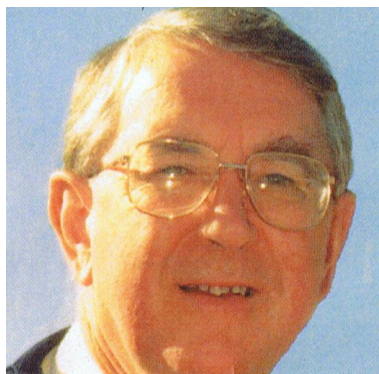




Richard Arthur Cartwright

Richard was born on 1 March 1931 in Leeston, Canterbury. His father was the headmaster of the local primary school. The family were strong presbyterians and Richard acquired a faith that was to serve him well throughout his life. His secondary schooling was at St Andrews College, Christchurch as a boarder. He excelled at mathematics.



After school, Richard attended Canterbury University College where he gained a BSc in Chemistry. He then moved to Dunedin to the Otago University Medical School. He lived at Knox during his studies which saw him graduate MB ChB in 1955.

The many friendships he made in his Dunedin years were strong: the class of '55 always seemed close-knit and Richard was instrumental in maintaining links with classmates.

His house surgeon years were spent in Christchurch in 1956–7. He then had a year as a registrar in Gore. He returned to Leeston in 1959 to join Dr Bill Volckman in rural general practice.

In 1960 he married Caroline Curtis who was working in the Pathology Department of Christchurch Hospital. Their four children were born while they lived in Leeston.

The Cartwright family moved to Christchurch in 1969. Richard purchased a solo general practice in the east-end of Cashel Street. After a few years with the loss of some neighbouring general practitioners, Richard was instrumental in setting up the Linwood Avenue Medical Centre where he remained working conscientiously for the rest of his professional life. He took the role of senior partner and was the moderator and adjudicator in the practice. His influence was most recognised when he left.

Richard had a busy obstetric practice in the days when general practitioners still attended the majority of deliveries. He was a dedicated police surgeon for many years, never complaining at the out-of-hours calls to often difficult prisoners. He attended many Pacific regional conferences about medicine and the police. He was also an advisor to Health Benefits Ltd, plus a member of the Medical Disciplinary Committee of the New Zealand Medical Association and subsequently of the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal of the New Zealand Medical Council. He was noted for his fairness and humour and the accurate detail of his written reports.

But his major interest was in the College of General Practitioners. In 1961, he joined the Canterbury Faculty of the English College as it was in the early days. In 1974, the New Zealand College of General Practitioners was formed as the links with the English College were severed. Richard worked tirelessly as the National Honorary Secretary to the Colleges from 1974 to 1976, that is before and during the time of the formation of our independent College.

He would devote every Sunday morning to his College secretarial work, meticulously ensuring that the College functioned as well as humanly possible. Together with John Musgrove as President and John Puddle as General Secretary, the transition was smooth and painless. Richard was Honorary Treasurer to the College from 1980 to 1984 and he was elected President of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners in 1985.

Richard was a Member of the College Board of Censors from 1978 to 1981. He received a bronze medal from the College in 1983 in recognition of his services and he was also elected a distinguished Fellow of Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners in 2000, a particular honour. Indeed, all New Zealand general practitioners owe Richard a great debt for his work for the College and general practice over many years.

In 1986, he was awarded a Fellowship by the English Royal College of General Practitioners and he was in London to receive the tribute. A weekly lunchtime meeting at Rotary was fitted into his busy schedule, a community commitment in which he took a range of leadership roles.

Richard was an elder of the St Paul's Trinity Pacific Church in Christchurch and his work among the Samoan community and parishioners was little known outside the church. They held him in such high regard that six fellow elders carried his casket into the church for his funeral.

Eight years ago Richard suffered a major cerebrovascular accident which left him with a right hemiplegia and near total aphasia. As he confirmed, all the information and thoughts continued to go round in his head but it was painfully difficult to get his ideas out. For a man who had such an excellent memory and paid so much attention to detail, it must have been a terrible eight years. Yet, over this time he remained calm and usually quietly accepting of his condition. He had always been a gentleman and he remained so.

Last year he developed a cancer of the bowel which was not curable. Again he accepted his illness with a quiet acceptance, a philosophical tranquillity, and an inner strength that amazed us all.

In November 2005, a 50th Jubilee reunion of the medical class of 1955 was held in Dunedin. In spite of failing health, Richard went and enjoyed a last contact with his old friends. It was a very special time for him.

Richard died quietly on 27 April 2006. His funeral was held at the St Andrew's College Chapel where he was farewelled by a church full of his family, friends, and colleagues.

He is survived by his wife, Caroline, as well as their four children and seven grandsons.

Dr Lanktree Davies (Retired GP, Christchurch) wrote this obituary.