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THE BEGINNINGS OF PLASTIC SURGERY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Prior to World War II there was no specifically trained Plastic Surgeon in Western Australia and no specifically designated Plastic Surgery Unit. The work which now is the perogative of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons was distributed between General Surgeons, Orthopaedic Surgeons and Paediatric Surgeons. It was only about 1948, with the urging of Mr L.E. Le Souef, that a Unit designated with the rather unsuitable title of Traumatic and Plastic Surgery Unit was established at Royal Perth Hospital.

It is proposed to deal with this foundation period 1948 through to 1967 as the development of all the Plastic Surgery Units in Western Australia took place during this period and the responsibility for their establishment rests on the shoulders of the four early Plastic Surgeons and three Oral and Maxillo-facial Surgeons who served during that time. Undoubtedly, at a later date, the ongoing history from 1967 will be written and will show how rapidly the speciality caught on and attracted a number of trainees so that by 1992 there were seventeen [17] registered Plastic Surgeons serving a population of approximately 1.65 million. This figure represents the popularity of the speciality and possibly the fact that we are over-populated with Plastic Surgeons at this point in time. A figure of one Plastic Surgeon to 120,000 of population in the United Kingdom is commonly thought to be a reasonable ratio. However, this is a matter for philosophical discussion and not for history.

The four Plastic Surgeons associated with the beginnings of the Royal Perth Hospital Plastic and Maxillofacial Unit from 1948 to 1967 in order of seniority were Leslie Le Souef, Harold K. McComb, John C. Bremner and Benjamin C. Cohney. Of these four Les Le Souef and Benjamin Cohney were West Australian born and Harold McComb and John Bremner were Queensland born but Melbourne graduates. Leslie Le Souef was also a Melbourne graduate whilst Benjamin Cohney graduated in Brisbane. The Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons [on the Dental side of the Unit] were Gilbert Henderson, Edmund A. Adler and Brian Henderson, all graduates of Western Australia.

It is probable that the best way of tracing the history of Plastic Surgical development in Western Australia is to give a short resume of each individual and his contribution, and try and weave this into the establishment of the various Units now in place. By way of comment, it is unfortunate that all the Units are within the Perth metropolitan area and none in the regional country areas, thus depriving country folk of ready availability of Plastic Surgical attention, although rapid transportation is always available by Flying Doctor if not by road or rail.

Dr Leslie Le Souef O.B.E., ED., M.B.B.S.(MELBOURNE) 1922, M.D.,(MELBOURNE) 1924, Honorary Doctor Of Laws, University of Western Australia, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, has been blessed with a long life and at present is 93 years old, retired with the rank of Honorary Colonel and lives in a beautiful area of Perth overlooking the famous Swan River. Colonel Le Souef, affectionately known as Les, was born in Western Australia at South Perth, and at the age of 16 matriculated for the University of Melbourne. There being no medical school in Western Australia, he proceeded there and as a very talented student graduated at the age of 22. He then came to Western Australia as a Resident at Princess Margaret Hospital and during the following two years he spent there he worked towards his M.D. of the University of Melbourne which he gained in 1924. Wishing to proceed to England and gain experience in surgery, he worked for the next two years at the Wooroloo Chest Hospital, which mainly dealt with tuberculosis. Proceeding to England in 1926 he held a number of surgical posts, qualifying F.R.C.S. in 1928. Returning to Australia he obtained the F.R.A.C.S. in 1931 and joined the staff of the Royal Perth Hospital.

Always interested in the treatment of trauma, he decided, in 1939, to tour various Units in the United States and England, a year which was to become very significant in world history. Prior to the outbreak of World War II, having visited England and Europe, mainly attending Plastic Surgery Units, he returned home to Australia. Shortly thereafter war broke out and he volunteered and joined the A.I.F. being sent to Greece and Crete and was in charge of a base

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hospital in Crete when it was overrun by the Germans. Following the German occupation of Crete he was taken prisoner together with most of his colleagues, and spent the remainder of the War as a prisoner of the Germans. On his return to Perth he had the foresight and vision to realize that a special Unit should be set up in Western Australia to deal with those problems which now are rightly regarded as the province of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. As with many of the early specialists, although not possessed of the technical background which bespeaks the born Plastic Surgeon or the one who has received a structured training, Leslie Le Souef persisted in his dream to effect the foundation of such a Unit. After visiting several overseas Plastic Surgery Units, particularly in the United States and Canada, he succeeded in persuading his colleagues at the Royal Perth Hospital, with much perseverance and not a little argument, that a Plastic Surgery Unit should be established at that Hospital. The new Unit was established towards the end of 1948 with the title of The Traumatic and Plastic Surgery Unit. At the same time he was a Senior General Surgeon of Surgical Unit "A" and one of his assistants on that Unit was Mr Ross Robinson, who later became a Neurosurgeon and succeeded the Foundation Neurosurgeon Mr James Ainslie as Head of that Unit. Other members of his General Surgical Team were Mr M. Minchin and Mr J. Lekias, another who would eventually become a prominent Neurosurgeon and eminent leader of the profession.

