

# *HUMANS of Pindara*

Dr Jacobus and Dr Nova Jordaan





# IN PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

**W**e met Jacobus (Jorrie) and Nova Jordaan in their rooms at the Surgical Weightloss Centre at Pindara Place – an impressive set-up, and testament to their success in helping their patients achieve their health and weight-loss goals.

In talking to husband and wife team, Jorrie and Nova, there was one theme that was a constant throughout, an ideal that is strong within them both – the perpetual pursuit of perfection.

It's not the pursuit of a superficial or unreasonable perfection, not at all, more an inherent desire and intense drive to simply, always do their very best – for their patients, their profession, as parents and as people.

Being from different backgrounds (Jorrie originally from South Africa and Nova a Gold Coaster by way of the USA) was no barrier for Jorrie and Nova, it was the mutual inclination for perfection in practice that initially drew them together.

They first met in a Pindara surgical theatre, Nova recounts being slightly intimidated by Jorrie when she would assist him in theatre – he was very focused, had high standards and was meticulous in his method.

Jorrie was intrigued by Nova's dedication to improvement – her penchant for writing thorough notes after each surgery so that she could consider and recount what worked and what didn't for the next time.

Despite a shared passion for surgery neither of them had initially envisioned a career in medicine.

Jorrie thought he would pursue a career in engineering, but a suggestion from his parents, born from Jorrie's love of animals, sent him in a new direction.

"When I was growing up in South Africa, I had many pets and even had my own little safe haven for sick and injured animals. I had all sorts – birds, lizards, even tortoises and I would nurse them back to health – so at my parent's suggestion, I followed that passion," Jorrie said.

Nova thought medicine was 'disgusting' and hadn't intended following the path many of her family members had pursued before her. After high school, she decided to study psychology and biochemistry, but was unconvinced about this career path and decided to travel instead – becoming a flight attendant.

It was only after September 11 that Nova decided to return to study and this time found medicine was what really spoke to her.

An incident with Jorrie's father, where he had to undergo an emergency laparotomy, had a big impact on Jorrie's choice of specialisation, with him eventually choosing Upper Gastrointestinal. His move into bariatrics – a surgical speciality that assists patients with weightloss – was a natural progression after Jorrie noticed the immense impact it made on his patients.

"It was something I started to do as part of the Upper GI service. I was quite surprised initially by the impact it had on patients. They did so well and were so happy that I decided to take on more cases and develop this area more and more," Jorrie said.

Finding a partner in Nova, who shared a strong interest in the area also, enabled them to build an impressive practice uniquely able to service the immediate and ongoing health needs of bariatric patients.

"What I like most about bariatrics is the ability to develop an ongoing relationship with your patient as their health improves. You get to see their lives change for the better, so it's very motivating and uplifting to be able to say 'I made a difference to that person'," Nova said.

For both Jorrie and Nova, it is clear medicine is much more than a job – it is a passion, a pastime and a fascination. Developing obesity medicine and bariatrics in Australia, as well as having it recognised as a discipline of medicine is one of their main goals.

Jorrie and Nova regularly travel overseas to attend conferences, education forums, and visit with other specialists in the field to continuously develop their own knowledge and skills in the area. They have created their own obesity medicine unit in line with world's best practice and often host other bariatric surgeons in order to share their knowledge.

Jorrie and Nova agreed they would also like to see the stigma removed from bariatric surgery. They would like to see obesity recognised as a disease, like asthma or diabetes, and treated as such. If obesity was widely accepted and treated as a disease it would help remove the stigma, which would lead to more people seeking help.

Their passion for medicine has seemingly trickled down to the other great loves of Nova and Jorrie's life – their daughters. Often attending rounds with their parents and video reviewing various surgical procedures, it comes as little surprise that the dolls in the Jordaan house often suffer from a range of maladies that require blood pressure checks, anaesthetisation and surgical procedures of various descriptions.

It is a sincere hope of the Jordaaans that they can model for their children the possibilities for the future and give their daughters the confidence to follow their own passions – whether that be medicine or not.

But, it is not all work and no play with the Jordaaans. Jorrie was a keen athlete when he was younger, playing Rugby Union in South Africa. In fact, playing rugby is where Jorrie got his nickname – Jorrie. Calling out Jacobus or Jordaan didn't roll off the tongue too well, so the crowd shortened Jordaan to Jorrie (pronounced Yorrie) and it has stuck ever since.

Running a busy practice means long holidays are not always a possibility, so 'staycations' play a big part in how the Jordaaans relax. Jorrie and Nova's perfect day would be spent in a pool in Cabarita with their family, just enjoying the weather and maybe a margarita or two for Nova while the kids float buy on a giant inflatable unicorn or otter or swan....

The perfect day would be finished off with a BBQ fillet steak and a whiskey for Jorrie and a generous antipasto grazing plate for Nova while listening to an eclectic combination of Dire Straits, Queen, Norah Jones and the Wiggles (for the kids...).

Bedtime reading mostly consists of children's books, with Dr Seuss, Hairy Maclary and Harry Potter featuring heavily on the Jordaaans' bedside tables – as with most busy parents time for your own recreational reading is hard to come by.

It is often real life that inspires the Jordaaans, when things get tough and seem insurmountable, they call on their core beliefs of never giving up, that there is always a way and to always do the right thing, even when it is the most difficult thing to do.

It was these ideals that helped Jorrie make the decision to make Australia his home.

"I always liked Australians and the weather was important, but it was the meritocracy that exists in Australia, and the egalitarian belief that everyone matters that appealed to me the most," Jorrie said.

"It is these same reasons we have stayed with Pindara all these years and built our practice here. There is a commitment to quality and excellence and it is the same at all levels, from environmental staff, to admin and clinical; the patient is always at the centre and everyone matters."

I think it is safe to say we are glad Jorrie and Nova have chosen Pindara as the place to continue their pursuit of perfection.



TOP: DR JACOBUS AND DR NOVA JORDAAN IN THEATRE.

MIDDLE: FAMILY PHOTO OF DAUGHTER MIAS 5TH BIRTHDAY.

BOTTOM: THE COUPLE CELEBRATING THEIR WEDDING DAY.