

## Dr Joel Bernstein - Class of "62"

I left school and went straight to medical school, luckily missing military training and ended up with a BSc in Medicine, Medical Degree and Speciality degrees in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Fellowships from London and Australia. My overriding interest has always been in Human Reproduction and I currently function as the Director and part owner of a Fertility Clinic in Bondi Junction, Sydney Australia. Denyse, my wife and I emigrated to Australia 21 years ago.



Our Fertility Clinic provides services for both hetero and same sex couples as well as single women. ([www.fertilityeast.com.au](http://www.fertilityeast.com.au)). Therefore we provide all forms of treatment including IVF, as well as donor egg and sperm services.

Denyse, is an IVF scientist and currently runs our donor egg programme, which sources donor eggs for Australian woman from Cape Town, Athens, New York and Los Angeles where we work in association

with other fertility clinics. Denyse and I are both passionate about "making babies", in a medical sense of course!

Both Denyse and I have offered wondered how many babies have we been instrumental in bringing into the world through our work in treating infertile patients. Without accurate knowledge but trying to assess this conservatively we estimate at least 3000 but it could well be more. Indirectly through the 2 clinics we have set up originally one in South Africa and since we have lived in Australia this number would exceed 5000.

Our most publicised patients were the surrogate granny from Tzaneen, her daughter and son in law and the fact that she carried her 3 grandchildren and gave birth to them in 1987. This story made world headlines and in some ways was the forerunner of the reproductive options available to patients today, where we can use a donor sperm from one person, a donor egg from another and have it carried for a couple in a donor uterus (surrogate carrier), by a third to be brought up by a fourth.

The reason I mentioned this case was the fact that it enabled us to emigrate to Australia!

Our decision to emigrate came later in life, when I was 48 years old. We looked at a number of countries where I could practice medicine without having to re-qualify. Despite a great job offer in the UK when I went for a job interview the weather was so atrocious that being lovers of the outdoors we decided not to take this and opted for Australia. However Australia was not looking for doctors and in fact being a doctor scored you minus points to get in. I tried a number of options but all failed and we were sitting in the Australian embassy with an official, feeling pretty dejected, when he asked

me had I done anything exceptional or unusual in my career, which up to that time was essentially pretty standard.

Denyse had kept a scrap-book of our Surrogate Granny in a cheap jotter and almost jokingly we mentioned this to him and showed him the scrap book.

To our absolute amazement he pointed out that this was just what he was looking for and we would hear from him in 6 weeks. He mentioned that that Australia did have a category for people with special achievements and I would fit this category.

We both smiled and laughed in embarrassment when we left his office. Our amusement was because we did not feel medically this was such an amazing feat, and in addition Australia at that time was a world leader in the field of IVF, and the place that had taught me this technology. The rest they say, *is history*, 6 weeks later we were accepted.

Living in Sydney, close to the beach is great.

I have 2 daughters from my first marriage, both live in Melbourne Australia, both married and I have 2 grandchildren.

Denyse, who accompanied me to our recent small reunion in London, also has 2 children from a previous marriage, who emigrated with us to Sydney. Both my stepson and stepdaughter are married with a total of 3 children and they all live in Sydney.

Growing up in South Africa has left an indelible imprint on me and despite having settled in Australia I still cannot get Africa out of my blood especially the bush, and so travel back to Southern Africa regularly for "safari" holidays, as going to a game reserve is known here in Australia.

Denyse and I would be happy to contact or meet up with any class mates travelling "down under" and can be contacted via [ivf@tpg.com.au](mailto:ivf@tpg.com.au)

Joel Bernstein

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