

Dr Peter Murray Last – OAM, MBBS, FRCP, FRACP, FRACMA

23 November 1929 – 5 July 2019



THE impressive gathering of family, friends and colleagues at St Columba's Anglican Church on Friday 12 July 2019 is testament to the people whose lives Peter influenced and inspired over 89 extraordinary years of life, 63 years of devoted and loving marriage, and an eclectic career spanning four decades.

Academically, Peter was an exceptional student. Over the years he accumulated numerous academic awards and prizes and won coveted school and university scholarships. He completed Leaving Honours only days before his 15th birthday, but was too young to be admitted to university. His school sensibly suggested that he return and repeat his matriculation, this time studying humanities rather than science subjects.

Peter met nurse, Jenny Robertson, at Royal Adelaide Hospital and they were married on 8 October 1955. They complemented each other perfectly. She brought enormous energy and enthusiasm to his life, and her influence and that of his best friend and cousin, David Judell, introduced some irreverence and a different way of looking at the world and never allowed him to take himself too seriously. Most importantly, they distracted him from spending his whole life studying.

The family hosted seven international students over 10 years at their home in Unley Park. In time Peter became President of AFS in South Australia and served on the national board. He was also deeply honoured to be made a Life Member of the organisation he felt so passionately about.

While a teenager, Peter was introduced to the infinite joys and challenges of sailing by his cousin David Judell and he loved it, eventually joining Dave's crew on *Jedda*. Peter raced his yacht *Kareelah* successfully, winning an off-shore trophy and competing in all the local races. Cruising became the family's annual Christmas holiday and Easter was always at Port Vincent with a big fleet of RSAYS vessels.

Peter first came to the Royal South Australian Yacht Squadron seventy years ago, and was an Intermediate Member while he was a University student before becoming a Senior Member in 1953. He was very proud to be conferred with Life Membership in 1999.

As a bush lawyer, he was responsible for the drafting and amendment of several Constitutions, including for his beloved Yacht Squadron. Over recent years, he had accumulated and contributed vast mountains of paper and photographs to the Yacht Squadron's historical archives. In 1992, Commodore Tim Williams asked Peter on short notice to become editor of the *Squadron Quarterly*, a volunteer role he greatly enjoyed for 14 years.

Peter was a quite extraordinary historian. His breadth and depth of knowledge of historical events (and his unbelievable memory for dates, battles, names and general trivia), was truly amazing. He also wrote a published history of repatriation services in South Australia and his love of language and vivid imagination inevitably inspired him to write nine novels.

Upon returning to Adelaide, after stints working in Melbourne and the UK, he soon rose to the role of Clinical Superintendent of the Royal Adelaide Hospital in the early 1960s. He was then Senior Physician Specialist at the Repatriation General Hospital through the mid-60s. He was proud to volunteer as a civilian member of an Australian medical team, serving for three months at Bien Hoa Hospital at the height of the Vietnam War in 1967.

Always looking for intellectual challenges, in 1972 he was drawn away from clinical medicine to an administrative career in the



Jenny and Peter Last



Peter aboard *Alpha Centauri*

State Government, finishing as the Medical Coordinator at the South Australian Health Commission. In that role, he influenced and transformed, both at State and Federal levels, the development of country hospitals, rural health services, community health programmes and the delivery of extended, long-term care in South Australia.

Peter concluded his professional career by returning to institutional administration in his role as Clinical Superintendent of the Julia Farr Centre, from which he retired in 1990.

After his retirement, Peter finally got his chance to 'preside from the bench' when he was asked to serve as a member of the Medical Practitioners' Professional Conduct Tribunal, a role that he took very seriously for nearly 11 years.

In 1990, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to medicine.

For the members of his family, his greatest and enduring legacy is his character of scrupulous integrity: unfailing loyalty to friends and family, consistent pursuit of excellence, deep and inherent understanding of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', and especially his utterly transparent, consistent and unequivocal love and devotion for his wife, his children and their families.

ED: A tribute to Peter Last was published in *The Advertiser* on 24 August 2019.



Peter in academic attire

Dr Peter Last

A Letter of Thanks to the Commodore from Peter Last's Children

MY family wishes to express our appreciation to all from the Squadron community who attended our beloved father's funeral recently. It was such a comfort seeing so many Club members scattered throughout the church, supporting us and celebrating his life. Thank you all for coming, and the Flag Officers for attending in full dress uniform. It was a strong and tacit sign of respect which our family found most moving.

Our father greatly enjoyed the fellowship of the Squadron and for years participated in the Friday luncheons in the city and, in more recent times, spending Saturdays with dear friends enjoying lunch in the beautiful Dining Room. These Saturdays were the highlight of his and Jenny's week, which they never missed unless there was a family commitment. They continue to be an important engagement for our mother, Jenny. Our family appreciates the wonderful support the Club community continues to give her.

Peter regularly attended Quarterly Meetings and came to respect how well some Commodores conducted the meetings. Sometimes he could be helpful (or annoying, depending on one's point of view) in trying to assist Commodores and others to conduct the meetings according to the Constitution and the Squadron's long-standing ways of doing things.

He greatly enjoyed a stint as Editor of the *Squadron Quarterly* and also convened a group who undertook to describe and catalogue all the Club's historical objects. One outcome of this was establishing The Gallery for some of the Club's large collection of pictures.

In 1999 Peter Last was elected a Life Member of the Squadron. In his own words, "This was the most valued honour I have ever received."

Kind regards,

Kate Porter

(on behalf of Jenny, Rob, Anne and Bill)



Valerie M'Farlane

25 July 1945 - 5 June 2019

VALERIE was first introduced to the Squadron in 1969 as a guest of her future husband, Bruce, who was crewing for Ion and Margaret Ullett on *Spindrift* and *Cooroyba*. She quickly became a life-long friend of the Ulletts and joined them sailing on *Achena* and *Alpha Centauri*.

She was an active member of the RSAYS Theatre Group and over time made many valued friends at the Club, including Peter and Jenny Last, Arthur and Sarah Cocks and Roger and Marion Holden.

Val enjoyed the boating scene and many precious memories were made on *Promises* (28 ft Bertram), *Avanti* (40 ft Randall) and currently *Yarramara* (53 ft Dyna). Sadly, in her later years she was unable to participate

in the physical part of boating because of a back injury sustained in her childhood.

Her other passion was undoubtedly her love of all animals.

Her generosity to many charities which supported medical research and the protection of our planet, over many years, is indicative of her kind spirit.

She is survived by her mother, husband Bruce, two daughters and three grand-children.