The beginnings of The Traumatic and Plastic Surgery Unit were rather humble, consisting of some beds in Les Le Souef's General Surgical Unit "A", which at that time was situated in Ward 82. A four-bed ward was, again with much difficulty, sequestrated from the Orthopaedic Ward 52, and all severe Burn patients were admitted there. This small ward sometimes had to hold up to six acute burns cases and was the forerunner of the present Burns Unit of the Royal Perth Hospital. This situation was to persist for a number of years, but nonetheless they were the auspicious beginnings of the formation of an extremely good Unit, which was to become world-recognized for its high standard of professional work.

Having achieved these arrangements at Royal Perth Hospital and having had the speciality of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery recognised, he then began achieving a similar arrangement at the Princess Margaret Hospital, where he also held an appointment as a General Surgeon. Patients under his care were placed in various surgical wards and the burns patients were all segregated at the end of a verandah in an area known as Ward 1.

In 1951 Les Le Souef again visited Plastic Surgery Units overseas and was further enthused by what he saw. On his return to Perth he persisted in his treatment of Plastic Surgery patients and those with burns and, by 1953, had convinced the Boards of the Royal Perth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital that the time was ripe to search for and bring in a fully trained Plastic Surgeon with the background and qualifications which would firmly establish the speciality.

It was in this way that Les Le Souef contacted Sir Benjamin Rank and a talented young General Surgeon, Harold McComb, was recommended for the position. He applied for the position of Assistant Surgeon to the Traumatic and Plastic Surgery Unit at the end of 1953 and finally took up his post in January 1955.

Harold Keith McComb born in Queensland and educated at Melbourne University Medical School, had graduated M.B.B.S. in 1947 and spent six months as a Senior Resident in the Plastic Surgery Unit of Benjamin Rank and Allan Wakefield. This short period was enough for him to decide that he wanted to become a Plastic Surgeon. He proceeded to England and rapidly obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in England in 1952. However, he didn't succeed in obtaining a suitable training post in Plastic Surgery and therefore pursued a career in General Surgery, achieving seniority as a Locum Consultant in General Surgery in 1953 at "Mayday Hospital" Croydon, England. (At this same Hospital were two fellow Australians, George Bedbrook and Henry Cohen, the former to become a world leader in spinal injuries and the latter to become one of Perth's leading Senior Anaesthetists.) In February 1954 he was able to enter the Nuffield Department of Plastic Surgery under Professor Kilner. Professor Kilner was only

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allowed one Registrar and a Resident, and in order to have another training post he created a Surgical Research post. This was the post to which McComb was appointed, but in fact it was a subterfuge in order to have another trainee and this was fortuitous for McComb.

McComb's original application as Assistant to The Traumatic and Plastic Surgery Unit of Royal Perth Hospital was dated March 1953 and written from London. He was appointed to start on 1st July 1953 but having had no luck in obtaining a training position at that time asked for further leave of absence, which was given until 31st December 1953. It is rather a tortuous tale in that here was a young man wanting to be properly trained, being pressurised to return home to take up a post with minimal training. Having now obtained a position with Professor Kilner he wrote again on 9th March 1954 requesting a further leave of absence, and this was granted until 1st September the same year. However, on 1st May 1954 he requested and was granted a further leave of absence until 31st December the same year. He left the Oxford Unit in November 1954 and commenced duties at both Royal Perth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital for Children on 2nd January 1955, and from that date set about establishing a high standard of results which, in a few years, led to Royal Perth Hospital Plastic Surgery Unit being regarded as a peer among Eastern States Units. Being highly regarded and having come highly recommended, he possessed a great technical ability, and the few months he had spent with Professor Kilner had given him the expertise in training and planning procedures which was to stand him in good stead over the years as he gained experience. Wasting no time he set about organising himself and studying for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons examination in Plastic Surgery, which he sat and successfully obtained in September of 1956. He was one of the first two to sit this speciality examination, the other being the late Richard [Dick] Ewing.

