Professor Jimmy James
25th September 1940 – 4th December 2019

John Henri James, known as Jimmy, was born in Lusaka [then Northern Rhodesia [now Zambia]. He was the youngest son of a Dutch protestant Missionary and an English Methodist Minister. He was educated in Kings School, Bath, a missionary school. He attended St Andrews University to study classics but changed to medicine in his first year with no science and graduated in 1966. He started married life as a student being supported by his wife Judith [a teacher]. He was left wing, member of the CND, president of the New Left club and was described by 1966 Year Book as “a perpetual president”.

He took his FRCS Edinburgh in 1972 at which time he was a plastic surgery registrar in Lothian Health board, when he wasn’t appointed senior registrar in Edinburgh he went to Aarhus, Denmark instead.

In 1977 to 1981 he was consultant reconstructive and leprosy surgeon [and incidentally pilot] with the Flying doctor Service in Nairobi, which he described the best job in the world.

He left in order to educate his 3 children in the UK and took an anatomy demonstrator job, again, before becoming a plastic surgeon in Shotley Bridge where he stayed for 14 years.

He has 30 papers on burns and reconstruction including a chapter in Primary Surgery edited Maurice King 1987. He was also and Examiner for MRCR and FRCS Edinburgh college

In 1996 he upped sticks and went back to Africa [before he was too old] to go to Blantyre in Malawi to work with Anne Gloag his ex theatre nurse to set up a Burns Unit, the Malawi Burns trust grew under Jim’s vision and became one of Africa’s best burns units. He was made associate professor in 1999 and retired 2001.

From the inception in 1999 he has been the leading light of COSECSA, he was a founder fellow and organiser and when the college set up a financial and physical base in Uganda in 1991, he was made Secretary General.

He worked at the development of the college Mastership, the first to be held in Kampala 2003 and later Fellowship. He went round all the suitable hospitals in the 8 counties for accreditation. They were Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. He was masterly in diplomacy, totally open and honest, pretty forceful when the discussion got heated and factions developed and trusted by all. He was also an indefatigable hard worker

It was my pleasure to have been with him in Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe when we did these hospital visits.

I once asked him 2 questions when I gave the citation for the Edinburgh College medal which he was justly awarded in 2003
What is the best thing you have done? Reply: Marrying Judith and doing plastic surgery.

Why have you got the College medal? He did not know. He got it for a loyal servant of the college especially in Africa.

He retired in 2009 and went back to Clathy in Scotland where he indulged in his passion for cars, going on road trips with Judith in the Morgan, tending his garden, sailing, have the company of his 8 grandchildren and get warm every year with a trip to Kenya.

Jimmy died after a short illness.

He was a fabulous, all round good guy and a Christian in the best sense of the word [ie caring]

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