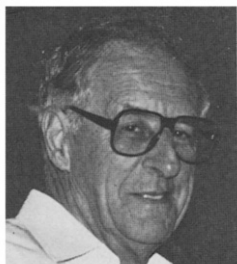


In memoriam

Alan Ross Wakefield
1917-1985



In the latter part of World War II, while I was in charge of a Plastic Surgery Unit at a large city base hospital, a succession of officers from all three services were attached for duty and experience. At my request, for a younger man who might pursue a career in plastic surgery, Captain A. R. Wakefield, then serving in a C.C.S. in New Guinea, was approached. He had graduated in 1941 and after a short resident term at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, joined the A.A.M.C. in 1942.

The first impression of this tall, young officer was that of a "man of few words." Somewhat taciturn and laconic, he was not easy to get to know. One soon came to appreciate his good head and sure hands. He was quick to grasp essentials. So began a lifelong and valued association as a friend and colleague and partner in practice for many years. I held a deep respect for his loyalty, his logical mind, and his capacity for decisive action. He had little place for compromise.

Alan Wakefield became a staunch advocate of the principles of plastic surgery in primary repair of injuries, especially hand injuries. Our book, "*Surgery of Repair as Applied to Hand Injuries*," which was first published in 1953, gives some indication of this.

He served as Plastic Surgeon to the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, and over the years developed this department's reputation to a high degree. An early sojourn in Britain spent with Professor T. P. Kilner prepared him well for this role. In England, he attained Fellowship in the R.C.S. in 1948.

He plowed new ground in establishing the place of surgery relative to the national prevalence and problems of skin cancer at the Cancer Institute in Melbourne. He relinquished this post after some years to devote more time to his first loyalty, the Royal Children's Hospital.

On trips to the United States he developed many lasting friendships. In 1964, he was invited to be a Founders lecturer to The American Society for Surgery of the Hand, in which he valued honorary membership.

In later years, after expressing some doubts about the direction of plastic surgery, he withdrew from private practice, but retained his Royal Children's Hospital appointment for its duration. This decision enabled him to pursue his lifelong interest in the land. (His father was a stock and station agent.) He became an authority on a new line of cattle, the Murray Greys. He developed a prize herd and became an administrator and judge at agricultural shows.

Another interest he pursued for many years was that of rosarian; he was a keen exhibiter and show judge. A perfectionist in all he undertook, he nevertheless always retained an innate humility and reticence.

When his role at the Royal Children's Hospital terminated, he accepted an appointment as Medical Director at the Victorian Plastic Surgery Unit, where his capacity as teacher and organizer received his last imprint for his physical problems presented. These he bore with typical courage and dignity despite the difficulties entailed. During this period, he visited colleagues in the United States despite his severe handicap.

Alan continued to reveal his philosophies and strength of character to his many visitors. On July 22, 1985, the end was typically without fuss and at his own request, a private affair.

Alan Ross Wakefield—"The Vicar"—will be missed by his many friends and colleagues, but the fruits of his teaching and stabilizing personal example will remain in the tradition of Australian Surgery.

He is survived by four children of his first wife Mary and six grandchildren. His second wife, Valerie, remains at San Remo.

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