

## Dr Frank Harland Mills AO

The degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa) was conferred upon Dr Frank Harland Mills on 27 September 2005 and presented at the Medicine ceremony held at 4.00pm on 18 November 2005.

### Citation

Chancellor, Frank Harland Mills was born in 1910, graduated in Medicine from the University of Sydney in 1933 and trained in surgery in London before the Second World War. He returned to Australia after the war broke out, and entered the Army as a Medical Officer. He was captured in Singapore, and spent the rest of the war delivering high-standard medical care under dreadful circumstances in Japanese prison camps, first in Changi, then in Sandakhan and Kuching. He emerged from Kuching camp weighing 38 kilograms.

Following his release, he returned to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, and in his spare time he built and began to test a heart-lung machine designed during his time in Kuching prison camp. While he was carrying out this work, a commercial heart-lung machine was developed by Gibbon in the United States. Mr Mills abandoned his work, but continued to develop heart surgery at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in the 1940s and '50s.

His early results for heart surgery were among the best in the world. He performed many hundreds of procedures on the heart and lungs long before such surgery became the province of specialists. He also pioneered surgery on the arteries, and was one of the first people to operate systematically and successfully on the liver. Indeed, he contributed significantly to the development of the special field of surgery of the liver, pancreas and bile ducts. He was also instrumental in developing techniques for the perfusion of anti-cancer drugs into the blood supply of tumours, a field in which he was well ahead of his time.

He was a remarkable technical surgeon, who taught generations of surgical trainees by his example. Far more importantly, he advocated the need for investigation and the academic outlook in surgery. In this he was strongly influenced by his friend, the great Dr Alfred Blalock of Johns Hopkins Medical School. By his encouragement, curiosity and refusal to accept conventional wisdom, Mr Mills influenced a number of surgeons to follow academic careers. Relatively few younger surgeons know how much they owe to him as a rational and thoughtful pioneer.

His contributions to the Faculty of Medicine go far beyond his technical prowess. His attitudes have pervaded the training and the practice of influential academic surgeons. In his active days as a surgeon, he always supported the work of the University's Department of Surgery in the most practical of ways – by providing the intellectual background to programs of investigation, and by endorsing the academic values which Sir John Loewenthal, and Sir Harold Dew before him, brought to the teaching and practice of surgery.

Chancellor, Frank Harland Mills was admitted to the degree of Doctor of Medicine, honoris causa, on 27 September 2005. I have great pleasure in presenting to you this outstanding surgeon, scholar and teacher.