

Newsletter 2000

THE ST GEORGE GRADUATE NURSES ASSOCIATION

President's Report

By Janice Myatt (Bakker 1978)

Dear Colleagues and Friends

It only seems like yesterday that I sat down to write last year's President's Report and I recall writing about the changes to the health care system, in particular, nursing that one might expect as we were about to enter the new century. In our area we hit the year 2000 without any anticipated dramas or millennium bugs.

This year the committee has planned our reunion luncheon for later in October due to the Olympic Games. I must confess that for the last few days I, like the rest of Australia, and probably the world have been glued to the television as much as I can, watching some amazing sporting events. The opening ceremony was exciting and very Australian, making me proud to be an Australian.

Not unlike my pride for Australia, I have always felt pride in my nursing training and feel honored to be the president of the St George Graduate Nurses' Association. At our April meeting there was an election of Officers and as most of you would now know, there have been a few changes to the committee and I welcome the new members. For your information the names of the committee are included at the end of this report, together with my phone number and email address.

We continue to support and work closely with the St George Nursing

Council and welcome Yvonne Brugmans to the committee and thank her for editing the newsletter.

Many of you would be aware of Miss Edna Harper's death and I am sure would have read the Obituary published in the Sydney Morning Herald paying tribute to her commitment to St George and nursing and encouragement to nurses that worked under her direction.

This year has been difficult for me as I have been quite unwell but fortunate that this has been a relatively quiet year for me in regards to Association activities. I must thank the committee for their support and attendance at activities which I was unable to attend, and thank them for the flowers given to me which were a great cheer up and arrived at exactly the right time.

I must reiterate the information in my letter which you received with your invitation, our numbers are decreasing and our costs increasing. The committee decided at the last meeting that we will be changing the venue next year and we are exploring a couple of options closer to St George Hospital, which may also give you the opportunity to have a look at the site and see some of the many changes, including the area where some of our memorabilia will be housed.

We always look forward to welcoming anyone wishing to join the committee and encourage you to talk to a committee member at the reunion or you may phone me on (02) 9792 7684. Email: cjmyatt@bigpond.au

Publications & Mail Returned

Judith Cornell (Roberts, 1961) tells us that it has been a good year for authors from amongst the St George grads, apart from Daphne Salt, Val Hayes (Green, 1968) has also had a book published and I co-edited *Letters from Belsen 1945: An Australian nurse's experiences with the survivors of war*. Muriel Knox Doherty wrote the letters to friends and family whilst serving with UNRRA in Europe.

I feel sure that many of you will remember the general nursing textbook by Doherty Sirl and Ring *Modern Nursing Practical Procedures* which was written in 1943 and used well into the 1960s.

If you know the whereabouts of the following graduates, please contact the reunion secretary: Rae Doak (Baker, 63), Jane Bentivoglio (Jackson), Sheila Carter (Thompson 1957).

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Committee Members

Janice Myatt, President
phone/fax: (02) 9792 7684
email: cjmyatt@bigpond.au

Dot Coker, Vice President

Janice Robson, Secretary
phone: (02) 9570 5517

Margaret Binder, Treasurer
phone: (02) 9772 1528

Judith Cornell, Reunion Secretary
phone/fax: (02) 9587 2834
email: cornell@eagles.com.au

Yvonne Brugmans, Newsletter Editor
phone: (02) 9350 2778
email: brugmansy@sesahs.nsw.gov.au

Committee members: Therese Riley,
Rosemary Carmichael, Nicky Positti,
Katherine Litchfield.

Committee Meetings

20 November 2000 at 730pm. Venue: Judith Cornells, 57 Queen Victoria Street, Bexley.

7 May, 27 August & 26 November 2001 at 7.30pm. Venue: Rockdale Nursing Home, 22 Woodford Rd, Banksia

Spare copies of graduation programs of the following years are available if anybody has lost their copy. 1971 x 1; 1972 x 4; 1976 x 4; 1978 x 2; 1979 x 2. Contact Judith Cornell if you would like a copy.

St George Hospital Celebrates International Nurses' Day

Everyone loves to be recognised for making a contribution, and for St George Nurses, 12 May was the day to receive it.