Not only was McComb Assistant Plastic Surgeon at the Royal Perth Hospital and the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children but he also was available for work at Fremantle Hospital and the Repatriation General Hospital. This gave him a

lot of public work but very little private practice, and because of his meticulousness and a shortage of experience, much time was spent in detailed planning of some of the complex procedures, most of which fortunately achieved their goals. Emergency work at all the major hospitals in the Perth metropolitan area grew, and soon he was extremely busy in these areas and rapidly built up a reputation of excellence of work and good results, especially in the field of facial injuries and hand surgery. Being the only formally trained Plastic Surgeon in the entire State he soon had quite a large general Plastic Surgical practice in the relatively short time of two to three years. By this time the need for this speciality was recognised, and it was obvious that there was a need for at least one further Plastic Surgeon, but even McComb could not accurately forsee that soon a third Surgeon would be needed. In 1961 he had written to Cohney (already training in England) to say that he didn't think a third Surgeon would be needed for ten years !

Up to the time of McComb's arrival all the cleft lip and palate work was performed by Dr Ralph Crisp, a man of extraordinary talent, and an all round Childrens' Specialist, who was an extremely good Surgeon and a very highly regarded Paediatrician. McComb relates that he was well received by Dr Crisp and was allowed to watch his cleft lip and palate operations, and admits he learnt a great deal of technical expertise from him. Ralph Crisp was particularly gifted in the sphere of cleft lip and palate work, and it is a tribute to his work that McComb stated that he didn't find an aftermath of significant deformity or bad speakers to deal with following Ralph's early repairs. Ralph Crisp worked with another Paediatrician, Dr Walter Seed, who gave his anaesthetics. These anaesthetics consisted of open Ether which was blown into the oropharynx via a hook placed in the angle of the child's mouth during the operation. The airway was dependent on the pharynx being clear of blood during the procedure and these operations often took up to 2½ hours, which bears witness to Dr Seed's expertise in this field.

On retiring from Princess Margaret Hospital Ralph Crisp handed on to Harold

McComb Brophy's classic book on cleft lip and palate which he had used as his guide over the years. According to McComb, Ralph was also an extremely good golfer and a patron of the arts, and his charming wife Nora was a concert pianist.

McComb states that on his arrival the situation at Royal Perth Hospital was far from ideal. The Plastic and Reconstructive Surgical patients were nursed initially amongst the General Surgical cases, and it was surprising to see how much interest and surprise was created by the fact that simple grafts took uneventfully and that tube pedicles could be fashioned and moved and survive.

It soon became abundantly clear that Plastic Surgery patients should be physically separated from General Surgical patients, which often appeared to present a greater priority in nursing care. A team of nurses was also required who understood the significance of dressings, Plastic Surgical techniques and generally a staff more interested in the meticulous care required in the after-care of specialized areas of the body.

Up to 1957 the only assistance that McComb had in the hospitals at the junior levels were of a Senior Resident status and this was particularly a problem in that they rotated through for eight to twelve weeks and were of very little use other than clerking in patients. This situation was to change in December 1956 with Benjamin Cohney's arrival, becoming the first Registrar in Plastic Surgery at Royal Perth Hospital, a post in later years upgraded to Senior Registrar.

McComb was on-call for Royal Perth Hospital and for all the other public hospitals in the metropolitan area. He recalls that on the evening of the day he arrived in Perth he was called out to a compound fracture of the skull with scalp loss, which he treated by transposing a large flap over the area of scalp, and left the audience gasping when he applied a split skin graft to the secondary defect. This patient's name was Wally Conduit and being anxious

that nothing should go wrong and having plenty of spare time on his hands, he visited the patient twice daily for something to do.

McComb set up in private practice, a new experience for him, and he shared rooms initially in St. George's Terrace with Jim Watson, who was a General Practitioner working as a Specialist Paediatrician. In those days in Western Australia a diploma gave one the right to be called a Specialist, and Jim Watson had a D.C.H. (Diploma of Child Health). This was before the days of requisite years of training in all specialities and the need for diplomas from Colleges.

McComb relates that initially work was slow to come and that he used to take a cut lunch and go in his small green Ford Anglia down to the jetty at Barrack Street on the foreshore of the Swan River (known as the Esplanade) and eat lunch with the seagulls.

