

## Historical perspectives of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery: Richard A. Jonas

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Richard Andrew Jonas was the 86th president of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS) and served from 2005 to 2006 (Figure 1). Reflecting on his international perspective as an Australian-American, he titled his address "Risks, rewards, and responsibilities of globalization for the cardiothoracic surgeon."<sup>1</sup> As he began his address, he noted "This Association is a brilliant public symbol of the importance of the academic mission for the present and future of cardiothoracic surgery. By awarding



Dr Richard A. Jonas, 86th president of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery

### Central Message

This article presents a historical perspective on the 86th president of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery.

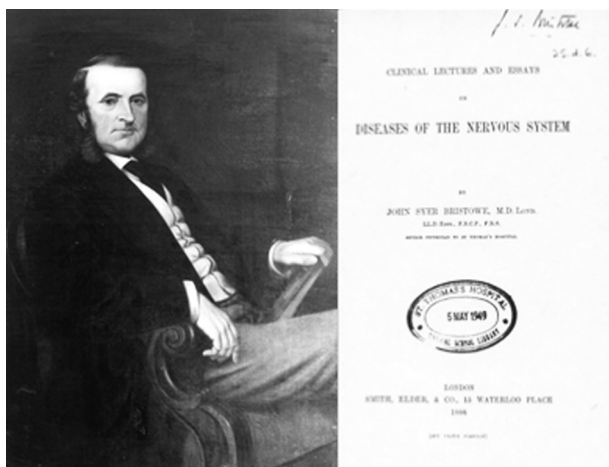


**FIGURE 1.** Dr Richard A. Jonas, 86th president of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery.

membership, the Association pays tribute through peer recognition to those who make significant contributions to teaching, research, and clinical surgery. When I became a member of the Association, I considered it one of the greatest honors of my professional career."<sup>1</sup>

Dr Jonas was born and raised in Adelaide, South Australia, on the south-central coast of Australia. Reflecting the early demographics of South Australia, Dr Jonas's maternal and paternal forebears migrated to Australia in the mid-1800s from southern England and northern Germany. They included the Bristow family descended from John Bristow, a distinguished 19th century surgeon at St Thomas' Hospital, London, whose portrait hangs today in the committee room at St Thomas' (Figure 2). Lyall Jonas, Richard's father, was one of the youngest commanders of an Australian naval vessel in the Second World War, laying mines in the treacherous seas south of New Guinea. After the war he returned to Adelaide where he took over the family shipping business with his 2 cousins and expanded into mining. Richard's mother, June Clio Coles-Robinson, played a role in the establishment of Adelaide's first hospital for children with cerebral palsy.

Dr Jonas attended St. Peter's College in Adelaide, a prestigious Anglican boarding college with many notable alumni including 3 Nobel Laureates: Sir Lawrence Bragg (Physics 1915), Howard Florey (Medicine 1945), and Robin Warren (Medicine 2005). He excelled academically in the highly competitive environment at St. Peter's, winning almost every one of the coveted awards for academic



**FIGURE 2.** Dr Jonas's paternal grandmother Marjorie Fricker-Bristow was a descendant of John Bristow, a surgeon at St Thomas' London in the mid-1800s.

excellence (Figure 3). Richard graduated from St. Peter's in 1968 and entered medical school at Adelaide University with the goal of becoming a medical researcher. However, he was soon inspired at medical school to enter the field of surgery, specifically heart surgery through the influence of Hamilton D'Arcy Sutherland, chief of cardiothoracic surgery at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. On graduation with honors in 1974, he moved to Melbourne to train in general surgery at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Australia's pre-eminent surgical institution.

In 1979, on completion of his general surgical training, Dr Jonas was invited by Dr D'Arcy Sutherland to begin training in cardiothoracic surgery at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. Dr Sutherland had recently become executive director of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and had moved from Adelaide to reinvigorate pediatric cardiac surgery at Australia's leading pediatric hospital in Melbourne. Dr Roger Mee was recruited from Boston Children's Hospital and established the Royal Children's Hospital as one of the leading centers in the world for primary repair of complex congenital heart anomalies. Coincidentally that year, when Drs Mee and Jonas began working at Royal Children's, prostaglandin E1 was widely introduced, opening the door to corrective neonatal surgery.

Dr Mee arranged for Richard to move to the Green Lane Hospital in Auckland on completion of his year at the Royal Children's Hospital. At Green Lane Hospital in New Zealand, Richard trained in general cardiothoracic, vascular, and congenital cardiac surgery. In particular he was exposed to Sir Brian Barratt-Boyes, KBE, who emphasized the importance of early primary repair of congenital anomalies. It was during this period in the early 1980s that Barratt-Boyes was working closely with Dr John Kirklin (59th president of the AATS) from the University of Alabama



**FIGURE 3.** Dr Jonas receives the General Rowell Trophy for the most outstanding army cadet in the state of South Australia, 1968.

Birmingham (UAB), co-writing the great textbook of cardiac surgery that was to become the foundation of the entire field of cardiac surgery for the next few decades. After Richard completed certification in cardiothoracic surgery with the Australasian College of Surgeons in 1982, Barratt-Boyes arranged for him to take a fellowship position at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

At the Brigham and Women's Hospital, Dr Jonas worked with Drs Lawrence Cohn (79th president of the AATS), Jack Collins, and Richard Shemin, and was exposed to the efficiency and superb high standards of the US health care system. At the end of 1982 he rotated to Boston Children's Hospital to work with Drs Aldo Castaneda (74th president of the AATS) and William I. Norwood, initially as a senior fellow and subsequently as chief resident. In January 1983, Dr Norwood published the first report of successful surgical palliation of hypoplastic left heart syndrome. Also that month, Drs Norwood and Castaneda performed the world's first successful neonatal arterial switch procedures. Exposure to these 2 seminal events was pivotal in Dr Jonas's career and signified that congenital heart surgery had evolved to the point where the goal of corrective surgery as early in life as possible had been realized.

When Dr Norwood left for The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia at the end of 1983, Dr Jonas was invited by Dr Castaneda join him at Boston Children's Hospital. Dr Jonas soon acquired a large experience with the Norwood operation and published early reports describing the technical challenges this procedure raised. Drs John Mayer and Frank Hanley were surgical partners in Boston. In 1994, Dr Jonas was appointed as the William E. Ladd Professor of Child Surgery at the Harvard Medical School and Surgeon-in-Chief of the Department of Cardiac Surgery at Boston Children's Hospital. Dr Pedro del Nido (95th president of the AATS) was recruited from Pittsburgh to join the faculty. The program continued to grow in size and prestige, including the continuing expansion of the highly innovative

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