**OBITUARY**

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR THOMAS SMITH REEVE AC, CBE, FRACS  
NSW GENERAL SURGEON AND RACS PAST PRESIDENT  
23RD NOVEMBER 1923 – 20TH AUGUST 2023**

The surgical world lost one of the true greats when Tom Reeve passed away on 20th August 2023, just 3 months before his 100th birthday. His legacy lives on however, in the countless number whose lives were touched by his leadership and influence and in those who had the honour of calling him teacher, mentor and friend.

I first worked with Tom in 1967 (over half a century ago). Three months of a surgical term under Tom’s tutelage and guidance at Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) convinced me of the magic of surgery, at least when performed by someone who demonstrated genuine care and compassion for his patients, extraordinary knowledge of surgical illness and the skills to undertake complex surgical procedures in a manner that was exciting to watch and be part of.

From that time my life was changed; surgery was my vocation. I continued to work with Tom intermittently in various roles for the next 50 years!

Thomas Smith Reeve was born on 23rd of November 1923 in Queanbeyan and received his high school education in Canberra. The death of a young childhood friend from diphtheria and the example set by his family GP, Dr. John James FRCS, stimulated Tom to study Medicine at Sydney University, graduating in 1947. Following graduation, he was a resident at Marrickville Hospital in Sydney before being the sole general practitioner in Collinsville in central Queensland. He took the then most unusual step of travelling to the USA for Surgical training at the Albany Medical Centre, Albany New York, with Dr John McClintock, Secretary of the American Goitre Association (now the ATA). Tom met and married his lifetime soulmate, Mary Jo, who worked as a scrub nurse at the Albany Medical centre. On return to Australia in 1956 as almost certainly the only surgeon in Australia to be Board Certified in the USA, Tom was appointed to a research post at RNSH where he subsequently built up the University of Sydney Endocrine Surgical unit. He was appointed Professor of Surgery by the University of Sydney in 1974.

Tom travelled often to Universities and Hospitals all over the world to share knowledge and to keep up with the flow of advances in surgery. Everywhere he went, he gathered friends in major medical centres and universities. Australian surgery expanded its outlook as a result, as many of these international centres welcomed Australian trainees and surgeons to visit, study, work and undertake research. Tom and his endocrine surgical unit also hosted many internationally acclaimed surgeons who shared their knowledge and expertise.

Tom and Mary Jo, in association with others, offered support and funding that attracted international surgeons and trainees from many countries, to work as “TS Reeve Fellows”. These fellows worked for up to 12 months with Tom, his team, colleagues, and successors in the Sydney University Endocrine Surgical unit at RNSH.

Tom was interested in many other aspects of surgery as well as endocrine surgery and, working with other surgeons, he introduced Vascular and Cardiothoracic Surgery to RNSH. He developed a major interest in Diagnostic Ultrasound and worked with George Kossoff and his team at the Ultrasonics Institute in Sydney to define and enhance the effectiveness of diagnostic ultrasound, particularly in the diagnosis of Breast cancer. Tom was also helped establish the Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine and stimulated the Society to offer the first qualifying exams for sonographers and for doctors using this tool. He was Department of Surgery Chair at the University of Sydney and President of the International Association of Endocrine Surgeons in 1985.

Tom retired from active surgery in 1988. At this time his prospective data base of thyroid surgery numbered over 5000 procedures. Tom then devoted more time to improving cancer care. He chaired multiple committees that developed evidence-based cancer care guidelines that improved cancer care in Australia and were subsequently picked up in other countries. Despite retiring from primary surgical care in 1988, he continued to attend the operating room for two decades, scrubbing in and assisting with thyroid and parathyroid procedures. This provided him the opportunity to meet and teach all the surgical fellows appointed to the TS Reeve International Fellowship in Endocrine Surgery over that time – a most significant legacy.

Tom was elected President of the RACS in 1989 and served with distinction. Beyond his term on Council, Tom continued to take a strong interest in the College and its activities.

The list of issues related to surgical care and the management of cancer that stimulated Tom’s inquisitive mind is enormous. Tom’s contributions to surgery were widely recognised internationally as he was awarded Honorary Fellowships of the American College of Surgeons, the American Surgical Association, the College of Surgeons of South Africa, the Philippine College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the Asian Surgical Association, and the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons. Tom’s work and contributions to improving surgical care were recognised by his country by the award of Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) and as Commander of the British Empire (CBE), and by The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons with the award of the Sir Hugh Devine Medal, its highest Honour.

