



William 'Bill' Norman Gilmour

14 June 1922 – 2 December 2021

By Graham Forward

William Norman Gilmour was born at Lockhart, NSW, on the 14 June 1922.

Following his education at Wagga Wagga and the University of NSW, Bill married Shirley Butters after qualifying as an orthopaedic surgeon in the UK in 1952. Bill was recruited to commence practice in Perth by Alec Dawkins, and Bill and Shirley arrived in Perth in September 1952.

In 1954, in the midst of the poliomyelitis epidemic, Bill was appointed junior consultant at Royal Perth Hospital and Shenton Park annexe, which was the infectious diseases hospital for polio. He was almost full-time with polio surgery at Shenton Park on a one-in-two trauma roster at Royal Perth Hospital in the midst of developing the WA Orthopaedic Association and planning trauma services at Royal Perth Hospital.

A hallmark of his career was his commitment to teaching, and many orthopaedic surgeons, operating room nurses and physiotherapists are the beneficiaries of his analytical mind and generous attitude towards teaching. Bill had private rooms on the corner of Milligan Street and St Georges Terrace until he purchased 20 Colin Street, West Perth in 1958 with Plastic Surgeon, Harold McComb. In 1962, he and Frank Bell visited the orthopaedic centres of the world, where Bill's intellect and attitude made him a famous figure in world orthopaedics. He was a stalwart of the Australian Orthopaedic Association, regularly attending and giving papers on a wide range of subjects, usually accompanied by detailed anatomical studies. He was an examiner, known as the 'smiling assassin', for the Royal Australian College of Surgeons for ten years during the 70s and was president of the Australian Orthopaedic Association in 1984.

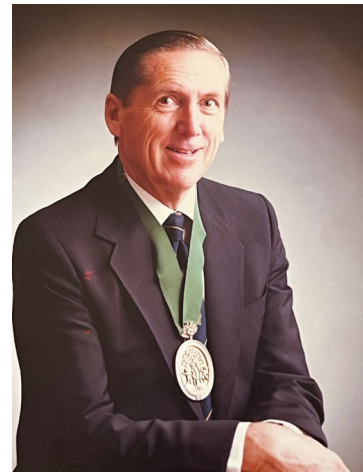
In 1971 he visited Indonesia with a care programme training mission and in the 1980s went to Flores on a mission with Jack Kagi and Tim Keenan.

Orthopaedic surgery today is highly specialised. Bill was a master of many of these specialities, describing his own pathway as trauma throughout with polio and paediatric surgery as priorities. He was highly skilled at hand surgery and rheumatoid arthritis surgery, which was common until the disease-modifying medication reduced its incidence. Bill was the sports surgeon in Perth in the 60's and 70's and was an earlier adopter of modern joint replacement surgery. During all this time he maintained a strong interest and ran the bone tumour registry with Pathologist John Blackwell and Radiologist Peter Braidahl, meetings which still continue in a modified form today.

His systematic thinking and knowledge of developmental anatomy enabled him to revolutionise the treatment of club foot in babies in Australia. Bill used sequential plaster of Paris and boots with excellent results. This technique is used worldwide and known as the Ponsetti method, but it really should be called the Gilmour method.

Supported by Shirley during their 69-year marriage, Bill was a committed family man and his children, Jenny, Jacqui, Peter, Chris and Michael, have all had successful lives, living in Western Australia and producing their own children and grandchildren.

Beyond orthopaedics, Bill was a keen participant and member of Royal Kings Park Tennis Club, Peppermint Grove Tennis Club and Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club. Whilst not as accomplished as his sons, he brought enthusiasm and joy to his fellow competitors. He was a





keen farmer with an extensive knowledge and great interest in learning modern farming techniques. The Gilmour family continue to run a large agricultural enterprise farming Wagyu beef at Two Peoples Bay.

Bill passed away peacefully at Hollywood Hospital on the 2 December 2021. Over 400 people attended a celebration of his life in the presence of many medical colleagues, students, former patients and families. We heard and agreed that he was a humble, inspirational and positive man with a legacy of formidable orthopaedic achievements. Orthopaedic surgery is surely going to miss him.