

**MAJOR GENERAL SIR WILLIAM REFSHAUGE AC CBE
ED**

Born on 3 April 1913 he spent the first five years of his life in Wangaratta, Victoria, where his father was the Headmaster of the I,Ilangaratta High School. The family then moved to Hampton, Victoria, after his father developed Polio myelitis and was paralysed down his left side and was invalided out of the Education Department.

In his early school days, Sir William was a member of the 1st Hampton Scouts, first as a Cub and then as a Scout, from 1920-1927. During that period he attended some 30 scout and cub camps including attendance at Coroborees in Adelaide (as a Cub) and Tasmania and a Jamboree at Dunedin, New Zealand, in January 1926. In order to pay for these trips he did a newspaper round on bicycle each morning (when not in camp!!) for many years.

In those days one received 3 pence (3 cents) per dozen papers delivered or sold.

In 1928/29 Christmas holidays, at the age of 15, he rode his bicycle from Melbourne to Canberra (and' then got a lift to Sydney!) in order to get fit and more strength with a hope of getting into the 1st Eight for the Melbourne Head of the River. He was selected for the Frist's just before his 16th birthday.

At school he rowed in the Head of the River 1st Eight for 3 years and was in the 1st XVIII football team. To assist in paying fees, he coached younger children in mathematics from time to time and worked as a station hand on farms in vacations. One Christmas vacation, 1929-30, he worked as a station-hand on a property near Emmaville, north of Glen Innes - mainly clearing paddocks.

He was offered 10 shillings a week and keep before he went up from Melbourne to Glen Innes, but the Manager paid him 30 shillings per week at the end of his six weeks work! This helped considerably as the Basic Wage in those days was about Three Pounds per week i.e. six dollars!

His father died in 1930 at the height of the 'Great Depression' and, as the pension did not flow on to his mother, his mother sold up their house in the Melbourne suburb and the family moved to a dairy farm in the country outside Melbourne. There were five children in the family, three girls and two boys - the girls being all older than the boys. Two sisters went to work - one as a Lecturer at the University of Melbourne and one to Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, to translate the old German Documents of that country which had been annexed from Germany during World War 1. They assiste ' d in the up-keep of the family. His mother, one sister and he, himself, milked the 45 cows twice a day but both his-sister and himself eventually were able to attend the University of Melbourne and obtain their degrees. His brother was too young and was still at school.

Sir William was able to row for the University of Melbourne and was awarded a University Blue for Rowing. He graduated in Medicine in 1938 and became a Resident Medical Officer at the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne in 1939.

At the outbreak of World War 2, Sir William joined the medical services of the Australian Imperial Force. In over six years with the AIF, he saw service in the Middle East and the Pacific areas. He was in action in the Battle of Bardia and the capture of Tobruk in January 1941 and in the Greek Campaign and the Battle of Crete, 1941 (in which he was injured twice from enemy bombing), the Wau-Salamaua Campaign, Jan-August 1943, Ramu Valley-Madang Campaign Jan-May 1944 and the invasion of Borneo (Brunei and Sarawak) June-August 1945. He was awarded the OBE in 1944 and was Mentioned in Despatches M I D four times.

After the war, Sir William gained membership in the Royal College of Gynaecologists and became Medical Superintendent of the Women's Hospital (now Royal Women's Hospital), Melbourne in 1948. In the middle of 1951, during the Korean War, he rejoined the Australian Army and was appointed Deputy Director-General of Army Medical Services. In 1955, at the age of 42, he was appointed Director-General with the rank of Major-General. In 1959, he was awarded the CBE for his services to the Army and in 1965, the Efficiency Decoration (ED).

In 1955, Sir William was appointed Honorary Physician to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (an appointment he held until 1964) and, in 1960, he was appointed Director-General of Health for the Commonwealth of Australia, in which capacity he served until 1973.

During this period he was also Chairman of the National Health and Medical Research Council, Chairman of the Commonwealth Council for National Fitness and Chairman of various other advisory bodies. From 1961 to 1966, he was also Joint Services Medical Adviser in the Department of Defence and Chairman of the Defence Forces Medical Services Rationalization Committee.

In 1962 at the instigation of Sir Adrian Curlewis, the National Co-ordinating Council for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in Australia was established as a product of the Commonwealth Council for National Fitness. Sir Adrian Curlewis became the National Co-ordinator and Sir William the Deputy national Coordinator - a position he held until early 1973. Sir William always regarded Sir Adrian Curlewis (who had been a POW of the Japanese in World War 2) as the 'father' of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in Australia.

In the international field, Sir William attended many meetings of the World Health Organisation as Chief Australian Delegate. He has been chairman of the two main Committees of the World Health Assembly Chairman of the Executive Board of W H O and President of the 24th World Health Assembly in 1971. He has attended, as an Australian Delegate, many other international meetings.

In 1966 he was created Knight Bachelor and he is a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of England, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the **Royal Australasian** College of Surgeons, the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators (he was Censor-in-Chief from 1968 1973) and a Foundation Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Health and a Life Member of the Australian Dental Association.

In 1973 Sir William retired as Director-General of Health and assumed the appointment of Secretary-General of the World Medical Association, near Geneva, a post he held until 1976.

He maintained his ex-service interests and has been a National Trustee of the Returned & Services League, Australia, from 1962 - 1973 and again from 1977 and still is (1998). He is a Life Member of the RSL and led the RSL Tour of the Battlefields of Europe to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Remembrance Day. 11 November 1978. He was a Member of the National Committee of The Menzies Foundation, 1979-1983, and was Deputy Chairman of its Research Advisory Committee. From 1979 -1988 he was Honorary Consultant to the Australian Foundation on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence and now is a Life Member.(1998)

In 1983 he was Chairman of the Interim Board to develop and establish the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin. When it was established in 1985 he became Chairman of the Board of Governors, a position he held for a further two years. The School now has achieved a national reputation for its work on Aboriginal health. In 1987 he was appointed Chairman of a Planning Committee to develop a Menzies Centre for Population Health Research within the University of Tasmania. The centre was established in January 1988 and now has a fine reputation for its work on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). From 1986-1988 he was Chairman of the Research Into Drug Abuse Advisory Committee for the Commonwealth Government's Drug Offensive.

In 1980 Sir William was awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) and in 1988 he was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Medicine by The University of Sydney. In 1990 he was awarded the ANZAC Peace Prize by the RSL of Australia for his contribution to World health and World peace. This was presented by the then Governor-General at a special ceremony at Government House at which the whole family was present. In 1991 he was awarded the highest award of the RSL - The Meritorious Medal. He is still a member of numerous RSL Trustee Committees concerning Welfare, Historic Medals and Memorials and Overseas Aid etc.

In 1942 Sir William married Helen Elizabeth (nee Allwright.), a senior nursing sister at the Alfred Hospital, and they have four sons and one daughter and seven grandchildren.