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A New Beginning in Sight

By Eric J Arnott

Published by Docwife Publications, Forrestview House, Dockenfield, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4HA

With an Irish background and having worked as Eric's registrar when he first became a consultant in London in the 60's, I had a particular interest in reading his book "A new beginning in sight" which is a distillation of a daily diary kept by him since 1947. Being familiar with the well known Arnott's of Dublin large department store, I was intrigued to learn in the first section of the book about the Scottish origins of the family. Eric's great grandfather, Sir John Arnott, emigrated from Dundee in the mid 1800's to Cork, in the south of Ireland. He later became Mayor of the city and MP at Westminster and strongly influenced and championed "The Irish Poor Law Relief Bill" which helped reduce the rate of child mortality at that time where the Great Famine ravaged the country.

The strong religious ethos which runs throughout Dr Arnott's book, culminating in the teaching of phaco techniques to Indian eye surgeons at the Said

Baba Eye Hospital in Puttaparthi, and the subsequent inauguration of the very successful mobile operating theatre for India, can be seen to emanate from the incredible social responsibility and deep religious conviction Sir John displayed in this remarkable successful entrepreneurial business activities in Ireland at the time with his constant attention to helping the poor.

The second section of the book outlines Eric's basic training in Ophthalmology at the Eye and Ear Hospital in Dublin and Moorfields in London. Set against a background of considerable controversy over Ridley's intraocular lens implant in the 50's, his experiences subsequently helped him to adapt to a similar type of reaction which greeted the introduction of small incision phaco emulsification and installation of the first phaco emulsifier instrument in Europe in Charing Cross Hospital in the late 70's.

With the resulting success of phaco and

with such a host of successful conferences in London, Eric turned his attention to the designing of a suitable intraocular lens implant which embodied the concept of the totally encircling loops, which he has patented and which was subsequently copied by some US companies. The resulting successful legal action taken by his son Stephen and himself, in an American court is described in great detail. At the time it was a make or break financial situation for his practice.

Regarding the personal aspects of the book, we cannot but be impressed by the considerable devotion he had for his wife Veronica whose Russian family background id also fascinating to read about and which towards the end of the, forms the basis of a great friendship between the Arnott's and Svyatoslav and Irina Fyodorov and a subsequent business venture for their surgical clinic in Gibraltar.

The final chapter refers to Veronica's final

illness and one is left with the feeling that what is fascinating account of a brilliant career in ophthalmic surgery in an era of what must have been one of the most innovative forty years in ophthalmology, is dwarfed by the loss of Veronica's friendship and constant championship in an equally if not more incredible forty years of married life.

Whereas this book would mainly be of interest to ophthalmologists in that it provides an accurate account of the exciting developments in technology from Ridley's lens implant and Kelman's phacoemulsification inventions, non-medical readers will also find it a fascinating history of motivation and achievement in the great gift of the restoration of sight to the blind.

Attention: Apple Korps

We are trying to establish a database of all the former Apple Korps Fellows (David J. Apple, MD).

Please send your current contact information (i.e. mailing address, fax, phone, e-mails, etc.) to Ann Curran, ann.curran@hsc.utah.edu.