Privately, he operated at almost every private hospital in town whenever the call came, doing initially emergency work at St. John of God Hospital Belmont and St. John of God Hospital Subiaco. The other private hospitals used were the Mount Hospital, Bethesda Hospital, Lucknow Hospital, South Perth Community Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital Bicton. Additionally, there was a small hospital in Mount Lawley, Avro, and an even smaller one in Mount Hawthorn, St. Omer's. Nonetheless, over the reasonably short period of a couple of years, work built up and the demand for reparative surgery increased and there were many operating sessions which continued well into the night with emergencies coming from everywhere requiring moving from one hospital to the other. Most Plastic Surgeons can recall working unbroken stretches of time for days and that the worst occasion that he could remember was an unbroken 30 hour stretch of surgery which commenced with a Tuesday afternoon list at the Royal Perth Hospital, continued all night with emergencies at the same hospital, followed by an operating session on the Wednesday morning at Princess Margaret Hospital. To top this off, the afternoon was spent with a private list at the Mount Hospital.

By being readily available and working long hours, McComb established the role of Plastic and Reparative Surgery by providing a reliable on-call service, as well as giving numerous lectures on Hand and Facial Trauma at Clinical Staff meetings and in country centres. Most of all, probably, was the fact that the work was carried out meticulously and the excellent results attracted attention.

In this way the Medical profession and public at large became aware of the role of the Plastic Surgeon in the management of burns, facial trauma, hand trauma, skin malignancies, and in aesthetic surgery at a later stage.

The second trained Plastic Surgeon in Perth was John Cameron Bremner, born in Brisbane, Queensland, on 8th October 1930, whose family moved to Melbourne where he completed his secondary school education and entered Melbourne University qualifying M.B.B.S. in 1953. He was Junior House Physician and Surgeon and Senior House Physician and Surgeon at Royal Melbourne Hospital in 1954 and 1955 and in 1956 was appointed Resident Surgical Officer. In May 1958 he obtained the Fellowship of the Australasian College of Surgeons and in 1957 was an Associate Assistant Surgeon to Mr. E.E. [Weary] Dunlop of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, a Surgeon of Burma Railway fame. In 1958 he became an Associate Assistant of Plastic and Faciomaxillary Surgery to Mr B.K. Rank, also at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. At the same time he was Assistant to the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, Mr. A.R. Wakefield, at the Peter McCallum Clinic in Melbourne, and Surgeon to the Casualty Clinic on a basis of one day a week at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. In 1959 he moved to England and obtained the F.R.C.S. [England] in May 1959. For a while he worked as the private assistant to Harold Gillies. He then obtained a Fullbright Scholarship in 1959 to go to the United States and work with William White, a distinguished Plastic and Hand Surgeon in Pittsburgh.

He applied for and was appointed to the position of Assistant Surgeon Plastic and Maxillofacial Unit at Royal Perth Hospital in January of 1960 but because of his Fullbright Scholarship did not take up that appointment until July 1961.

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His experience in the basic sciences was extensive, having been a Junior Demonstrator in Pathology at the University of Melbourne in 1956 and, at the same time, a Clinical Demonstrator in Surgery and a Clinical Supervisor at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. From June 1959 to July 1960 besides being attached to Dr William White, he was a Teaching Fellow and Preceptor in Plastic Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh.

He was a Lieutenant of the Royal Australian Navy Reserve from 1955 and during his course at the Melbourne University obtained the Ryan and Syme prizes and, on his moving to Western Australia, was a member of the State Committee of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and a member of the State Medical Planning Committee. In 1960 he was appointed Consultant Plastic Surgeon to the Royal Australasian Navy and in 1961 became Senior Plastic Surgeon at Fremantle Hospital and Plastic Surgeon to Princess Margaret Hospital and Visiting Senior Plastic Surgeon at the Repatriation Hospital. In 1961 Harold McComb deferred at the Princess Margaret Hospital from his more senior post, allowing John Bremmer to become the Senior and to take a more active part in the running of that Department. However, in 1963, before Cohney's return, the situation was reversed and reverted to the status quo ante, with McComb being Senior Surgeon and (John Bremner) and Cohney filling the position of Surgeon and Assistant Surgeon respectively.

John Bremner brought with him a different type of training to McComb, having quickly caught on to the American way of dealing with particular problems, and was far more adventurous in carrying out procedures, often very lengthy, and necessitating massive blood transfusions in long operating sessions for extensive resections of carcinoma of the head and neck and reconstruction. These procedures often took a whole day.

From his arrival until approximately 1970 John Bremner worked long hours and took part in the general management of Plastic Surgery patients at all the public hospitals and at many private hospitals. He was quite popular as a

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lecturer and teacher and travelled extensively, as well as becoming heavily involved in farming as a part-time hobby. He was also fond of fast cars and drove a Jaguar for most of his time in Perth.

