

Charles Ronald Lucas

MBBS, FRACP

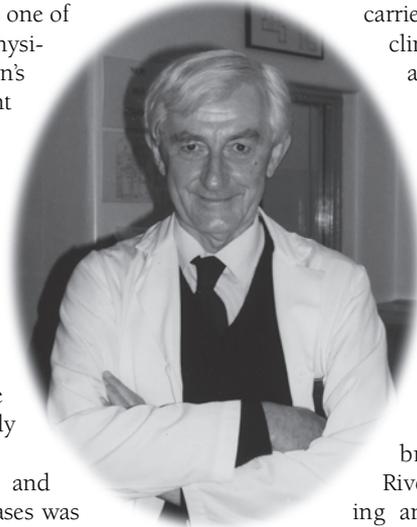
RON LUCAS (“ROWDY” TO HIS MATES) was one of the most outstanding infectious diseases physicians of his generation. He was a physician’s physician, and the person you would want caring for you if you were ill.

Born in Ballarat on 13 August 1932, he was educated at Ballarat Grammar School, where he excelled at football and cricket and was school captain. He studied medicine at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1956.

After a brief period at Horsham Base Hospital, Ron joined the staff at Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, where he remained until his retirement in the early 1990s.

Ron’s career spanned a most exciting and eventful era, as the field of infectious diseases was transformed from a largely descriptive branch of medicine, with limited diagnostic tools and therapeutic options, to the science-based discipline of today. Empowered by Medical Superintendent John Forbes’s view that clinical practice would only progress if it was based on strong relevant research, Ron formed a partnership with the laboratory team and helped not only to improve clinical practice but to define many important features of the epidemiology, natural history and control of some of the most common viral diseases.

He pioneered techniques for managing patients with fulminant hepatitis, established the first dialysis unit for chronic



carriers of hepatitis B virus, established dedicated clinics for the care of patients infected with HIV and, in his role as founding Secretary/Treasurer of the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases, guided the growth of that organisation.

Although shy and quiet to the point of taciturnity, and often hidden beneath a cloud of pipe smoke, Ron had a profound impact on a generation of medical students and was a marvellous mentor of young physicians and laboratory personnel.

After his first marriage ended, Ron married Jo Cornish. They built a wonderful mud brick house in Eltham overlooking the Yarra River. With Ron’s craftsmanship and Jo’s cooking and decorative flair, their home became a haven for their host of friends.

Some time after his retirement, Ron began to develop signs of the debilitating neurological disease which was to claim his life. He became increasingly immobile and was forced to give up most of the pleasures that sustained him. Eventually, confined to his favourite chair and in the loving presence of Jo and his children Kate, Eric, Michael and David, he continued with calm and dignity to receive a stream of visitors until his death on 13 June 2009.

Ian D Gust, Edwina J Wright and Suzanne M Crowe