

GREAT MEDICAL LIVES; DR JOHN BILLINGS

GREG AND AGHI CLOVIS



“Marriage is an edifice, the building of which must be continued every day”

Dr John Billings

John James Billings AM, KCSG, MD, FRCP, FRACP, was born in Melbourne on 5 March 1918 and died after a short illness in 2007. Educated at Xavier College and the University of Melbourne he married a fellow doctor Evelyn L Billings in 1943. He served in the Australian army, during WWII in Papua New Guinea.

In 1947 John Billings was awarded a Nuffield Fellowship for post-graduate studies in London.

Specialising in neurology, he returned to Melbourne where he became Head of the Department of Neurology at St Vincent’s Hospital, Melbourne, and Dean of the Undergraduate Medical School within the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Melbourne.

Thus as a high powered and intellectual doctor he was, in 1953, asked to begin work on a method of natural fertility regulation, which was originally called the Ovulation Method. For the following 50+ years Drs John and Evelyn Billings researched, developed and perfected the method which now bears their name. With high efficacy ratings, the Billings Ovulation Method has been successfully introduced into China, where it is now the only government-approved method of natural family planning. The Billings Ovulation Method also proved to be singularly effective in assisting couples, who had previously been considered to be infertile, to achieve pregnancy. He travelled widely and with his wife spent a large part of each year travelling to many countries throughout the world, training teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method, establishing teaching centres, and lecturing to doctors, medical students, nurses and others.

I first saw him in Brixton Town where, as ever he combined raw and excellent science with his vision of the beauty of married love. And yet they still provided for their family and many grandchildren. I recall driving the Billings back to their accommodation one evening, showing them the sights of London to their fresh and interested minds and hearing how they managed to keep up with all their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. Its odd to drive a couple around the streets of London knowing that you owe them a great debt. I never met a man with a better understanding of marriage.

“A man may move into old age and know that every time he looks at his wife he is looking at the most beautiful woman in the world”.

Dr John Billings

John and Evelyn both assisted us to develop the SAFE system in 1994. They were utterly generous of their time and supportive of us. Dr. John Billings’ work for the family was recognized with a Papal Knighthood, an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) in 1991, Honorary Doctorates from multiple international universities and the joint award with his wife of International Catholic Physicians of the Year in 2002. He was a proper doctor, a proper father and a great man.