

The Legacy of Geoffrey H. White, MD 1951–2012

On January 26, 2012, the vascular community lost an outstanding physician, an innovator, a collaborator, and for many, a true friend. Although he passed far too early, Geoffrey Hamilton White, MD, lived a full life that has imparted a profoundly strong legacy.

Dr. White's list of accomplishments exceeds what many of us only dream up as goals, a reminder that we are capable of more than we imagine. From the example he set, we can draw valuable lessons on what it takes to truly innovate in a field fueled by advancements borne of collaboration. Most importantly, by following this example, we can continue the progress he helped to spark and foster in the vascular community.

Throughout his career in medicine, Geoff sought to work closely with others, both sharing his experiences and drawing from theirs. It sounds simple enough, and "collaboration" is an ideal mentioned in multiple sessions at every vascular congress. But true, productive collaboration is rarer than we often acknowledge. The human characteristics it takes to truly share in progress are often stifled by other forces, ranging from self-preservation to lack of sufficient motivation.

Geoff was not burdened by either, and as his career progressed, the circles of people interested in working with him grew larger and more diverse.

Although well-known as a fantastic host along with his wife, Kathy, chances are the last time you saw Geoff, he was not on his home continent. Like many of his countrymen, he had a profound love for Australia, yet an

insatiable enjoyment of international experiences. In 1984, Geoff's hunger brought him to California, where he took an academic post at UCLA Harbor Medical Center.

His career as an innovator began to take flight, in part due to his arrival coinciding with the inchoate stages of the endovascular revolution. Geoff was among

the first wave of vascular surgeons to embrace the potential of a minimally invasive field that was seen by some as a livelihood threat. He and other forward thinkers saw the potential of endovascular therapy to be a better means to their work's end. They worked long hours in the lab and in the OR, then compared notes with an eye toward doing the next procedures better than the last.

Geoff returned to Sydney in 1989, but he continued to work with colleagues abroad throughout his career, including returning to the United States as a visiting professor at UC Irvine in 1993. During this stay, he first implanted a component aortic

graft, calling it the "Trombone Technique."

Emerging as a global vascular visionary, Geoff remained true to his life's roots. Returning to Australia and a post in the Department of Vascular Surgery at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, he continued his research and academic endeavors, and worked extensively with physicians, industry, and regulatory representatives to develop a better understanding of the forces contributing to and affecting diseased vessels. Their joint goals of collaboration then focused on how best to tailor treatment to these patients. He continued performing a range of surgical procedures from simple repairs to complex aneurysms, while keeping an eye on

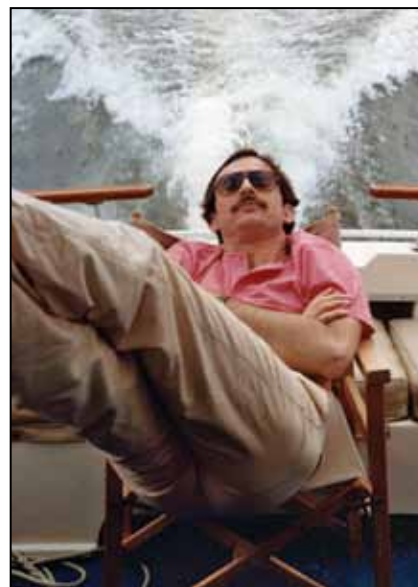
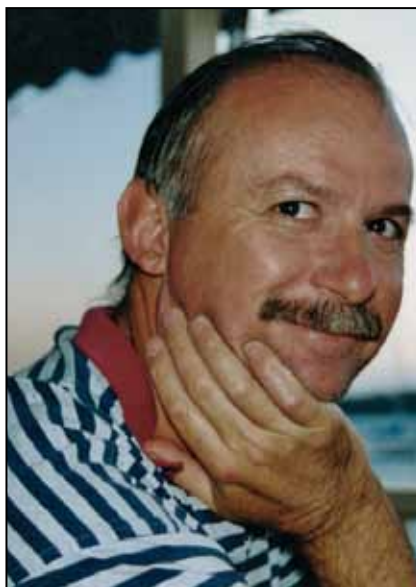


how best to apply the latest in endovascular innovations.

Geoff was invited to share his experiences at international symposia around the world, and he also worked with his countrymen to develop highly regarded congresses that regularly brought global pioneers to share their perspectives in Australia.

From the stairs descending the podium's stage to the tables surrounding the hotel bar, the discussion continued. With Geoff, you never wanted it to end. His dry blend of humor and profundity endeared friends and colleagues, new and old.

The legacy of Geoffrey H. White cannot be confined to the devices and techniques he helped create and develop. Although their significance within this life-saving field is monumental to every patient he treated and those who will benefit from the incremental advances that continue, no tangible collection of accomplishments can fully encapsulate the inspi-



ration of this innovator. Far more enduring is the example of a tireless collaborator who still sought time for the family he loved and activities that rejuvenated him when he left the OR for the day.

Geoff's early departure from our lives is a reminder that the time to collaborate, innovate, and enjoy life is now. ■

I'll Miss My Friend Geoff

Geoff White had the head, the heart, and the hands to become an international thoughtleader in his chosen field of vascular surgery. He pioneered the way forward with his conceptual work on aortic aneurysm modular endografting, but it was his personal qualities—his quiet confidence, his dry wit, his attentive listening, that drew people to him wherever he went. Geoff's love of the operating room, his passion for athletics, and his joy in competition were obvious to all who knew him.

His golf game, however, kept him humble. Geoff, Claudio Schonholz, and I were playing golf at the ISES meeting in Phoenix 16 years ago, and on a par three, Geoff hit one right at the stick. We lost the ball's flight at the last moment, and as we arrived at the green, we could not find it. I told Geoff to look in the cup, and if it was there, he was buying. He looked in the cup and with that dry, Aussie wit simply said, "I'm buying." Indeed, he

hosted all present at The Phoenician's Thirsty Camel that night!

I treasure the miles we walked on golf courses, remember the meeting presentations, and savor the memories of dinners with wives and friends. When Geoff told me of his diagnosis, he courageously said no sadness, no negativity should surround him, only "positive energy." He said he had led a full life and had too much to accomplish in the time ahead, that with the love and support of his wife Kathy and their children, he would beat this. He lived life to the fullest and never gave up.

I am forever grateful to have known Geoff; he was a positive influence on my life. We who grieve should pause to remember and celebrate the countless ways in which he touched us, while leaving behind a radiant legacy in his wake. We are all much richer for having known him.

— David Rosenthal, MD