding President of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta.

Roy enjoyed a busy general surgical and vascular private practice in Nairobi, sharing consulting rooms with well-known surgeons Gerald Nevill and Imre Loeffler. Over the years he became a doyen of the surgical fraternity in Kenya, was a founding member of the Association of Surgeons of East Africa and is fondly remembered to this day.

During his career Roy published on a variety of surgical topics, his main interests were portal hypertension and cancer of the oesophagus. In 1981, he and his son Brian, who subsequently became a senior well respected surgeon and academic in Brisbane, Australia, set up the first Endoscopy service in Kenya. In 1986, aged 65, Roy retired from surgery and migrated with Mary to Australia to join family in Victoria. Home moves to Canberra and northern New South Wales followed, to enjoy the blessings of their two children, Brian and Wendy, two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren..

A strong character, Roy had a very perceptive mind. One of the hallmarks of a true professional is to be able to encourage and inspire one's juniors, and herein he excelled. Numerous surgical

trainees remember him with affection and gratitude, having become senior surgeons in public or private or professorial posts. His distinguished career led to an OBE award at an Investiture ceremony held in Nairobi in 1975, in recognition of his service to health care in Africa.

A number of diverse interests outside of Surgery were pursued with customary vigour, particularly dinghy sailing, being the manager of the Kenya Olympic sailing team at the Rome Olympics in 1960, having won numerous sailing trophies both on the Kavirondo Gulf at Kisumu and at the Nairobi Dam. Roy loved to sail on Lake Naivasha in the Rift Valley, winning the East African Fireball championship there in 1982, and his sailing continued in Australia. Quite late in life he mastered computer skills, reading the BMJ and Time Magazine till the week he passed away.

In closing, Roy Miller was a surgeon's surgeon and a mentor to many. He and Mary, somewhat incapacitated for the last 15 years of her life, were married for 70 years. Roy lovingly took care of her with devotion, respect and support. Her passing in August 2014 was followed just three weeks later by his own demise on September 20th 2014.

Prof. Frank Branicki,
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Mary Miller



Mary and Roy Miller

On behalf of the Editorial Board and the readers of the East and Central African Journal of Surgery, I extend our most Heartfelt condolences to the children Brian and Wendy and the grandchildren for the loss of their dear parents and grandparents within such a short time interval.

Having worked in Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi when Roy Miller was The Chief Surgeon, I still recall the guidance, we young surgeons of the time received from him. He was a mentor, a role model and a leader to us. His contribution to the advancement of surgery in the East African region in general and in Kenya in particular, was tremendous. His efforts were not in vain.

We pray for the family to gather the courage to bear this great loss.

May the souls of Roy and Mary Miller Rest in Eternal Peace.

Ignatius Kakande

*Editor in Chief,
East and Central African Journal of Surgery*