Sadly he developed a chronic illness, which diminished his capacity to work and resulting in taking extensive sick leave in 1972 and 1973. He died suddenly on 9th June 1973 at Portsea in Victoria at the very young age of 42, leaving his widowed Mother and a married brother as his only survivors.

John Bremner was an enigma to many, being of small stature and softly spoken. However, for those who got to know him, he was a kindly man who spoke very gently to those about him and to his patients. His opinion was highly regarded by all his colleagues. He never married and devoted his spare time to his farm, the various arts and the better things in life. His illness at an early age and his sad demise deprived Perth of a fine thinking and caring Surgeon and a supportive colleague.

The last of the original four Plastic Surgeons is Benjamin Cohney and he felt particularly privileged to have been the first West Australian to have undertaken a fully structured training, after being lured to the speciality by the fine work and results of his two more senior colleagues, Le Souef and McComb.

Born in Fremantle Western Australia and educated locally, he eventually entered the University of Queensland Faculty of Medicine, completing the five year course in 1953. Following a year as a Junior Intern, he received his M.B.B.S. in 1954 and spent the next two years in rotating posts mainly in Anaesthesia and Surgery covering the fields of Orthopaedics and General Surgery and gaining experience in Anaesthesia for clefts of the lip and palate and other Plastic Surgery procedures. It was at this time that he first met Sir Kenneth Fraser and Lew Davies who were performing most of the Plastic Surgery work in Brisbane. Sir Kenneth Fraser did much fine cleft lip and palate surgery. It was for one whole term that Cohney saw the work from an Anaesthetist's perspective.

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In December 1956 he returned to Perth and the Royal Perth Hospital, having received an appointment as Surgical Registrar. On arrival he found that he had been allocated to Les Le Souef's General Surgical Team "A" for six months and at the same time he became the first Plastic Surgery Registrar to the team of Les Le Souef and Harold McComb and a relieving Clinical Assistant Plastic Surgeon Ken Bolton. On the Faciomaxillary side Ted Adler, a long time friend from childhood, was the Senior Oral Surgeon and his deputy was Brian Henderson, both of whose stories form an integral part of the development of Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery in Western Australia and to be related later.

At the same time due to a shortage of available Registrars he was also Surgical Registrar to Surgical Team "C", consisting of Messrs. Nairn, Price and Pestell and additionally was supposed to be Registrar to Orthopaedic Team "B" consisting of Dawkins, Gilmour and Pannell. The surgical load was enormous but the rewards were a tremendous amount of experience and a plethora of operating, which stood him in good stead in the years to come.

Besides being Registrar to the Plastic Surgery Unit he was supposed to be continuously on-call for the admission of all burns and was mainly responsible for burns dressings, which normally took an entire day. The nominated major dressing day was a Wednesday, when every burn would be thoroughly dressed by him assisted by a nurse allotted to the Burns Unit. The Burns Unit as such consisted of six beds in an airconditioned separate ward attached to the Orthopaedic Ward 52.

With six months experience in the treatment of burns, hand injuries, faciomaxillary injuries and massive excisional surgery Cohney decided, with encouragement from some overseas personalities, to seek training in Plastic Surgery and departed for England in May 1959. Having gained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh by the end of the same year, he became in 1960 Locum Senior Registrar and then Registrar for the Manchester United Hospitals early in 1961. Although having had a vast experience in

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Manchester, he was unhappy with the lack of teaching and the interpersonal problems within the various hospital units. He applied for and was fortunate in obtaining the inaugural post of Senior Registrar to the Nuffield Department of Plastic Surgery of the United Oxford Hospital. He was chosen from a field of eight applicants including two, Theo Wilkie and Suresh Gupta, who were favoured by the Chief of the Department, Eric Peet. His fortunes were helped by the presence on the selection board of the No. 2 of the Unit, Tom Patterson, the Nuffield Professor of Surgery, P.R. Allison, and the outside assessor, from the British Association of Plastic Surgeons.

The following two years were probably the happiest and most productive years of his career in that there was plenty of teaching from the seniors, the late Eric Peet and Tom Patterson. Progressively more work was delegated as he became more competent, and at the end of 18 months in September 1962, he became Locum to Tom Patterson, who went for six months' work in Head and Neck Surgery at Bakamjian's famous unit, Roswell Park Memorial Hospital in Buffalo N.Y. U.S.A. By the end of May 1963, having had four years in supervised posts, he felt that he was fully trained in Paediatric Plastic Surgery, the surgery of malignancies and general Plastic Surgery. The one area in which he felt somewhat less than well trained was in Hand Surgery but this was to come with time. He was short-listed for a Consultant post at Newcastle General Hospital, but withdrew on the advice of Eric Peet, who hoped a third Consultant post would be created for him within the Oxford area. All this did not eventuate until about four years later.

