

## Reuben Hertzberg, CBE, AM, President of the Australian College of Ophthalmologists, 1970 - 1971

Reuben Hertzberg was born on 19 April 1914 and died in 2001 at age 87 years. He was married, and father of two daughters, Cleo and Robbie. He graduated with a BSc (Syd) 1935; M Soc Sc (NSW) 1937; MB BS (Syd) 1939; DO (Melb) 1946; MACO 1946; FRACS 1948. He served in the AIF from 1941 to 1946 as Captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps, in the Middle East.

In 1945 Reuben was seconded to the then Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, and Concord Military Hospital, to train as an ophthalmologist, obtaining a Diploma of Ophthalmology from Melbourne. In the 1940s when Reuben entered Ophthalmology, there was no resident training program, no lectures or demonstrations in ophthalmology, no University Departments of Ophthalmology, so no Professors of Ophthalmology. However, the senior ophthalmologists at the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital had trained in Great Britain and Australian Ophthalmology equalled that of most other countries. The Ophthalmological Society of Australia had been founded in 1939. After his demobilisation in 1946 he commenced practice at Hurstville, NSW and was invited to write ophthalmological abstracts and review books for the *Medical Journal of Australia* and *Excerpta Medica*. He obtained Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1948.

From 1946 to 1974 he served at St George Hospital on the Honorary Medical Staff, as mentor and teacher, and at the same time he served on the visiting outpatient medical staff of the Repatriation Department. From 1949 to 1979 he was a Visiting Consultant at Concord Repatriation Hospital and from 1947 to 1979 was on the Honorary Medical Staff as mentor and teacher at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children where he came directly under the influence of Sir Norman McAlister Gregg and ultimately took over his clinical responsibilities. Eventually Reuben became Australia's most experienced paediatric ophthalmologist. From 1949 to 1952 he was also a member of the Council of the Medical Eye Service of NSW. In 1960 he was appointed to the Honorary Consulting Staff at Prince of Wales and Prince Henry's Hospitals and in 1961 became Chair of the NSW Branch of the OSA. From 1962 to 1972 he served on the Council of the OSA and the newly formed Australian College of Ophthalmologists. From 1953 to 1967 he was Editor of *Transcripts of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia*, being appointed as Chair in 1958. Whilst President, in 1971 he took an active role in setting up a more frequent publication entitled *Australian Journal of Ophthalmology*, and was appointed as Chair of the Editorial Committee.

As governments became increasingly involved in the delivery of health care, medico-political activities escalated. The 1960's were medico-politically difficult, especially in regards to relationships with non-medical providers of eye care. Reuben Hertzberg was a pillar of strength in guiding Ophthalmology through those difficult times, while the AMA carried the responsibility to negotiate with government.

In 1966 he was appointed to the RACS Board of Examiners in Basic Sciences in Physiology of the Eye, when the Primary Examination for Fellowship was modified to a division devoted to Ophthalmology. In 1970 he was appointed to the RACS Court of Examiners for Final Examinations, and in 1975 he became examiner at the first conjoint examination of RACO and RACS. In 1966 he was elected to the Board of the ORIA; Chair of the Research Committee in 1969; and Chair of the Board of Management in 1972. He delivered Council Lectures in 1967 and 1973 and was appointed Visiting Consultant in Paediatric Ophthalmology to the Sydney Eye Hospital in 1976. He played a major role in the establishment and funding of the Chairs of Ophthalmology at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales. Those who trained under him not only gained the professional aspects of Ophthalmology from a learned teacher, but the much wider advice on how to conduct private practice. Reuben instilled in those who worked with him the importance of ethical values and of compassion in dealing with patients. Ron Lowe said of him that the self-compiled entry in the "Medical Directory of Australia" gave a very meagre indication of the services of this modest man.

In his Presidential Address in 1971 Reuben covered the clinical changes that had taken place in Paediatric Ophthalmology during his 25 years' experience with children at that stage. During his dissertation on the various diseases he paid tribute to the work of Kate Campbell of Melbourne which drew the attention of the world to the relationship between oxygen therapy in premature babies and retrolental fibroplasia. Many of his own publications deal with Paediatric Ophthalmology and the aetiology of congenital cataracts.

In 1982 he was created Commander of British Empire (CBE); in 1994 he was created Member of Order of Australia (AM); and he was awarded the College Medal in 1996 for his broad and dedicated service to the College. Reuben enjoyed company, conversation, social occasions, his family, reading, music, gardening, and playing bowls.