

OBITUARY

Gerard William Crock AO, FRANZCO,

1. Professor Gerard William Crock, died peacefully at home on 23rd December 2007. He was a compassionate and considerate physician; an extraordinarily gifted clinician, a highly innovative microsurgeon and an inspiring teacher.

2. Gerard Crock was born in Perth in 1929 as one of identical twins. Both twins were educated by the Jesuits in Perth and together they entered medical school at the University of Melbourne where they shared various prizes and graduated at the top of their year 1953. In 1956 Gerard married Jacqueline Bladin and founded a great partnership.

Gerard trained in ophthalmology at Moorfields in London and then travelled through the USA on a Harkness Foundation Fellowship that included time at the Wilmer Institute.

3. In 1963 at the age of 34 Gerard was appointed the foundation Ringland Anderson Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Melbourne. This was the first medical specialty chair in Australia and only the second chair in ophthalmology in the British Commonwealth.

Gerard established the Melbourne University Department of Ophthalmology (MUDO) and much of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital as it is today. He founded and directed the Retinal Unit until he "retired" to a busy private practice in 1987. He specialised in retina, cornea and glaucoma and was one of Melbourne's leading cataract surgeons.

He was a pioneer in retinal imaging including stereo-photography, fluorescein angiography, and cinematography and also retinal laser photocoagulation. He had Australia's first academic scanning electron microscope and amongst his many studies were those on the bionic ear that Professor Graeme Clarke was developing on the floor above. He helped established the innovative and well know Low Vision Clinic at Kooyong.

Gerard was one of Australia's pioneering microsurgeons. With Jean-Marie Parel and Ljubomir Pericic, Gerard invented a range of microsurgical and other instrumentation; including the Schultz-Crock binocular indirect ophthalmoscope that won a Prince Phillip Design award (1975); the stereo retinal camera; and the circular corneal cutter. His highly successful collaboration with Jean Marie Parel, Ed Norton and Robert Machemer developed the vitreous infusion suction cutter (VISC) range of vitrectomy instruments that laid one of the bases for modern retinal surgery.

4. His large practice included the community's leaders but also people from all walks of life. Many of his patients became long-standing friends and maintained contact with him

over many years. His primary interest was always in his patients as people first: however interesting or rare their condition, they were never merely 'cases'.

Gerard combined his considerable clinical skills and his talent for insightful innovation with his gifts as an inspiring teacher. Gerard's skill and enthusiasm made it hard to understand why everyone did not want to become an ophthalmologist. Gerard trained a generation of ophthalmologists across Australia as well as many international fellows who remember their time in Melbourne fondly.

5. He enjoyed a remarkable bond with his equally talented twin brother Harry and they enjoyed a legendary ability to finish each other's sentences. Gerry and Harry were so often mistaken for each other that they adopted a life-long policy of acknowledging salutations from confused strangers.

As a member of the International Council for Ophthalmology from 1966 to 1973, Gerard played an important role in establishing relations with China in 1973. Gerard was a founding member of the Academia. He held chair was XV from 1976 until 1989 when he received emeritus status. He was followed in this chair by Clement McCulloch (1989-1999) and now Bill Tasman (1999-). He was a Hospitaller of St John's Eye Hospital in Jerusalem for over 30 years. His contributions were recognised by appointments as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1985; and as a Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem in 1990.

During his long cancer related illness Gerard celebrated 50 years of marriage and the arrival of his eighteenth grandchild. He is survived by his wife and their 6 children.

Professor Hugh R Taylor AC
University of Melbourne