Meanwhile back home in Perth in January 1960 Les Le Souef retired from Royal Perth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital, and McComb became the Senior Plastic Surgeon at both these hospitals. Unfortunately no word reached Colney of the advertisement for an Assistant Plastic Surgeon commencing at both hospitals (Royal Perth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital) in 1960. Therefore it was with great disappointment that he read in a letter from McComb in February 1960 that Mr John C. Bremner had been appointed as Assistant Plastic Surgeon to commence in January of 1961. McComb was also of the opinion

that there would be no room for a further Plastic Surgeon in Perth for anything up to ten years and this provided something of a dilemma for his plans for the future.

Nonetheless he finally returned to Perth and commenced practice as a Consultant Plastic Surgeon on June 5th 1963. Whilst it had been stated that there were too few beds for him to be allotted any on a regular basis at Royal Perth Hospital, he was welcomed on to the Emergency Roster and virtually had the same circuit that McComb had had when he commenced practice seven years previously. In fact he was immediately put on the emergency roster, which was some three days after arriving. The entire first weekend was spent at Royal Perth Hospital putting faces together and ,in particular, re-attaching an almost completely severed nose which survived !

On July 1st he was appointed Clinical Assistant Plastic Surgeon to the Royal Perth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, and Assistant Surgeon to Fremantle Hospital, and Senior Specialist in Plastic Surgery to the Repatriation General Hospital. In addition to this he was the only Plastic Surgeon at a Regional Hospital at Osborne Park which was government-controlled.

Having no formal beds for admission to the Royal Perth Hospital it was suggested that he explore the possibility of an appointment at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and ultimately leading to formation of a Plastic Surgery Unit there. Fortunately for him the Superintendent of the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital was one Robert Elphick, an old friend and a Chest Physician. On an informal basis he was allowed beds at this hospital for transfer of those seen at Royal Perth Hospital Out-Patients ,and accorded an operating session. This soon built up to not only by admission of referrals from Royal Perth Hospital but emergency admissions to the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, intra-hospital referrals and the admission or private hospitals who were referred directly to him. After a period of time a formal appointment as Senior Plastic Surgeon to Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital was approved and thus he became the founder

of the fifth Plastic Surgery service in the metropolitan area.

In this way from 1948 to 1967, in a short period of approximately 20 years, five recognized Plastic Surgery Units had been established and an on-call system worked to the benefit of patients and hospitals alike. However, a hierarchial system similar to that which pertained earlier in England, meant that although the three younger Plastic Surgeons were all approximately the same age, the most senior opted for less time on the emergency roster and as a result the most junior found that he was often working five days on call out of every seven. This played havoc with family life and private practice but did result in a rapid accumulation of experience in trauma, and particularly hand surgery, a field in which Cohney was largely self-taught. Within the first four years of practice he had accumulated over two thousand major hand surgery patients in addition to hundreds of facial injuries and burns and the treatment of great numbers of skin malignancies of all kinds, for which our state is infamous.

During this period of time there was only one real Burns Unit for adults and one for children. In the first five years from 1963 to 1967 Cohney looked after approximately 80% of the burns admissions for the state of Western Australia and did a goodly share of those that were admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital for Children. Burns at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital were only treated if they were less than 10%, and at Fremantle Hospital the lesser burns could be treated in segregated areas of the General Surgical ward.

By this time the Plastic Surgery Unit at Royal Perth Hospital had its own ward [Ward 82] for elective cases and at the end of this ward there was a segregated part with separate airconditioned rooms for approximately ten burns patients.

Having established the need for Plastic and Faciomaxillary surgery, the next step was to formalize a training programme and to have competent junior staff in order to relieve the Consultants of the less onerous cases that were

admitted at all times of the day and night.

Thus in 1967 a training programme was approved and put in place and another local West Australian, Harry Hansen Khanori, was appointed to the post of Senior Registrar, Plastic Surgery, and remained with us during the two year period that he was in training. He had graduated in 1956 and spent a little time in General Practice prior to going to England where he had extensive General Surgical experience. Realizing that there was very little place for new General Surgeons in Perth, at the time he wished to return, he made the rather heroic decision that Plastic Surgery would be an appropriate area to specialize in. He was to be followed by many more, some excellent, some good and some indifferent.

