

OBITUARY



Dr. Vettivaloo Kandasamy Pillay 1929 - 2016

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Dr. V. K. Pillay fondly remembered as Kanda by all his friends and colleagues both in Singapore and abroad was born on 15 May 1929 in Seremban in Malaysia. After his initial schooling in Seremban he entered Medical School in Singapore in 1948 and graduated in 1953. Two years later he married Manon in 1953 and was one of the first local Singaporeans to do Orthopaedic Surgery. After doing his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of England he along with Dr. William Fang from Singapore did his M.Ch. Orth. from Liverpool in 1961. His love for Orthopaedics grew from the mentorship of Professors Cameron, Karlen & Donald Gunn whom he respected as his great teachers all his life. To honour his most respected teacher Prof. Donald Gunn he established Donald Gunn Gold Medal in 1989 for lectureship by a Singapore Orthopaedic surgeon every year at the Singapore Orthopaedic Association annual meeting. He himself was Donald Gunn lecturer in 1990. He also held Dr. Khong Ban Tze in high esteem as one of the pioneers who helped the establishment of Orthopaedic Department with Professors Cameron, Karlen and Gunn and also for organizing and cataloguing the world famous Orthopaedic Slide Library for the department. He never forgot Dr. Khong's contribution until his death. That was the nature of his character.

I came to know Dr. Pillay for the first time in 1966 when he visited Liverpool where I was doing my M.Ch. Orth. The charismatic personality of this tall man was striking and he exchanged contact details with me immediately to keep in touch; that brief encounter eventually brought me to Singapore. When Prof. Gunn left in 1967, he was appointed the first local Singaporean Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery to the National University of Singapore. I joined as a lecturer in Orthopaedic Surgery in November of the same year

(1967). One thing that struck me when I joined the department was that his interest was in expanding the knowledge and the department and not stifle anyone with new ideas and procedures. At meetings he made it a point to name the people who had contributed and did not try to share the glory. This became a role model for my journey through the academic life.

He was instrumental in laying down the foundation for the postgraduate programme in Orthopaedics and was responsible for the recognition of Master of Medicine (Surgery) degree by the University of Liverpool for M. Ch. Orth. degree course. He put Singapore on the international map for promoting Orthopaedic Teaching and Training in developing countries through World Orthopaedic Concern (WOC) which was established and registered in 1975. He dedicated many years of his life and time to this organization to see it successfully established. In 1970 he established the Orthopaedic Training Programme in Indonesia and in recognition for that, he was conferred the title of Honourable Academician of Makassar University in 2002. He was also conferred the title of Dato.

He resigned from his academic position in 1971 and started a group private practice but his interest in teaching and training both in Singapore and the developing countries remained unabated. To honour him as one of the pioneers in orthopaedic academics, V. K. Pillay Lectureship was established at the National University of Singapore in 2004. Renowned orthopaedic surgeons from abroad are invited every year to spend about a week to deliver lectures, teach postgraduates and orthopaedic trainees and exchange scientific advancements in orthopaedics with the staff members.

He and his family were devout followers of Satya Sai Baba and he spent a lot of his spare time in providing orthopaedic expertise to the Satya Sai Baba Hospital in Putupathi in India.

Kanda was a devoted husband and father to his four children; Prem, Ravi, Ashok and Roshni and doted on them with intense interest in their academic achievements. The sudden demise of his beloved wife Manon on 20 September 2002 devastated him and he took a long time to recover from the loss of his wife's support which was responsible for his

success with his various projects. Ill health in his later years restricted his participation in academic orthopaedics but he remained alert till his peaceful demise on 30 August 2016. Singapore has lost a pioneer orthopaedic academician and surgeon of international standing. Through the inspiration of his legacy the younger generation of orthopaedic surgeons both in Singapore and in the developing countries will make further progress in orthopaedics. We bid our deep condolences to all his children and grandchildren.

Pesi Chacha.