This magnificent record of achievement does not fully reflect the true extent of Tom’s impact on the world. The ripple effect of Tom’s role as leader, teacher, mentor and surgeon will be seen for years to come in the achievements of Surgeons whose lives he touched.

Vale Tom.

*(This obituary/eulogy was written by Emeritus Professor Bruce Barraclough, AO FRACS, past President RACS 1998 – 2001)*

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR THOMAS SMITH REEVE AC, CBE, FRACS  
NSW GENERAL SURGEON AND RACS PAST PRESIDENT  
23 NOVEMBER 1923 – 20 AUGUST 2023**

Tom Reeve passed away in Sydney on Sunday 20th August, just three months short of his 100th birthday. Thomas Smith Reeve was born on 23rd November 1923 in the small country town of Queanbeyan, New South Wales, and received his high school education in Canberra. As a young child, he was moved by the death of a young friend from diphtheria and was encouraged by his general practitioner, Dr. John James, to enter medicine.

He graduated MBBS from The University of Sydney in 1947 and spent a short time in country general practice in Collinsville, Queensland, before taking the then-unusual step of travelling to the United States for specialty training. He completed a surgical residency at Albany Medical College in New York State becoming one of the first Australians ever to be board-certified in the USA. One of his mentors was Dr. John McClintock, Secretary of the American Goitre Association (now the American Thyroid Association) and it was in that period that he developed his lifelong interest in thyroid surgery.

It was also in Albany that he met Mary Jo, a scrub nurse whom he married. They returned to Sydney to spend the rest of their lives together in their home in Beecroft. On his return to Australia, he was appointed to a research post at the Thyroid Investigation Unit at Royal North Shore Hospital and subsequently appointed Senior Lecturer at The University of Sydney in 1961. His clinical interests were not confined to endocrine surgery however as he made major contributions in the areas of ultrasound and breast disease, working with the Ultrasonic Institute pioneering grey-scale ultrasound techniques and developing one of the earliest breast ultrasound machines. His other major clinical and research interest was surgical oncology.

He was Department of Surgery Chair at The University of Sydney and became President of the International Association of Endocrine Surgeons in 1985. Having retired from academic practice in 1988 he continued to work tirelessly in numerous areas, being elected President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and Chairman of the Board of the Northern Sydney Area Health Service. He took up a position as Executive Officer of the Australian Cancer Society (now the Cancer Council Australia) and was extensively involved in the development of best practice guidelines in cancer. He has also been a member of the Board of Management of the NHMRC National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre.

His lifelong links with The American College of Surgeons enabled him to facilitate numerous surgical rotations of young Australian surgeons to the USA for post-fellowship training. He was awarded Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1973 and a Companion to The Order of Australia in 1994. Despite retiring from primary surgical care, he continued to attend the operating room for two decades, scrubbing in and assisting with thyroid and parathyroid procedures. This provided him the opportunity to meet and teach all the surgical fellows appointed to the TS Reeve International Fellowship in Endocrine Surgery over that time, likely his most significant legacy.

He is survived by his three children, Tommy, Anne, and Graham.

*Written by Emeritus Professor Leigh Delbridge, FRACS, FACS*

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR THOMAS SMITH REEVE AC CBE**

**(23 NOVEMBER 1923 – 20 AUGUST 2023)**

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| It was my solemn privilege to be in attendance at the funeral service for Tom, who died just 3 months short of his 100th birthday. Tom had a career with deep connections with American surgery. His deeply loved wife, Mary-Jo, had passed away in January 2021; they met when she was an OR scrub nurse where Tom was training in Albany Medical College Hospital, New York State. Just 10 days before his death, Tom was awarded with the inaugural Royal North Shore Hospital Alumni Medal  (see: http[s://w](http://www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/News/Pages/RNSH-Alumni-night-resounding-success.aspx)ww[.nslhd.health.ns](http://www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/News/Pages/RNSH-Alumni-night-resounding-success.aspx)w.[gov.au/News/Pages/RNSH-Alumni-night-resounding-success.aspx](http://www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/News/Pages/RNSH-Alumni-night-resounding-success.aspx) ).  Attached to this personal reﬂection and tribute is a Biography for Professor Thomas Reeve, prepared by Dr John Brereton (C/T surgeon at RNSH) for the RNSH Alumni Evening.  I wish to pay tribute to Tom in respect of his contributions to the ANZ Chapter of the American College of Surgeons and his mentorship and support for me in related endeavours. | An old person with glasses  Description automatically generated |

