OBITUARY

MB ChB (NZ) 1949, MRCP (Lond) 1954, MRACP 1957, FRACP 1965, FRCP (Lond) 1972

Dr Marshall Luke died peacefully on 3 March 2014 at the age of 87 years.

Born at home in Roseneath, Wellington to Ken and Alice Luke in 1926, Marshall was schooled at Scots College.

The only boy amongst four sisters, he studied medicine at Otago University, graduating in 1949. It was there he met his wife and lifelong partner Beverley Brown, a Doctor of Medicine herself.

Marshall spent his years as a house surgeon and registrar at Wellington Hospital.

In those years he assisted in a number of cardiac catheterisations under the guidance of Verney Cable. He well remembered the delight shown by Verney during such an investigation in 1952 when the catheter proceeded directly from the RV into the aorta in a patient with Tetralogy of Fallot.

Of course, these days, there are easier methods of making such a diagnosis and intervention, but with Verney, Marshall (as a graduate doctor) was in a pioneering field.

Taking “The Queen’s shilling” he travelled by ship to England as the Ship’s Doctor in 1953, where he then enrolled as a PG student at Hammersmith Hospital in 1953. Travelling separately on another ship, Beverley and their two young children joined him afterwards. In 1954 he was appointed SHO to Drs’ J G Scadding, Charles Fletcher and Emeritus Professor McNee. In 1954 he became Medical Registrar at the Cardiothoracic Hospital in Sully, Wales.

Interspersed with some camping journeys in Europe with Beverley and their children, they all returned to Wellington in 1956 where he became a Medical Tutor to Wellington Hospital (1956–57) and Acting Staff Health Officer (1957–58). This, at the time, was a typical pathway for a young Doctor returning from his/her OE and post-graduate training.

In 1958, Marshall started a private practice in Khandallah. He also held the appointment of Visiting Physician in the Cardiology Department at Wellington Hospital, from then until 1991. He was also appointed Visiting Physician (general medicine) until 1989. He served on Ward 9 in Wellington Hospital through these years. Simultaneously, in 1959, he established his own practice in Kelvin Chambers on The Terrace as a Consultant Physician. During these years and into the 1960s he served as Commanding Officer, with the rank of Colonel, of the 2nd General Hospital at the Waiouru Army Camp. Other roles included Visiting Medical Officer at the VD Clinic from 1959–1960.

Retiring in 1995, Marshall continued a number of ongoing consultancies; to Wellington Hospital, to Civil Aviation (famously in this role, he grounded the pioneer aviator Fred Ladd), to Colonial Mutual Life and to Swiss Reinsurance.

In his personal life, Marshall, with Beverley, brought up one daughter and three sons. In later years, between them, he also enjoyed the company of 10 grandchildren. His passions were for gardening especially roses (like his own father), golf which he loved but played badly, bridge, holidays at Lake Taupo where he and Beverley perfected trout fishing by harling the reefs, and fast cars! Marshall’s ideal day was a millpond-like lake, a beach in the Western Bays, and some trout to take home. These were his “Taupo days”.
Less is perhaps known about Marshall’s spontaneous generosity. He gave money to those he thought to be in plight. After driving through a flood-stricken Manawatu he contacted an affected farmer and donated him money, no questions asked. This generosity extended to others in a wide array of circumstances.

As a physician, Dr Luke was noted for his astute and accurate readings of X-ray’s and ECGs. He had the mind and eye to see through the fuzzy images of these technologies and really see what was going on. Diagnostically he was pitch perfect. Perhaps better though, was his ability to talk with his patients and see the signs and causes of their ailments where others had misunderstood them. One case was a man who had been bounced around the medical system presenting bruises and loose teeth. After some gentle discussions with the patient about his diet, Marshall diagnosed scurvy as the cause, an ailment that no-one else had even dreamt of.

In the medical profession, a doctor of Marshall’s capabilities and intuition is a very valuable person. In his career he combined a remarkable knowledge with a very humane sensibility towards his patients. His career is exemplary for this combination and he detected those little tricks and ticks that many others missed. His humanity and care, combined with an indepth medical knowledge, is a career skill that is so important. He saved, through these skills, many lives that could have otherwise been lost.

In his retirement years, Marshall, with Beverley, lived in a new, architecturally-designed house. This and its garden gave him enormous pleasure, all the better for it being right next to a golf course. There he practiced his (never very good) golf skills, but he took much delight in walking the course, despite the many times he had to try to hit the ball. He became involved with learning to use a computer and through this went on to become a teacher for Senior Net, helping other elderly people access and use computers.

Marshall’s failing health took him into respite care in late 2012 and latterly into hospital care in early 2014. He retained a sense of humour, a reasoned mind and a great kindness to all around him right up until his death.

Marshall is survived and missed by his wife Beverley; his daughter Adrienne and her husband Lawrence; his sons Richard and his wife Gill, Alistair and his wife Sharon; and his grandchildren Nicki, Sophie, Jonathan, Michael, Simon, Sam, Katie, Ben, Lise, and Helena.

He was a very special man and a remarkable medical professional.

Alistair Luke wrote this obituary.