The Annual Nurse of the Year Award ceremony was well attended by staff from throughout the organisation.

In her address, Acting Executive Director Mrs Jenny Phillips, explained the importance of the nurses' role, continuing education and colleagues rewarding nurses for their hard work.

Special guest speaker at the ceremony was the Hon Cherie Burton, MP, Kogarah, who paid tribute to the nurses of the hospital. She spoke of her recent first hand experience as a patient at St George and highly commended the nursing staff for her care and treatment. Additionally, she stressed the strong links that exist between the hospital and the community and pledged ongoing support through resource and funding.

The Nurse of the Year was awarded to Ms Trish Davidson, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Cardiology for her outstanding contribution to Nursing



Left to right: Kathryn Bedwell, Lauren Smyth, The Hon Cherie Burton MP, Kogarah, Yvonne Brugmans, Chairperson St George Nursing Council, Gerard Keenan EN and Carmen Datson EN.

throughout the organisation during the year.

Yvonne Brugmans presented the St George Hospital Nursing Council Scholarship Awards. Gerard Keenan and Carmen Datson, Enrolled Nurses, were recipients of scholarships to support their ongoing education

towards a Bachelor of Nursing. Secondary school students Katherine Bedwell and Lauren Nicole Smith received scholarships towards their pursuit of nursing as a career choice.

Yvonne also thanked the St George Graduate Nurses Association for their continued financial support.

Reunion Report 1999

By Judith Cornell (Roberts 1961)

A very happy day was had by the 130 grads who attended the 1999 luncheon at the St George Motor Boat Club.

Apologies were received from 100 with a special apology from Miss Harper. The President Mrs Janice Myatt extended a special welcome to Gloria MacKillop (Thompson, 59) and Helene Dickson (Windsor, 62) both visiting from the UK, Gloria from Scotland and Helene from London, as well as Sylvia Bennett (Smith, 74) who returns

after 2 years travelling in the UK. Janice also welcomed the 7 interstate visitors who were able to attend.

The lucky door prizes were won by Chris Busatill and Betty Tierney and small posies were presented to Miss McGuire and Miss Snodgrass.

We were very pleased to have a "selling" table for the St George Nursing Council and the girls reported a brisk trade in the various items of branded merchandise, St George

badges and copies of *The Healing Saint* Proceeds from the sale support educational scholarships for St George nurses.

I would thank all those who contacted me about the success of the day and those thanks have been passed onto the committee. We are appreciative of those who handed back their name badges as it not only saves money, but more importantly it saves much computer time.

St George Graduate Nurses' Association Historical Collection

It is my pleasure to announce that the historical collection which is owned by the St George Graduate Nurses' Association has a new home. Now under custodial care by The St George Nursing Council, the collection will be soon on display in the new Library facility on 1st Floor Research and Education Centre. May I take this

opportunity to thank Jenny Phillips, Assistant Executive Director, Nursing and Clinical Support Service for the support and assistance given in making the new home possible.

Specially designed display cabinets have been purchased as well as a donation of two book display show-cases from Rosemary Snodgrass which

was very much appreciated. Thank you to Rosemary for her generosity and to Karen Andrews, Manager, Library Services for her cooperation and support in housing the new Museum. For any further enquiries about the collection please call Yvonne Brugmans, Chairperson, St George Nursing Council on 9350 2778.

News & Greetings

McGaven (Matheson, 1954) (Email: cathm@bri.net.au) During June I had a very enjoyable trip to Canada staying most of the time with Audrey Newman (Dash, '54). I flew to Vancouver, had 4 days in Victoria seeing lots of the sights including Butchart Gardens, of course. After returning to Vancouver I caught the Rocky Mountaineer Rail train to Jasper after an overnight stop at Kamloops. Audrey met me at Jasper and we drove through Bamff to her home at Salt Prairie, where she lives with her son Peter. After several days there we flew to Toronto and on to Niagara Falls, Maid of the Mist and Niagara-on-the-Lake, we returned to Salt Prairie for a few more days then flew home to Aussie. Audrey sends her love to all of her friends from '54.

