

AFOEM Fellows interview series

This series provides insight into the careers of retired and actively serving physicians in occupational medicine. On this occasion I had the pleasure and privilege to meet Dr Ann Long and share some of her old and treasured memories at her lovely residence next to the Opera House.

Dr Farhan Shahzad, Consultant Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Sydney

Dr Ann Long (AFOEM Past president, 1998-2000)

Farhan: Thanks for taking the time to join us on this series. We would love for you to tell us a little bit about your personal life, medical school and training.

Dr Ann Long: I went to school in Parkes NSW. My father said girls can do anything. My dream was to do Medicine. Physics and Chemistry were not taught at my school, so I went to boarding school in Sydney where they taught girls chemistry but not physics. I made Medicine but my father's friends told him I wouldn't be marriageable.

I did my Medical Degree at Sydney University starting in 1956. I met, Geoffrey, a med student 3 years ahead of me. We wanted to get married, but my father said finish the degree first.

In 1962 we married, travelled around Europe. In London Geoffrey studied Anaesthesia and worked at the Middlesex. We had 2 children, headed to Philadelphia for postgraduate work and had 2 more children.

Back in Australia, in 1968 my old tutor, Brian Morgan, organized for me to do an internship at Marrickville Hospital, then had 2 more children.

In 1974 we moved to Rome. Geoffrey had a job at the Australian Embassy. When we returned to Australia, I did a retraining course with the College of General Practice. I wasn't particularly interested in Occupational and Environmental Medicine, but I found an ad in the Australian Medical Journal for a Director of a blood pressure study being conducted by Professor David Ferguson and I got the job.

In 1982, the government set up the Agent Orange Study. It was the government's response to the Vietnam Veterans' complaints of being poisoned. The study was huge and there were 3 components to it. I was seconded to run the Veterans' Health component. But the government was undecided whether to proceed. While we waited to hear about the study, I assisted with the 2 other studies, Birth Defects and Veterans' deaths. David Ferguson was very supportive and suggested I do the MPH while I was "hanging" around with indecision re the agent Orange Study.

For the next 10 years I coordinated the Occupational Health component of the Master's Program, and then the Master of Occupational Health.

Farhan: Please tell us about your journey with AFOEM?

Dr Long: I had an exciting time with the College particularly the Faculty because as organizer of the 10-week course in Occupational Medicine I had a special interest in training. As chief Examiner I proposed that we set out the Competencies of Occupational Physicians and so we would define their training. The Faculty embraced the task with great enthusiasm. The competencies were a great collaborative effort.

Later, when I was President of the Faculty we developed with wide consultation The Compensable Injuries and Health Outcomes document

Farhan: Looking back at your long career, you've been involved in different places. What have been some of the highs and lows of your career?

Dr Long: A low was workers' compensation and workers' health. It was a political football.

A high - being part of the National Institute of Occupational Health. I chaired the working group on health surveillance, which set out national health surveillance requirements for various jobs. Though the Competencies were the greatest fun.

Farhan: What's your message for trainees and Fellows?

Dr Long: It sounds too simple. It is important to actually know occupations. I think the relevant question to ask is, "*What is your job?*" but trainees must truly understand the reply.