

Edward Vanderbyl Waddy Pockley, President of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia (OSA), 1966 – 1967

Doctor Waddy Pockley was one of the founding members of the College having served as President of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia (OSA) during discussions on the formation of the College.

The grandson of Dr Frank Antil Pockley, who was a pioneer ophthalmologist, he was born in Sydney in 1909 but his father died when he was a child, and he and his brother were brought up by their mother on her own. He was educated at Barker College then T.A.S. (The Armidale School), Armidale, NSW. Following his graduation in Medicine from Sydney University he became a resident at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital before undertaking specialist training in eye diseases at Oxford and London in England. On his return to Sydney he joined his paternal uncle, Dr Granville Waddy who was an eye specialist in private practice. Waddy Pockley was appointed Honorary Ophthalmic Surgeon on the staff at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital before WWII. Because of an injury to one of his legs he was unable to serve in the war and became a pioneer in the introduction of intra-capsular cataract surgery in the early 1950s. He assisted in the training of undergraduate medical students as well as in the post-graduate training of ophthalmic registrars. He was also an examiner at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) and was active as a referee in medico-legal proceedings.

During his term as President:

- The draft of the proposed constitution for a College was considered;
- Incorporation of the OSA was considered;
- A change of name from OSA to an Australian College of Ophthalmologists was debated;
- Academic goals were considered;
- Amendments were made to lectures for optometrists;
- A Standing Committee on Optometry was set up;
- Visual Standards for Drivers of Commonwealth Cars were introduced.

In his Presidential address he talked about his interest in ophthalmology being initially awakened at undergraduate level by Granville Waddy and being indebted to Granville Waddy, Dr Colin Ross and Sir Norman Gregg for subsequent nurturing and invaluable experience. He described Australian ophthalmology being shaped by the conservative approach of the British schools of training, and commented on the more progressive advances being made on the Continent and the USA, particularly regarding intra-capsular cataract surgery. He described the process of cataract removal and the advances that had been made in eye surgery. He described how with the development of air travel, advances in specific eye surgeries were brought to Australia from overseas. He encouraged the concept of a more even balance of training between the clinics of the USA and the UK for young graduates: "that contact with overseas clinics is essential if those who practise ophthalmology in this country are to reach and maintain high standards and keep abreast of current trends". However, he pointed out that for most, the cost of overseas travel and academic study made it almost impossible to pursue but that Sir Norman Gregg had made his breakthrough with clinical research. He then championed the idea of a Chair of Eye Health at the University of Sydney in the hope that it would provoke constructive discussion and even accelerate opportune and enlightened decisions.

In his spare time Waddy Pockley relaxed on a cattle property in the Southern Highlands of NSW.