Mary Telford (Billings, 1954) writes: To all my fellow nurses and good friends from St George Hospital, I wish you a happy and successful reunion. After twenty years as a clinic aide with the Washoe County Schools, I retired in June. The staff honoured me by naming the clinic after me. They gave me a great send off and said some very nice things as well. I have just completed an 8 week visit to Australia spending time in Queensland with my family, visiting the "Top End" and spending a week in Sydney catching up with St George friends Eileen Bergin, Cath Wolf and Dot Coker. All welcomed me into their home to stay a few days. I caught up with Joan Staples and Joan English at Cath Wolf's house, we all had a good gossip about our St George days. Best Wishes

Maisie Horswell (Wyness, 1950) sends greetings to all and hopes that everyone has a good day.

Marie Parnell (Chadwick, 1950) wishes everyone a successful day.

Rhonda Hall (Stephenson, 1962) writes... I hope everybody has a wonderful day. We will be on holiday at reunion time this year so will be unable to attend. Marion Wittner (Macintosh) and husband Bob spent 2 months working as volunteers at an orphanage for disabled children in Ankara, Turkey and they are hoping

to return next year but will have to raise funds to do so. Rhonda has forwarded part of a letter written by Marion whilst in Turkey which gives an indication of the task..."we arrived in Ankara and spent 2 nights with a German girl who works (unpaid) at the orphanage and then moved to a nice apartment looking out across the city... the city is in a valley creeping up the surrounding hillsides. We are on a large plateau about 900 metres above sea level. There is a small corner store about 2 mins walk away and a supermarket about 5 mins away, not exactly like Woolworths or Franklins.

Like a good Turkish housewife I pick up plenty of fresh vegies and fruit on my way to the bus, and like a good Turkish lady I hang my washing from the clothesline attached to both balconies (except my undies – of course they cannot be hung out in public view). How strange men sell ladies nickers in the market stalls, but apparently once they have adorned a body are not to be seen by men!! But that's Turkey... Well as to our work – the orphanage was just as bad as our worst expectations. Really it would break your heart to see these children – such haunted looks. Many are confined to bed/cot all day never going into the sunshine, the Turkish workers employed by the orphanage are, on the whole, underpaid and poorly educated – they think the disabled have no feelings. They do the bare minimum, just feeding (mostly bottles whatever the age) and changing. The group we are with is Kardelen, an association formed by foreign Christians to get a legitimate foot in the door. They now employ 6 Turkish Christians and what a contrast in their attitude to the children, so happy, loving and kind. It is such a daunting job they often come away in tears and need much prayer and encouragement to be able to work 4 days.

Bob is doing a custom designed bike for them as well as working in the wheelchair factory. Everything takes twice as long as it would at home and having no Turkish is very frustrating. I am helping set up a "sensory room"

to try and stimulate some of the more severely handicapped – many of whom just withdraw into themselves."

Daphne Salt (McCarthy, 1968) writes that her book, *Kurnell: Birthplace of Modern Australia* has been published this year and she will have copies of it at the special price of \$20 at the reunion. That price also applies to mail order copies.

Merrilyn Rundle (Brown, 1979) writes... I am currently completing 4 units externally with the Uni. of Central Qld as per the QLD Nursing Council requirements so that I may have my registration restored. I have been out of nursing for 15 years having children. The course is mainly about the professional issues in nursing and the transformation from passive obedience to critical thinking practitioner. It struck me that in my training in the mid 70s at St George we were never taught to be passively obedient."Intelligently obedient" was the phrase used. Within the framework of the apprenticeship structure of the time, St George nurses were taught to be critical thinkers and challenge orders that were obviously not in the best interest of the patient. I feel proud that St George was ahead of it's time!!

Marie Johnstone (McIntyre, 1942) sends warmest greetings to all. Have a wonderful reunion full of happy memories.

Alice Wong (Ho, 1974) emails... Greetings from Malaysia! Hi! Happy reunion to everyone down there. How is everyone at good old St. George which I last visited in 1997? Time really flies and we are already in the last quarter of the year. I have been travelling to UK to attend conferences as well as visiting my son Alex Wen Ping in Nottingham, in the last 2 years.

