



REMEMBERING Neil James Yorkston

May 18, 1928 - February 20, 2023



"No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those

who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9

Neil Yorkston passed away peacefully in Melville Hospice, Surrey, BC on Family Day, February 20,

2023. This is a summary of his remarkable journey.

Early Years in China

Neil's journey began in 1928 in Yunnan-Fu (Southwest China). He was the youngest of three boys,

born to missionary parents (with China Inland Mission), John Yorkston and Annie (Bailey) Yorkston.

They lived in a tiny village in the mountains.

When Neil was six years old, his parents took him to Chefoo school, on the east coast of China,

where he attended as a boarder.

During WW2, Neil and his other school friends were moved to a Japanese Internment Camp in

Weih sien. Neil worked in the kitchen. At night he studied under a single light.

Eric Liddell, the famous Olympic athlete, taught at Weih sien. Eric saw promise in Neil's friend,

Stephen Metcalf's athletic abilities, giving him his worn-out running shoes. Neil

remained in the camp

until it was liberated by American troops in 1945, when Neil was 17.

From China to Australia

Neil was then reunited with his parents in Australia. Sadly, both of Neil's brothers had died in March

1945, having volunteered in the Royal Australian Air Force.

In 1995, Neil returned to China with his two daughters, Ruth and Anne, for the 50th anniversary of

Liberation. In 2005, he returned with daughters Catherine and Ruth. Neil was able to show them

where he was interned, and also the small village in the mountains where Neil's parents had lived

and worked.

Neil studied medicine at Sydney University, completing his Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of

Surgery (MB BS) degree in 1952. He worked until 1956 at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital as a

resident, and then spent a year working in paediatrics at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children.

Australia, New Zealand, Ethiopia, and London

Neil first met Elizabeth Wendy Young in December 1946. Elizabeth had committed to a temporary

posting with the Middle East General Mission, or MEGM as a missionary in Egypt. Elizabeth was

expelled from Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956.

In February 1957 Neil and Elizabeth were married in Bowral, NSW, Australia. (Neil always said that

was the best decision he had ever made.) They celebrated their honeymoon climbing mountains in

New Zealand.

Neil obtained a diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (1957). Following the birth of their first

daughter, Catherine, in January 1958, the family departed for Eritrea (then part of Ethiopia) where

Neil worked as a medical missionary, as head of the medical department at the Haile Selassie 1

Naval Base, Massawa from 1958-1960.

A second daughter, Ruth, was born in September 1959, and soon after the family

relocated to

London, England in September 1960, where Neil worked at Guy's Hospital. Their son, Ian, was born

in December 1961, and Anne, their youngest, joined the family in June 1965. Neil trained to

specialize in Psychiatry and worked at the prestigious Maudsley Hospital in southeast London, while

earning his diploma in Psychiatric Medicine.

United States, England, and Canada

In the late 1960s, at the height of the "brain drain", Neil received research funding for projects in

Philadelphia, USA. He spent three years at Temple University, Philadelphia, as Associate Professor

of Psychiatry. From 1970-73, he worked in the Department of Psychiatry and Medicine at the

University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, where he completed his major book, Psychotherapy versus

Behavior Therapy (Harvard University Press).

In 1973, he left the USA and returned to southeast London. He worked as a Consultant Psychiatrist

at Friern Barnet Hospital in North London until he was appointed Consultant Psychiatrist at the Royal

Bethlem and Maudsley Hospitals.

In 1980, the family immigrated to Vancouver, where Neil served as Head of Psychiatry at the

University of British Columbia. He and Elizabeth returned to Australia in 1990, where he worked at

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney and in Newcastle, NSW. In 1992, they relocated to County

Durham in northern England to be nearer their grandchildren. Neil ended his working life as a locum

in Scotland (his father's birthplace), and retired to North Vancouver.

While Neil had a remarkably strong work ethic, he also enjoyed a wide variety of interests, including

photography, painting (Monet and Van Gogh were particular favourites), poetry, literature (especially

Shakespeare), drama, skiing, nature (usually mountains or the sea), camping, music, singing,

calligraphy, and more. He appreciated clear and expressive speech, with emphasis

on appropriate...

pausing. A favourite book, "Painting as a pastime" by Sir Winston Churchill, reflects well Neil's own

appreciation for hobbies. His dedicated life's work-combined with his many interests-ensured that

his life was full, productive, and meaningful.

Neil's Faith and Final Destination

It is impossible to share Neil's story without addressing his deep and abiding Christian faith. His

belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour-and in God's love for the world-was central to his life.

This brought purpose and meaning to his vocation and to his many projects and interactions.

From a medical perspective, Neil was intent on serving "the least of these", always focused on

helping those in need. Neil fervently believed that careful, serious reading of the Bible was vital for

Christian growth and understanding. In studying the Word, he respected the incisive critiques

provided by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981). In Vancouver, he formed a long-standing friendship

with Dr. J. I. Packer, (who taught at Regent College), who also shared an appreciation for Lloyd-

Jones' work. He regarded The Pilgrim's Progress (by John Bunyan) as an illuminating classic, and

had even considered updating the work for contemporary readers.

To the question, "What is home?", Neil once answered "Heaven is home". His family find comfort in

knowing that he has reached his final, truest home after travelling a long, extraordinary journey.

Neil is predeceased by his wife Elizabeth Wendy Yorkston (23rd November, 2020), and is survived

by his children Catherine (John), Ruth, Ian (Valerie), and Anne (Leslie), grandchildren Emma

(Abbie), Simon (Ally), Ben, Adrian and Fiona, and great-grandchildren Jonas and Albie.

A Memorial Service will be held at Shaughnessy Heights United Church in Vancouver at 2pm on

Saturday 25th March, 2023 with a reception immediately afterwards in the Church

Hall. Neil wished

friends, colleagues, acquaintances and family to share in this celebration together.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to Overseas Missionary Fellowship (omf.org), Leukemia

and Lymphoma Society of Canada (bloodcancers.ca), or Peace Arch Hospice Society

(peacearchhospice.org).

