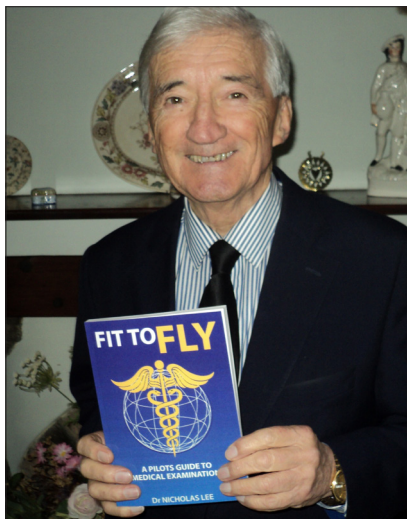


OBITUARY

Nicholas Lee



Nicholas Lee was born on 11 July 1933 and died at 88 years of age after a full and varied life on 27 December 2021 at his Simonstown home, Flora House, surrounded by family and loved ones.

Nic was multi-talented, and apart from medicine's varied disciplines, he was an actor, playwright and director. (A role that many will remember was his Uncle Vanya in the Chekhov play *The Cherry Orchard*.)

His formative years were spent in Plymouth, England, and his father served in the Royal Navy and later as a chef at Admiralty House, Simonstown. Owing to war-torn England and absent parents, he attended many schools, excelling in both the arts and the sciences. He became an RAF fighter pilot squadron leader and a

flying instructor on Oxford University Air Squadron. This also afforded him the opportunity to study medicine at Royal London Hospital, where he met his future wife, Carol, a nurse who was also talented in drama and the arts. While there he edited the *London Hospital Gazette*, which laid the foundation for his future editorship of the *SAMJ*.

Nic practised medicine in the RAF for 10 years and obtained a diploma in aviation medicine. He served in several countries and war zones, and thereafter went to be a flight medical officer at RAF College Cranwell and lecture in aerospace medicine at RAF North Luffenham, before moving to South Africa in 1969 - 70. In 1974 he bought a general practice in Simonstown that came with an old house built from the timber of *HMS Flora!* During this time, he did many home deliveries in the Fish Hoek area and saw the birth of False Bay Hospital.

He left his practice in 1983 to embark on his third career, becoming Editor-in-Chief of the esteemed *SAMJ*, where he remained for 15 years. He famously covered the death of Steve Biko and encountered Credo Mutwa, Desmond Tutu and Laurens van der Post in the course of his editorship.

'The best thing I ever did', he said to me, 'was find a man like Dan Ncayiyana!' – who took over as Editor, taking the journal to new heights.

Subsequently, Nic worked as a locum for the UK Civil Aviation Authority and as senior physician for the Heathrow Medical Services Authority.

He returned to South Africa full time in 2010 as a senior designated aero-medical examiner for the South African Civil Aviation Authority, conducting obligatory flying medicals for local and international pilots. He also served on the committee of the Southern African Aerospace Medical Association. He finally retired in 2018, when the demands of computer technology caused him to say, 'This is like having to fly a plane from an armchair!'

At this time, he authored a book, *Fit to Fly*, a textbook for pilots. He also wrote many monthly articles for *African Pilot*, every one entertaining and instructive.

Nic's highest priority was his family, of whom he was immensely proud. He doted on his grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, thankfully living nearby. His wife Carol was with him through thick and thin, holding the family together.

Nic had a wonderful English wit and sense of humour, a fine intellect, a love of learning and enquiry into many branches of medicine, and an appreciation of art and science, the classics, writing and photography.

He was a patient himself, having had heart failure since age 50, and was the beneficiary of the expertise of many colleagues and the interventions of modern medicine, sometimes, in his own words, 'in the nick of time'. He had a strong faith, and was an astute observer of world affairs, and the beauty all around him.

Charles Chouler

Medicross Tokai, Cape Town, South Africa
chouler@crus.co.za