IN MEMORIAM

JOHN WILLIAM VAN REES HOETS
1885–1961

John Hoets died in his seventy-sixth year on March 17, 1961, in the Scottish Hospital, Sydney—the hospital he loved so well and in which he had done so much of his work.

Few men can have been so loved by both his colleagues and his patients as John. To his patients he gave a lifetime of selfless service and devotion, and of him it can be truly said that the patient always came first. He never postponed setting a fracture to the following day, no matter what the hour and the personal inconvenience of making the necessary arrangements, including x-ray control. Rare indeed would be the time he did not visit his patient in hospital on the evening before operation and the evening after. I know well what a physical effort this visit often was at the end of a long day but it was never neglected. Small wonder then that, after his many years in busy practice the patients, colleagues and friends who mourn his passing are legion, and many have a feeling of acute personal loss. His wonderful gift of unhurried understanding gave his patients the comfortable feeling that in him they had a counsellor and friend as well as a very gifted surgeon.

He was born in Boorowa, in the Southern District of New South Wales, the son of a country practitioner. His schooling was in Goulburn, and later at the King's School for two years before University. He had a fine sporting record. He represented the school in rugby union football and in cricket, and was in the Combined Great Public Schools football team. He was appointed captain of the school. Later he represented his university at rugby and was a member of the team of 1905, probably one of the best that the university ever produced. He gained representation in the Combined Universities' team which toured New Zealand in that year and later gained a place in the New South Wales team against Queensland.

After graduation he entered general practice, and for some years was in the Glebe, first in partnership with the late S. A. Smith, later to become a distinguished physician, and then with the late Theo. Potts, whose name will always be associated with the brilliant anatomical dissections in the Museum of the Anatomy School. During this period he became associated with John Hunter and Normal Royle in their experimental work on the sympathetic nervous system, and for some years he gave Royle's anaesthetics in both his experimental and clinical surgery. About this time he was for a brief period Honorary Gynaecologist at the South Sydney Hospital. However, about 1920 he moved from the Glebe to Bellevue Hill where he lived to within a few weeks of his death, and it was then that he interested himself in orthopaedic surgery which was to be his true life's work. Within a few years he had given up general practice and began his busy life as a consultant orthopaedic surgeon in Macquarie Street.
He was a Foundation Member of the Australian Orthopaedic Association and a Foundation Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. He was for some years an Examiner in Orthopaedic Surgery for the College, and in the years 1947-49 he was President of the Australian Orthopaedic Association. This was a fitting climax to his career because there can have been few men held in higher esteem by his colleagues.

His hospital appointments were many, and he was for many years the senior orthopaedic surgeon to Lewisham and Sydney Hospitals. On his retirement from the active staff at the latter the orthopaedic outpatients' department was named after him. During and for a time after the second world war he also undertook honorary appointments at Western Suburbs Hospital and Prince Henry Hospital. Despite an affliction of both feet which plagued him for the greater part of his life and rendered him unfit for overseas military service during the war, he yet found time to do consultant orthopaedic work at the Concord Military Hospital. With also the numerous private hospitals at which he operated, and the enormous size of his private practice in those years, the work he performed must have been simply stupendous, and, as he often told me, it allowed of no holidays or week-end relaxation.

In addition, during these years and before and after the war for a time this remarkable man found the time to take active interest in such bodies as the Australian Physiotherapy Association, the Far West Children's Health Scheme, and the Society for the Physically Handicapped. Even so, up to the age of seventy he played a respectable game of golf and was a tough opponent.

His wisdom and technical skill as an orthopaedic surgeon were superlative, but it will always be as a man rather than a surgeon that John will be remembered by his friends and colleagues. A most charming and kindly personality in which consideration for others was paramount; a wonderful sense of humour and a lover of good stories; a deep and abiding interest in the younger members of the profession who subsequently had the benefit of his unobtrusive help and advice; these are the things with which his memory will always be associated.

To his widow, and son and daughter, goes the heartfelt sympathy of all who knew and loved him.

W. S.