I ﬁrst encountered Professor Reeve in his lectures on thyroid conditions to medical students of Sydney University, likely in 1970. My next contact was in 1982 when I joined the Dept Surgery of Sydney University as a Senior Lecturer in Professor Miles Little’s unit in Westmead Hospital and attended regular departmental meetings under Tom’s chairmanship. Miles closely supported my initiatives towards improving Trauma Care and Tom was strongly supportive from more of a distance; both shared a strong desire to see improvements in the care of injured members of our communities. Sadly, Miles has also now passed away on September 29, 2023, at almost 90 years of age. My four years of surgical training in the USA was something which I had in common with Tom.

Professor Ken Cox was the ﬁrst Australian Governor-at-Large in the Board of Governors of the ACS (1974-81) and he arranged for ACS fellows from ANZ to meet annually at RACS General Scientific Meetings (GSMs). The ﬁrst ANZ Travelling Fellow of the ACS was Dr Donald Kaminski (St Louis, Missouri) in 1982. Tom Reeve followed Ken Cox on the Board of Governors and persevered with negotiations for creation of an ANZ chapter of the ACS. This was achieved on 5th February 1985 and Tom became the ﬁrst chapter president. Dr C Rollins Hanlon, Director of the ACS, addressed the ﬁrst meeting of the chapter, which was held on 3rd May 1985 in Sydney, and presented the appropriate testamur (Charter 101) to Tom (see photograph at Attachment 3); at that time, there were more than 200 ACS fellows in ANZ. The Travelling Fellowship was formalised to be a biennial opportunity with the award to Dr Thomas Peters (Jacksonville, Florida) who attended the GSM in 1986 in Adelaide and visited centres in Sydney and Brisbane. This became an annual award from 1989.

I became aware of the ATLS course of the American College of Surgeons in 1983. In 1985, having become a fellow of the ACS, I enquired of the ACS, without success, as to whether the ATLS course could be brought to Australia. I shared that correspondence with Tom Reeve who indicated that if I was prepared to commit to the project, he would make further enquiries; he indicated that he had made a similar previous enquiry. Tom was on the Council of RACS, and was to become President 1989-91; he was also a member of the Board of Governors and the International Relations Committee (IRC)of the ACS. There are other components of the history of the commencement of the EMST course in Australia in 1988 but is it clear that Tom’s connection with ACS colleagues was highly influential. I clearly recall a conversation in 1986, at the foot of the steps of the Bosch Lecture Theatres at Sydney University, between myself, Tom Reeve and Miles Little in which these two senior colleagues and mentors challenged me directly regarding my willingness to lead an ATLS programme. After giving it a moment’s thought, I declared that I would commit to 4 years to get the programme established. I had been provided, by Professor Tom Reeve and Professor Tom Taylor (Orthopaedics and Trauma, Royal North Shore Hospital), with a copy of a 1985 Edition ATLS Instructor Manual which I was asked to review in order to provide advice regarding the implementation of a programme in ANZ. Tom steered John Graham (vascular surgeon at RNSH) to join me and Peter Danne on the original team who participated in an ATLS international instructor training course in San Francisco in 1987; this visit enabled me to be present at the Convocation of the Annual Clinical Congress of the ACS in that year and observe Tom being inducted into Honorary Fellowship of the ACS. Dr Oliver Beahrs, a mentor of mine during my 4 years of training at the Mayo Clinic, was Chair of the Board of Regents of the ACS at that time and he had written to me seeking some details of Tom’s family and personal background to inform the citation; I was delighted to be able to forward contributions from Dr Bernie Amos, Bruce Barraclough and Leigh Delbridge.

In July 1995, I was invited by Tom to join him on a visit to Broken Hill Hospital to provide support to the acting director of surgery, review surgery and trauma care services and provide some teaching and encouragement to the local clinicians. I joined Tom for a one day return car trip from Broken Hill to Wilcannia to visit the Wilcannia Hospital – plenty of time to talk! I had been elected to the council of the ANZ chapter in May and I expressed some frustration with the rather narrow and senior traditional focus of vision and activities of the chapter. Tom was thoughtful and understanding and encouraged me to work for change. Tom’s simple humanity was evident as we discussed issues of clinical care and health serve administration with the hospital manager/matron in what Tom referred to as “the committee room” – the three of us lounging in the sunshine on the grassy slope behind the hospital, looking down on the Darling River.

