



## **RUSSEL PARDOE, M.D.**

**1932 - 2011**

Humboldt County medicine lost a true giant last month with the death of Russel Pardoe. An extremely modest man, with nothing to be modest about, his accomplishments fill a list too long to enumerate here. But everyone who knew Dr. Pardoe, and benefited from his skills, whether as a patient or a colleague, mourns his passing.

I first met Russ when I was a student and intern at Stanford, and rotated through Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, where he trained and subsequently became an Associate Professor and attending surgeon. He directed the SCVMC Burn Center, which became an important part of the subsequently established Level I Trauma Center, where I became the director prior to moving up here to Humboldt. I had not known initially when I moved here in 1997 that he had made the same transition nearly 20 years before, but it was a wonderful surprise to find him established as the mainstay of plastic surgical care here, a mission ably carried on by his son Mark, and Drs. Gagnon and Green who moved here as his associates and carry on the high level of care we have enjoyed.

Russ was not only a truly noble man, but an actual nobleman as well, knighted by the Queen of England for his extraordinary service while a medical officer at the Australian Antarctic Station. As befitted his self-effacing nature, I only found out about this adventure while reading a book on, of all things, the possibility of life on other planets in the solar system and elsewhere. In a footnote about life found in harsh environments, the book mentioned life in Antarctica, and an episode where a certain Dr. Pardoe, an intern from Australia, had saved the life of a diesel engineer named Newman who had a head injury and an intracranial hematoma. With no experience at all in neurosurgery (and very little in surgery of any kind), he crafted craniotomy instruments from dental tools, and, with instructions (in Morse code!) from a neurosurgeon back in Australia, twice performed life-saving surgery. The only experience he had was testing the equipment on a seal carcass before trying it out on his patient. Caring for him night and day for two months, they were finally evacuated with the aid of US and Russian transportation assistance. This earned him the title of MBE, the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. After I read this, I saw him on rounds in the hospital and asked if there could possibly be two Dr. Russel Pardoes from Australia, as I found it hard to believe that such an amazing accomplishment had escaped mention for the over 30 years of our acquaintance. He modestly admitted that it had been he who had done it, but he hastened to mention that he had help (a cook and two geophysicists!). It was so like him to shrug off what could be described as a real-life action-adventure hero as nothing to get excited about. And to top it off, he later returned to Antarctica for a second stint as medical officer. This in addition to being a pilot, paratrooper, frogman, mountaineer, and oh yes a plastic surgeon.

Russ was a person about whom it can truly be said that nobody ever had a negative word or opinion. He was the model of what we should all aspire to be: extremely able in his field, always

available for his patients and colleagues, and a dearly beloved husband, father, and grandfather.

We are all better for having the privilege of knowing and working with him. He is greatly missed.

*Ed. Note: an outstanding obituary written by Dr. Pardoe's son, Anton, is posted on line at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/times-standard/obituary.aspx?n=russelpardoe&pid=148877443>*