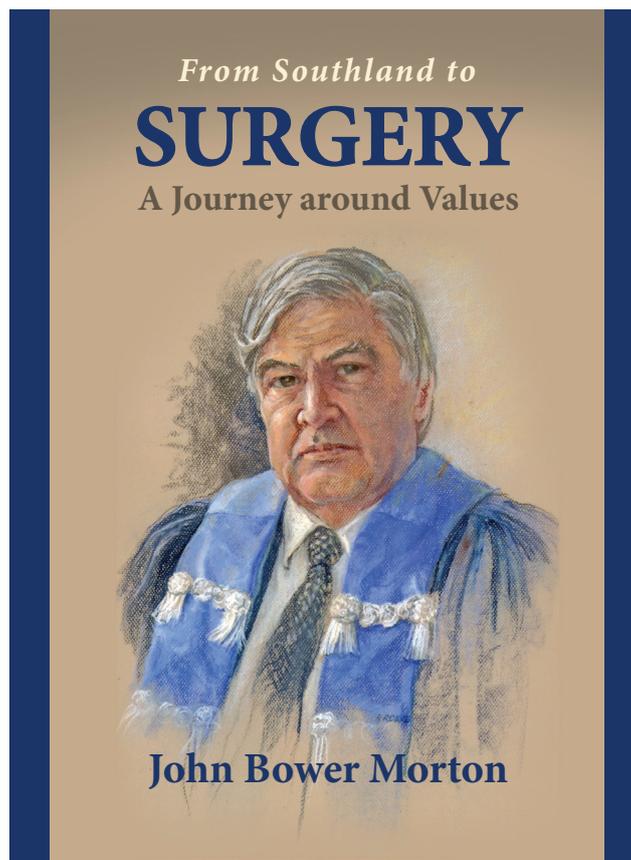


From Southland to Surgery: A Journey around Values

Richard Acland



John Bower Morton. Published by the Cotter Medical History Trust, 2020. ISBN 9780473543402. Contains 154 pages. Price NZ\$30.00. Available at www.cottermuseum.co.nz or PO Box 2301 Christchurch 8140.

Professor John Morton has not only written an intriguing catalogue of the Christchurch surgical scene in the latter part of the 20th century, but has also provided a well-considered philosophy for medical care.

In his preface, he highlights the challenges of writing an autobiography. ‘The style I have adopted attempts to break from the freeze-dried mode of scientific writing in which humanistic excursions

are not relevant, and confession is a sign of weakness and self-indulgence.’

The book is both a memoir of his early rural Southland life, and his life in medicine.

He was an academic surgeon who promoted wisdom: ‘I believe that it is more important to train budding surgeons to think, rather than teaching techniques.’

Not only was he at the forefront of the Renal Transplant Service in Christchurch,

but also the development of the subspecialty of peripheral vascular surgery.

He provides some fascinating anecdotes about special patients as well as his relationship with key surgeons; but, disappointingly, no operating theatre anecdotes, nor any reference to anesthetic colleagues.

The book does detail some of the impressive surgical developments that occurred during this time, not least the introduction of laparoscopic surgery.

He witnessed the evolution of surgical practice in Christchurch from a robust system dominated by Christ's College educated visiting practitioners to a more academically focused department of full-time surgeons.

John's surgical career was cut short by a stroke, and as a result he redirected his energies into nonsurgical matters. He highlights his professional relationships with key personnel where many impressive goals were achieved, not least the reconfiguration of the RMO out-of-hours roster. He had a keen interest in the evolution of medical ethics, a subject he taught with passion at the clinical school.

Canterbury has reaped the rewards of having this impressive man devote his career away from his Southland heritage.

I congratulate Professor Morton on writing this book, an excellent reference for those with an interest in the wider aspects of medical care.

Competing interests:

Nil.

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