

## Michael Hugh Mulvihille Ryan AM, President of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia (OSA), 1965 – 1966

Hugh Ryan was one of the founding members of the College and was involved in the development of the College Coat of Arms. He also served on the foundation committee of the ORIA.

Raised in a staunch Catholic family, service to others was preached and practised. After graduating in medicine from the University of Melbourne in 1936 with first class honours he was appointed as a RMO at St Vincents Hospital Melbourne from 1937 to 1938, continuing his medical career in ophthalmology after demobilisation from the RAAF at the end of WWII. From 1946 to 1948 he worked as registrar tutor at Moorfields hospital, gaining both the London DOMS and the English Fellowship. On returning to Australia he resumed his association with St Vincents Hospital becoming Head of the Department in 1968, and was appointed as Consultant Ophthalmologist to the Royal Womens' Hospital from 1950 to 1972. From 1960 he continued his association with the RAAF and became consultant ophthalmic surgeon with the rank of Group Captain.

Hugh was appointed to the Court of Examiners of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1962 and served as an active member of the Court for 10 years. He assisted Kate Campbell with her research on retrolental fibroplasia in premature babies for which she received world acclaim. Hugh produced a paper entitled "Retrolental Fibroplasia: a clinic-pathological study" which was published in the American Journal of Ophthalmology in 1952. In recognition of his service to medicine, his hospital and his church, he was created a Papal Knight in the Order of Knight Commander of St Gregory the Great in 1965. In 2005 he was awarded Member of the Order of Australia for service to medicine, particularly in the field of ophthalmology as a practitioner and researcher.

The main issues dealt with during Hugh's term as President of the OSA were:

- Investigation of legal aspects in setting up a corporation;
- Drawing up of a draft Constitution with recommendations by a committee under the chairmanship of KG Howsam;
- Draft Constitution with recommendations circulated to State Sections for comment, and to all members of the Society for consideration at the next Annual General Meeting (amended Constitution ultimately passed at the 1967 AGM);
- Fifth General Assembly of the AMA – resolution from the OSA adopted as follows:  
"It is the policy of the AMA that complete medical training and qualification remain the minimum requirements for professional registration as an unsupervised practitioner in the direction, exclusion, assessment, therapy and management of eye diseases";
- OSA Prize in Ophthalmology for 5<sup>th</sup> year medical student who gained 1<sup>st</sup> place in viva voce and clinical exams first awarded by University of Melbourne with the expectation that further OSA Prizes would be awarded by other Universities during the year;
- Twenty-sixth Annual General and Scientific Meeting held in Rotorua as a conjoint meeting with the Ophthalmological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ).

As the Twenty-sixth Annual General and Scientific Meeting was organised by the OSNZ, the Presidential Address was given by the President of the OSNZ and there is no record of Hugh Ryan having given a Presidential Address.

With the establishment and incorporation of the Australian College of Ophthalmology (ACO) in 1969, matters such as a Coat of Arms and academic dress were considered, and the Executive requested Hugh (who had a personal interest in heraldic matters) and Edward Ryan to look into a suitable design for the Coat of Arms. The design submitted to Council was a shield resting on a grassy mound and supported on one side by the Lion of England and on the other by the Eagle of the USA, symbolising the debt that Australian Ophthalmologists owed to these countries. Above the shield was a helmet partly covered with a cloth and a wreath, surmounted by a kangaroo carrying a flaming torch – the "torch of knowledge". The shield contained the sun, representing light and life, the staff of Aesculapius with a single serpent, which is a familiar and universal symbol in medicine, and the eye of Horus; to the latter a stalk and tail were added to represent the "Rx" used in writing a prescription. The motto was *Ut Videamus* (that we may see) but Council decided on *Ut Videant* (that they may see). The proposed Crest was submitted to the Royal College of Heraldry (RCH) following granting by Her Majesty the Queen in 1977 the right to use the prefix Royal, and the name of the College was appropriately altered. Advice of approval of the College's Grant of Arms was received in 1981 and ultimate approval in the form of the Letters Patent arrived in mid-1982 following minor changes suggested by the RCH. The Letters Patent, which is a work of art and calligraphy, was framed and is on display in the College office to this day.

Outside his profession, Hugh found time to indulge in painting, golf, tennis, spearfishing, beekeeping (apiary) and travel. He was a foundation member of the AMA Arts group and helped to found the AMA film society. He was married and father to three daughters