Tom was very supportive during my time as president of our chapter (2000-2005). In 2000 and a couple more years, he invited me to accompany him to the annual meeting of the ACS IRC; he had been a regular invitee to this meeting during the annual congresses of the ACS, in recognition of the unique ANZ Travelling Fellowship program. I was then elected to membership of the IRC in 2004, becoming Chair in 2010. During my time as chair, I initiated a review of international activities of the ACS to support the development of a strategic plan for the years ahead. As part of this process, I circulated a 26 item survey to colleagues within the IRC and ACS leadership and also to colleagues, such as Tom and Murray Brennan whose background knowledge and insights I greatly respected. Not surprisingly, I received a helpful, supportive and robust contribution from Tom, even at the age of 86 years.

We have lost a founder and very strong supporter of our ANZ chapter, an outstanding advocate for high quality surgery, a valued mentor to many ANZ fellows of the ACS and a wonderful leader in our Surgery profession. However, we are an important part of Tom Reeve’s legacy as we continue to foster international collaboration for the beneﬁt of worldwide communities.

*Professor Stephen A Deane. October 2023.*

**BIOGRAPHY FOR PROFESSOR THOMAS REEVE AC CBE FRACS**

The first and founding Professor of Surgery at the Royal North Shore Hospital, Professor Reeve is revered by generations of surgeons. He was appointed Professor of Surgery In 1974, retiring from academia in 1988. He was elected President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1989. He has Honorary Fellowships of the American College of Surgeons, The American Surgical Association, The College of Surgeons of South Africa, The Philippine College of Surgeons, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, The Asian Surgical Association and The American Association of Endocrine Surgeons. He is a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia, Commander of the British Empire and was awarded the Hugh Divine Medal, the highest accolade that the RACS awards. Subsequently he has continued to work with the Cancer Council of Australia and the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia to develop the Australian Cancer Network: in working parties since 1994 has developed clinical guidelines for the treatment of six major cancer pathologies.

The Medical Staff Council thanks him not simply for his mentorship, but for the way he has taught us to be mentors. We are thankful not simply for his academic contribution, but for showing us the vitality of science and academia in everyday medicine. We are thankful not simply for his kindness and care, but for showing us how to be kind and how to care, for our patients and for each other.

During a childhood in Queanbeyan, the grief of seeing school friends dying from polio, diphtheria and mastoiditis, set against the example of John James FRCS, the quiet and kindly family doctor, led inevitably to his studying medicine at Sydney University. Early steps from general practice In Collinsville, North Queensland, across the world to Albany Medical College, New York State were on a path seldom trodden. Thus he laid the way for later Australian surgeons to train in North America. The friends he made at this time provided a constellation of Institutions where North Shore and Australian surgeons would later be welcome to train, and equally from which fellows would come to train at RNSH. The openness of American surgery to trainees from a wealth of nations led to this network being worldwide.

The scientific and technological prowess of surgery in the USA at this time bore bountiful fruit on his return to Australia. With him came his lifetime support and strength, Mary Jo, whom he had met in the operating theatres at Albany.

At RNSH In 1956 Frank Rundle initially employed Thomas Reeve as a research fellow in his areas of interest: thyroid surgery and studies, isotopes and cancer chemotherapy, a prospective database for thyroidectomy, ultrasound of the breast, the animal experimental facility. Many of these were pioneering in this country. In 1958 he became one of the first Australians to obtain American Board of Surgery qualifications, later obtaining his FRACS on these credentials.

Ultimately, the academic unit he created, although based initially on thyroid surgery, has overseen the introduction of vascular surgery, cardiothoracic surgery, oncological surgery and chemotherapy, and surgical ultrasound. The unit flourished with the assistance of Monk, Tracy, Coupland and Appleberg. We thank him for such diverse contributions as the inception of databases In Australia; for the emphasis of meticulous surgical technique based on scientific and anatomical principles for new generations of surgeons; for education at the operating table, the ward and the lecture theatre for students registrars and surgeons alike.

*John Brereton*