No story of the development of the Plastic Surgery service in Western Australia would be complete without mentioning our Oral and Maxillofacial colleagues all of whom were dentally qualified and none of whom had any formal medical qualifications. The Senior person and the one responsible for the founding of the Oral part of the Maxillofacial Department was Gilbert Dowling Henderson who, having served during World War II as a Major working with B.K. Rank at Heidelberg, had done his dental training by apprenticeship and therefore had no recognisable qualifications. Pre-war he had been doing fractures of the facial bones and was on the staff of the Royal Perth Hospital as an Honorary Dentist.

With the cessation of World War II, having attained the rank of Lieut-Colonel Royal Australian Army Dental Corps, he was demobilised in 1946 and opened a private practice for the first time as a Specialist Oral Surgeon in St. George's Terrace. He was particularly dextrous with his hands and made prostheses for those who needed facial restorative work and taught many others to do so. He retired from Royal Perth Hospital in 1953 being succeeded by Mr Edmund Arthur Adler, who joined him both in private practice and at the Royal Perth Hospital on 13th April 1955.

Edmund Arthur Adler graduated Bachelor of Dental Science in 1950 and M.D.Sc. in 1953 ,having the honour of being the first person to receive each of these degrees. Prior to this time dental recognition was accorded to those who had passed an apprenticeship and did a diploma course. As Adler was the first on the list of graduands in 1950, so he has the certificate numbered one of that degree. The same applied to his Master of Dental Science, being the first to obtain this degree at the University of Western Australia.

On 25th March 1954 he married Cynthia Cohen and immediately proceeded to England for Post-Graduate training at East Grinstead ,Roehampton, and Park Prewett, but true to form there was time to explore the delights of London and its environs.

His initial appointment to Royal Perth Hospital was in 1952 where he had been appointed Assistant Oral Surgeon to the Traumatic and Plastic Surgery Unit of that hospital ,and in 1954 he became Surgeon to the same hospital. After this appointment he was given leave of absence and returned in November 1954.

During the period that he was away doing Post-Graduate training, the Superintendent of the Dental Hospital, Ron Campbell, did the Oral Surgical work assisted by his Registrar ,who happened at that time to be Brian Henderson, later to become the Assistant Oral Surgeon. Adler remained at Royal Perth Hospital as a Senior Oral Surgeon until his retirement in June 1976. He also held an appointment as Senior Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon to Princess Margaret Hospital and retired from that post in 1986.

Adler was chosen to run a trial of the use of Titanium implants which had been pioneered in Sweden by Professor P.I. Branemark and introduced this method to Western Australia with the help of Prosthedontist Pat Henry with great success. Having firmly established the procedure in dental implants, it was then used for the fixation of facial prostheses such as artificial ears and he has taught his successor Ray Williamson the technique. He ceased this type of surgery in 1990.

The third Oral Surgeon appointed to the Unit was Brian M. Henderson who had been born in England and served in the armed forces during World War II. He came to Perth and did his first year dentistry in 1947, graduating in 1952 having at the same time married Sally Hale, the only child of Judge and Mrs Hale. He proceeded to his M.D.Sc. University of Western Australia in 1956 and then returned to the United Kingdom for further experience at East Grinstead. On his return to Perth he was appointed as Assistant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon to Royal Perth Hospital and eventually Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon to the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in 1966, and retired from both hospitals after the sad and early loss of his vivaceous and supportive wife from a cerebral haemorrhage at the early age of 38 years.

Thus the evolution and personnel of the Plastic Surgery Units in Western Australia has been traced up to the intake of our first Senior Registrar. Since that time, having been fully recognised, the Units have expanded and the personnel have changed. The emphasis of work has also changed with the advent of the latest advances in Plastic Surgery such as transplantation, free flaps and craniofacial surgery.

Appendix to the history of WA Plastic Surgery 10.10. 2006

1)The attached history was prepared & delivered by me at the first meeting of "THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF PLASTIC SURGERY' held @ Den Haag , Holland. I was the first President & Dr. Barend Haaseker ,an acknowledged researcher into the history of Plastic Surgery & talented plastic surgeon was secretary.

2) I was the first W.A born Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon& the first in WA to undergo such a lengthy period of overseas training. In Edinburgh I was in the top 3% of those sitting the exam in 1960.

3) McComb , Bremner & I by 1968 all had had the F.A,C.S bestowed without examination & was a tribute to the high standard of work in our young unit.

4) I established the first training course for our trainees & this was held every Thursday in the study of our home , 73 Armadale Crescent., Mount Lawley from 8-10 p.m . The first two to attend were Harry Hansen & John Grantly Wheeler. They sat the examination together in Melbourne , however only John passed at this attempt & Harry succeeded six months later. This instructional course was the forerunner of all later courses.