Life over here seems to be forever busy with work and home. Last March, I presented a research paper at the 7th Perinatal Congress, and, pleased to say that I won the Best Nursing Paper Award. On 1.10.2000, with God's guidance, I will be representing our hospital to present a research paper at the 11th Federation Oceania Perinatal

Societies (FAOPS) Conference in Manila. Incidentally, the president for this Society is Professor Victor Yu of Monash Medical Centre, Melbourne. Shu Shyan, my daughter will be sitting for her University entrance exam on 18/9 and Wen Ping is currently having his job training in Chicago. On his return from US he will be posted to work in London for 6 months. He is enjoying his work at this international company Andersen Consulting which involves a lot of travelling and he loves it.

Last month, I was the organising chairperson for the 5th Perinatal Seminar for the nurses in our country. We had Professor Gartner who is Professor Emeritus from USA and Kerry Hayes from Melbourne who shared their expertise with us in maternal and perinatal medicine.

We had an overwhelming response from both doctors and nurses who came from all over the country. The Perinatal Seminar is an annual meeting organised by the nursing council members with the aim of providing continuing education for the nurses. It is an honour for me to serve as a council member in the Perinatal Society of Malaysia for the 4th term. Next October in 2001, I hope to attend the 5th World Congress in Perinatal Medicine in Barcelona. I really enjoy attending these international meetings as it gives me the opportunity to learn from world renowned perinatologists the best way of caring for the sick preterm infants.

Gloria Phillips (James, 1958) sends her best wishes to my "old" friends.

Kathryn Phillips (Mellor, 1987) and husband Michael, a third child, a daughter, Ashleigh Kate born 6.4.2000.

Noeline Wilkinson (Toohey, 1958) has met up with a 1939–1943 Grad, Eucine Pepper-Randell who lives in the Long Jetty area.

Ruth Jackson (Lawrence, 1962) writes... I retired in January after 25 years in ICU at St George – it was very hard to say goodbye to nursing and my workmates but I guess all good things have to end.

Marjorie Pont (Ainsworth, 1941) sends her greetings and wishes all a happy day.

Gwen Stokeld (1961) wishes all a very happy day and sends greetings to all.

Mary Henery (Assoc) sends greetings to all.

Colleen Lunney (Moore, 1962) writes that she and her husband have retired and are in the process of moving. She sends her best wishes to all and particularly the 1962 graduates.

Beryl Judd (MacKenzie, 1967) sends greetings and best wishes for a wonderful day to everyone.

Betty Edwards (Thompson, 1951) sends her best wishes for a happy and successful reunion

Dianne Swan (Tinsley, 1973) writes... unfortunately I am unable to attend this years reunion due to post operative complications and the prospect of more surgery. She says hello to all from the January 1970 PTS and would love to hear from them. She wishes all a happy day.

Beryl Watson (Schubert, 1952) writes that Margaret Stirton (1948) is now a patient in the Lawrence Hargrave Private Hospital at Thirroul.

Margaret Pierson (Walton, 1957) sends her best wishes.

Valerie Hayes (Green, PTS April 1964) writes from Melbourne... It is 7 years since I retired from Nursing yet life still remain very busy. My eldest daughter is completing an Honours year in Medical Science. My son, an Army Reservist is part of the security force searching for bombs at the Olympics – I hope he does not find any! My youngest daughter Paula, has undertaken a hospitality course and loving it.

The Year 2000 has been great for me. I joined a Public Speaking club called Toastmasters and won the coveted Humerous Speech competition for 4 states of Australia. In PTS 1964 Sr Elaine McGuire called me "the quiet one" so I have come a long way since those first few months in K Ward.

This year has seen another landmark in my life, writing and publishing my first book, "Wildflowers and Ochre – Our Australian Identity" is part autobiography and part story of White people discovering our Australian identity through a journey my family made to Central Australia. There I discovered the richness of our Aboriginal people and their deep spirituality. My book has lots of coloured pictures plus

reflections of my life journey. There are several pages about my nursing days at St George Hospital. Whilst focusing on things Catholic and spritual, my book is proving a great success and I would be delighted to forward a copy to anyone interested. Each copy is \$24 which includes postage (free of GST). It is 112 A4 size pages. Being self published it was credible expensive, so I would certainly appreciate the support of nursing colleagues to help me reimburse the family budget!

