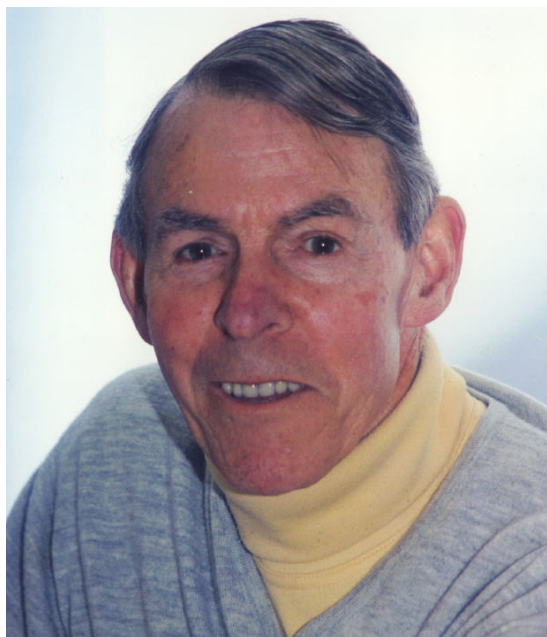


## Harold Thomas

At 7:15am on 8 June 1961, three great blasts echoed across Southampton Harbour marking the departure of the *Queen Mary* as she sailed away from the UK, across the Atlantic and onto North America. On board was Harold Thomas who was 36 at the time.



His previous sea voyage had been in 1957 aboard the *Flowergate*. This was an old cargo freighter carrying timber strapped high above the deck.

Harold back then had travelled as ship's doctor from Auckland across the Pacific, through the Suez and then onto Marseille.

From here he went to London where he spent the next 4 years working at the historic St Paul's Hospital in Endell Street, Covent Garden.

During this time Harold completed his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons.

After embarking from the *Queen Mary* in New York, Harold immediately purchased a new 1961 light blue 4 door Chevy Belair. With wife Shirley beside him and young Michael and Philip in the back, off they drove heading west to Southern California.

Harold had met Shirley at Auckland Hospital after asking his colleagues who was the best looking nurse in the hospital. When they replied Shirley, he wasted no time in asking her out on a first date, which he did as she was leaning down changing a patient bedpan. They were soon married.

In California, Harold trained under Rodger W Barnes, who was one of America's most prominent urologists and a pioneer of endoscopic surgery. He completed his Fellowship of the American College of Surgeons and worked at Riverside County Hospital attached to Loma Linda University School of Medicine.

Believing that Australia was an ideal family destination, Harold and Shirley once again packed their bag and this time moved to Sydney. Before long they settled into Esther Road in the sleepy seaside suburb of Balmoral. Two more children Kay and Geoffrey were added to the family.

Harold became a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons and would get up early to travel across the Harbour Bridge working at St Vincent's, Prince of Wales and Prince Henry Hospitals. He introduced American short-stay urology, which was not routine at the time. Despite a busy operating schedule, Harold took time to pass on

his skills especially of prostatic resection to other urologists. Later he became the President of the Urological Society of Australia.

Harold Thomas had come a long way from his humble beginnings in Rakaunui in rural New Zealand. He had finished school at 14 and worked in a bank to pay for night school. He earned a Diploma in Agriculture. Then, seeing a limited ability to ever own a farm, he turned his sights on medicine and went to Otago University. To pay his way through medical school, Harold worked as a shearer bent over heavy sodden sheep pulling belt-driven clippers.

When Harold retired as a surgeon he moved to The Southern Highland of NSW, Australia where he spent his days in old green overalls and blue cloth hat on a tractor, in amongst his cattle, repairing fences and planting trees.

In his 85 years Harold had gone full circle. From a small farm, to Master Surgeon, then back on the land. It was a remarkable journey and an extraordinary life.

One of his colleagues and a friend remarked that Harold had a wonderful life and made no enemies. I hope all of us at the end of our lives can claim the same.

Philip Thomas (a son in Sydney) wrote this obituary.