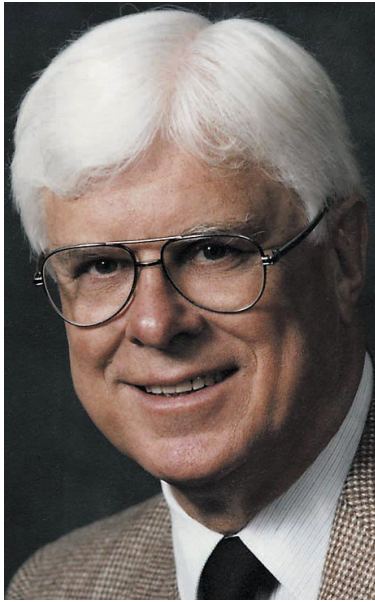




Brian Douglas Stringer

One day Brian Stringer was wearing Christ's College uniform. The next, he was in air force garb. It was 1940 and World War 2 was underway. Stringer had walked out the school gates and almost immediately in the gates of Wigram Air Force base to enlist, says his sister, Barbara Blackie.



The wartime pilot went on to become a surgeon, working for more than 30 years in the United States, although he remained very much a New Zealander.

Stringer died in Medford, Oregon recently He was 83.

Born and raised on a remote Waikato farm, Stringer received his early education from the Correspondence School. He retained an interest in farming, which was to help him in later life. Stringer's father had been to Christ's College and sent his son there as a boarder in the mid-1930s.

After flying training, he was posted as a fighter pilot to Malaya, in 1941. His sister remembers a letter he wrote urging the family not to worry about him. The Japanese would never get past Singapore, he assured them.

Soon after, his unit was forced to leave Malaya, as the Japanese captured Singapore and swept onwards. Stringer and his fellow pilots were ordered to fly to Jakarta, where they were evacuated by an Australian warship.

Stringer served the rest of the war in the Pacific. First, he flew Kittyhawk fighter aircraft. Then he shuttled Catalina flying boats from San Francisco to the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal, where they were used for supply and rescue missions.

After the war, he studied medicine at Otago University, did his house residency at Christchurch Hospital, then established a general practice in Upper Riccarton.

Stringer was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1954 and went to Harvard Medical School in Boston for specialist training in surgery. There he met American Jane Durno, whom he married.

Further surgical training in England and Scotland followed. Stringer became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1956. He returned to the US, working at his father-in-law's surgical practice in Medford.

He and his wife spent a year in New Zealand, after which Stringer worked briefly as a vascular surgeon in San Francisco. They moved to Medford again in 1958, where he practised for the next 30 years.

On his retirement, he became medical director for the Rogue Valley Physicians' Service and Blue Cross Shield. He enjoyed his affiliations with many national and international surgical and medical associations.

While living in Oregon, Stringer entered public life with election to local and state boards, dealing mostly with irrigation and water rights. His farming background helped him understand issues. It also helped him manage the eight-hectare farmlet he bought as a retirement activity; he grew mainly pears on it.

He remained deeply interested in aviation, although he did not retain his pilot's licence after the war. He enjoyed reading and travel. He was most fond of good Scotch whisky and prime-rib dinners.

Barbara Blackie says Stringer was a caring person and placed great importance on education. When his daughters were at university, he paid the fees for two unknown, talented students chosen by their school headmasters as needy causes. More recently, he endowed a scholarship at Christ's College.

He was affable and made friends easily. He could relate to people at all levels and had amazing ability to remember them. His popularity led to him being a best man and godfather more times than his sister could count.

Stringer always regarded himself as a New Zealander and always spoke like one, his sister says. He had copies of *The Press* mailed to him regularly and demonstrated a deeper knowledge of New Zealand events than many residents had. He visited home often.

"He was quick to share his homespun moral philosophy, wit and humour with his family and friends," his sister says. He often reflected on the gift and marvel of life, "and aimed to live it with dignity".

Brian Douglas Stringer, born Waikato, April 1, 1922; died Oregon, August 29, 2005; survived by his wife Jane, daughters Susan and Judy and five grandchildren.

This obituary entitled *War pilot and top surgeon* originally appeared in *The Press* newspaper (Christchurch) on September 10 and was written by Mike Crean. We are also grateful to Bruce Rennie and Carol Ashby of *The Press*.