Valerie Hayes, 83 Mayona Road, Montmorency Vic 3094. Does anyone know the whearabouts please of Beth Sinclair? Best wishes to everyone. Val (03) 9434 1310

Cath Wolf (Matthei, 1954) writes... Mary Telford (Billing) visited her family in Queensland in July/August before coming to Sydney. After staying a few days with Eileen Burgin (Dunne) Mary came to stay with my husband Ron and I at Lugrano. Whilst Mary was with us we visited Katoomba with a photo stop at Echo Point of course! Joan English (Marsh) and Joan Staples (Potter) joined us for lunch the following day. Mary then spent a few days with Dot Coker before returning to her home In Reno, USA. Mary is looking forward to a second grandchild early next year.

My husband and I enjoyed a great holiday in May/June which included Honolulu, the Ontario Canada, where we visited Toronto, Niagara Falls and Ottawa (a lovely city) We then travelled to Calgary, Alberta and the wonderful Rocky Mountains – through Banff, Lake Louise, (still frozen), the Icefields Parkway to Jasper. We sighted black bears – one close to the roadway and another near our hotel in Jasper. After a few days in Vancouver with visits to Victoria and the Butchart Gardens and to Grouse Mountain and a walk across the Capilano Suspension Bridge, we joined the Holland- America Line cruise ship "Westerdam" for a wonderful week cruising to Alaska. Shore visits were to Juneau (Capital of Alaska) and Skagway which included the scenic White Pass and Yukon Railroad train ride to the White Pass summit. The cruise to Glacier Bay was enhanced by perfect weather as we viewed. The Glaciers and watched

Nursing Roadshow Campaign Comes to St George

Much to the delight of staff at The St George Hospital and teachers and students at local Kogarah High School the Minister for Health, Mr Craig Knowles, brought his "Nursing Roadshow Campaign" to St George on Tuesday 13 June 2000.

The campaign targeting senior students is part of a statewide campaign to get more nurses working in the NSW public health system and to spotlight for students the wealth of opportunities that nursing offers in a professional sense.

An enthusiastic group of students listened intently whilst Sandra Moait (General Secretary of the Nurses Association) spoke about the changes in nursing over the years and peoples perceptions.

Ms Moait then introduced The St George Hospital's 'Champion Nurse'

Tracy Sutton who afforded students a first hand and insightful look into nursing as a career, particularly nursing at St George Hospital. Tracy recounted to students why she chose nursing and how she went about pursuing her lifelong dream and why despite placements at numerous hospitals closer to home, she traveled to St George, because of its "excellent staff training and support facilities".

After a relaxed and informal address, the Minister was flooded with questions by students about recruitment strategies and Government initiatives to attract more males into the profession.

Minister Knowles explained that the primary reason for this Statewide tour of suburban, rural and regional centres was to attract much needed attention to nursing, the career opportunities it provides as well as to fill some 1,100 nursing vacancies across NSW, 200 of

which relate directly to South East Health.

At the conclusion of his visit to Kogarah High School, the Minister and his staff made their way to a meeting with Nursing Executive staff at St George Hospital, however not before an impromptu tour through the hospital's emergency department and the opportunity to speak with ED staff.

After a brief presentation by Jenny Phillips Acting Executive Director on a number of St George Hospital initiatives, Minister Knowles commented that genuinely the strategic planning and management guidance at St George was something to be proud of and had "the hallmarks of excellence."

Maria Savvides, The South Easterly, Vol.5 No.6, July 2000. Reprinted with permission.

(continued from page 4) the wildlife which included whales. Dolphins, sea otters, bears, bald eagles and other bird life, We went ashore at Ketchikan on our return trip to Vancouver. The calm water, snow-capped mountains and great food all made for a wonderful cruise. Be warned! You must keep exercising to avoid bringing home excess weight. A highly recommended holiday!