5) Mcomb & I established the West Australian Society one afternoon @ St. John's Hospital Subiaco in a break in operating sessions , as we both operated Monday afternoons in adjoining theatres which enabled many exchanges of ideas & we could on occasion assist one another on difficult cases. Bremner agreed & thus three plastic surgeons & the three oral Surgeons Adler , Henderson & John Booth formed the small club.

6) On my return to Perth in June 1963 I soon formed the first Hand Club , predating the ones later established in the other states & that finally led to the establishment of the Australian Hand Club. The original members were Harold McComb John Bremner , Benjamin Cohney,William (Bill) Gilmour ,George Bedbrook , George Nunn John Collibee William (Bill) Rowe & we met every month in the beginning in my home on a Monday evening @ which time difficult & problem cases were reviewed & the patients present. This group functioned for many years until it was absorbed into the WASPS. I regard this as the unrecognized precursor of the Australian Hand Society of today.

7) ~~10~~) It may hurt the ego of many of those who were our Senior Registrars to nominate the one whom was the most outstanding but I feel compelled to do so. Dr. Mary Brooksbank was already a qualified General & Burns Surgeon when she came to Perth as our Senior Registrar. Not only was she competent as a surgeon but she was a superb lecturer & teacher & soon established herself as capable of rapidly learning even the most intricate procedures. She was Personable , Presentable , Considerate & universally liked. At the end of one year I considered her fully trained & capable of an immediate consultant post , offering a partnership in my busy practice , in order to retain her in WA. & nominated her for the fellowship in Plastic Surgery as she already had a general F.R.A.C.S Unfortunately , the powers that be of the RACS. refused to grant her recognition unless she did another year & thus we lost a very talented surgeon. However Palliative Care gained & in a short time she was at the top of that field & recognized Australia wide

8)The first Hand Reimplantation was done by McComb & myself one Friday in about1964. The patient was an 18 year old Italian Factory hand using a bacon slicing machine ; thus there was a clean cut just proximal to the proximal carpal bones, There was only a small skin bridge attachment .

In a marathon session using only x 5 magnifying loops the radial & ulna arteries joined followed by two dorsal veins . Median Radial & Ulna nerves were then approximated as well as most tendons. Her hand survived but function was only restored to about 30% , due to the fact she was poorly educated & motivated. The only secondary procedure was a Brand's Intrinsic transfer ,done some months later by McComb.

Some weeks later @ the old Mount Hospital in St. Georges Tce. a second reattachment was attempted by me late @ night on a farmer with a complex severance through the wrist. This was repaired in a similar fashion without the help of a second surgeon. Initially all went well but after about a week the procedure failed. However the press & T.V hounded me for days trying for an interview. Fearful of the publicity rules of the Medical Board , I managed to dodge all reporters & the only newspaper that ran the story with my name was the Age in Melbourne.

9) The unit @ Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital I started single handedly amidst many difficulties from colleagues . Nonetheless I built up quite a large emergency service & for 11 years was the sole plastic surgeon being available 24 hours a day , seven days a week , except when on leave. In the last two years I was joined by John Wheeler whose appointment was as Hand Surgeon , a first in WA. & one of my few successful innovations.

After 13 years of service I refused to continue @ the hospital due to the refusal of The Director of Nursing to send nursing staff to the RPH for proper training in dealing with the special requirements in our specialty. Unfortunately the other medical staff were unsupportive & on principle , but sadly I left the unit I founded. Even sadder , the MAC & Board failed to recognize the contributions I had made , including being on the many Surgical Committees which were vital in the early days for the establishment of new surgical departments , by refusing to make me an Emeritus Surgeon. Only recently , has Chris Allen recorded the foundation of Plastic Surgery @ SCGH & I understand had photographs to record events.

10) I was the first to go & train with Harry Bunke to do microsurgery , hoping to be allowed to set up a sub-unit for this , but regrettably jealousy prevented this as did it prevent the setting up of a sub-unit in Hand Surgery . although it had the approval & backing of Sir George Bedbrook , whose daughter-in-law had had a severe hand injury treated by me. These were two of the many disappointments during my time in Public Hospitals & eventually prompted my decision in 1979 to limit my activities to private practice.

11) To the lasting shame of the RPH Plastic Surgery Unit , the proposal to honour me for my many years of service , with the title of " Emeritus Surgeon", was forwarded to the Hospital Board , not by that unit ,but by the MAC under the chairmanship of the distinguished Neurosurgeon Dr. Bryant Stokes known to all as "BARS"

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