Maureen Bell, (1969) writes... My best wishes to all for a wonderful day. It is with blessings that I pay me respects to all mothers who supported their daughters during their training days. Sadly my Mum passed away last October and not a finer human being could you find. Her loyalty not only to me during my training days, but also to my friends who were also going through those turbulent days. How many Mums had a home cooked "Baked Dinner" on the table when their daughters landed home, longing for a home cooked meal? I know Mum was among many who nurtured and cared for our well-being. I Miss you Mum, Bless You. I look forward to hearing from old friends. I can be contacted at PO Box 1585, Queanbeyan NSW 2620.

Research & Education Centre Opens

On 12 January 2000 the staff from five departments moved into the new Research & Education Centre located in South Street.

The Department of Orthopaedics, the combined Health Libraries, the Clinical Teaching School and the Staff Education Department now occupy the first three floors. A major capital fundraising campaign was launched in April to raise \$2m to fully fit out the fourth floor of the building. The

Hon Craig Knowles, NSW Minister for Health performed the official opening on May 8 which was attended by local members of parliament and representatives of various community groups and staff from the hospital and the University of NSW.

The new center of excellence marks a new era in medical research and education for the St George district, southern Sydney and the wider community.



Back row (L-R): Julie Gibbs, Yvonne Brugmans, The Hon. Craig Knowles – Minister for Health, Coral Levett, The Hon. Cherie Burton MP – Kogarah, Chris Crawford. Front row (L-R) Gai Pickering, Jenny Crockett, Jodie Chung.

East Timor

A Personal Account

By Bronwyn Dunstone

Bronwyn Dunstone is one of the many nurses who answered the call for help in East Timor. This is her impression of her time there.

Dili was burnt by the time I arrived; nothing was there. I soon found out this was the case in most of the country, but when I travelled outside Dili the views of rolling hills and spectacular mountains were just breathtaking, and the Timorese people were kind, courageous and thankful for the international help.

In November last year I took long service leave from my job with the Salvation Army to go to East Timor with Assistance Medical International (AMI). I worked in Dili from 23 November until 23 February this year.

When I arrived, Timor was in a state of emergency with armed soldiers patrolling the country. As the weeks passed it moved on to civil unrest but the Australian military are excellent soldiers and we were confident they had the security problems taken care of.

We lived in Dili in a renovated house which had electricity and water but there were daily power blackouts which lasted hours. I slept under a mosquito net on the floor for the first month and then the team were given a great Christmas present – mattresses! Obtaining some goods was difficult but we soon developed bargaining skills to complement our more conventional nursing skills. For example, we saw wood in a parked truck which

we needed to build shelves and tables in our clinic. One of the team members spoke to the owner who agreed to drop the wood at our clinic and then supplied nails, saw and hammer.

We quickly learnt about the black market. In late January you could buy small Australian apples at a cost of \$1 each, a hamburger for \$8 and a pie for \$6. Due to lack of food we paid these prices and on New Year's Day, on a picnic with locals, we ate dog with great reluctance.

Dili is approximately the size of Wollongong and when we were there had about 5 medical clinics and 3 hospitals. The Red Cross Hospital was the main hospital in Timor and there was a Portuguese hospital specialising in paediatrics and malnutrition. The military hospital was only for 'interesting' cases and wounded soldiers. No oxygen was available in the two local hospitals and the pathology service consisted of 2 small microscopes.

Medico-legal decisions were never a problem because of the lack of medical equipment. No tubes or devices to prolong life were available but death was accepted and was painfree and peaceful as morphine and pethidine were available. I watched an old nun die in Dili hospital painfree and with spiritual support. This is something the western world can learn from the Timorese people.

The United Nations has policies and procedures for diagnosis and treatment in such poorly resourced situations and these were given to us in a book together with treatment guidebooks. Dr Anna Ralf and Dr Alyosha Jacobson from St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, our team doctors were extremely good

at educating us. Our team consisted of four nurses and one doctor. In such difficult circumstances nurses worked as doctors and the doctors as specialists.

I treated many infectious diseases which included chicken pox, malaria, cerebral malaria, pneumonia, malnutrition, dehydration, Guillain-Barre, roundworms, measles, Leishmaniasis, hepatitis, goitres, dengue fever, vaginitis, asthma, tuberculosis and cardiac problems. We had very limited equipment and medicine. One nebuliser was all we had to treat the many asthmatic cases so it was in constant use. At Christmas we were very short of Panadol but we managed somehow. We tepid washed the babies with temperatures over 40 degrees C which was difficult at first as the locals do not believe you should wash babies until they are at least 9 months old.

We needed to explain to them why this was necessary. Treating malnourished babies was often very difficult. We would give the mother rice and milk so that she was breast-feeding well and the infant should have been given extra formula to increase their weight but we did not receive this formula until the second week in January. At all times breast-feeding was encouraged but there were many motherless babies whom I fed with rice water.

Often the person who brought the child in was a relative and had children herself so we encouraged her to breast-feed. Mothers sometimes came in saying their breast milk was poisoned and would not feed their infant so with the help of the local nurses we needed to explain that this was untrue and re-establish the feeding.

Artificial feeding was a nightmare for me. Bottles were shared and the mothers had little knowledge or resources for correctly preparing and sterilising formulas. We worked from 8am until around 3pm in the clinic and after that there was always something that needed to be done: meetings, home visits, attending to sick Internationals or attending in-service, case presentations at the military hospital. We averaged between 160-220 patients a day at the clinic.

Sundays were our day off and we went to church. Most of the Timorese people go to church and the singing is just so beautiful. All the locals had their story of heartbreak. I recall one 18 year old man told us that on the night of the



St George Nurse volunteers at the New South Wales Nurses Association packing supplies for the airlift to Timor. Feft to right: Yvonne Brugmans, Coral Levett, Ruth Turton, and Irene Broadbent. (Photo, courtesy of The Lamp, NSWNA, Vol.56, No.9, October 1999.)

"trouble" he went outside for a moment. The soldiers came and he hid in the bushes near his home. He watched as his parents were shot and then dragged into the house which was burning.

In early November a 13 year old girl came into the clinic with amenorrhoea. She was obviously pregnant. She told me how she had been raped and was extremely upset about the diagnosis. We asked her to return the following day but she didn't and we later learnt that she had killed herself.

There is no mental health service in Dili, just 1 Timorese women's health worker and 1 male psychologist. There were many problems that we faced besides mosquitoes, lack of sleep, hypotension and the heat:

- team members seriously ill with dengue fever, malaria, hepatitis
- international untrained staff or staff that did not have experience in the area in which they were working
- international staff with psychiatric problems
- security problems
- lack of food – we ate local food most of the time and food parcels from my dear friends – thanks guys.

I would like to see compulsory psychiatry assessment on all personnel going to a war zone. We debriefed each other every day but debriefing on arriving home is also necessary. International staff also need to be qualified for the task and be able to educate others in the field.

I had many enjoyable times in Timor. We swam in the warm ocean, visited the thermal pools, went to the highest mountain in Timor, went to church with Bishop Belos and had breakfast with him, went to a wedding, met a lovely couple who had meetings for freeing Timor, and enjoyed the church services, but most of all I developed solid friendships with some of the Timorese people.

This was the most rewarding and challenging nursing I have done. The experience was so humbling and valuable. The Timorese people will be struggling for years to come so they do need our assistance and love.

Yes I have changed. I am more positive and confident. I encourage all registered staff to try this work at some time. You will be enriched. I would like to return to Timor or another war zone in the future.

Reunion Reminiscences

By Joan English (Marsh)

When I first connected to Reunions back in the 1950's and became a Committee Member, things were entirely different to Reunions over the past 20 plus years.

No invitations were mailed out – word of mouth was the method used to "spread the word" The reunion was held in what used to be the Lounge Room in the Nurses' Home and Afternoon Tea was served in the Dining Room.

The Committee spent the morning preparing the "eats". As I remember, the hospital provided sausage rolls, tea and coffee and the dining room staff served us. We, the Committee made sandwiches, filled sponges with jam, cream and strawberries, etc. One of our members, Mrs Wilson made gem scones. We finished the preparations, including flowers, and then it was home for a quick change of clothes, etc.

Dress in early days included hats, gloves – a good excuse for a new spring outfit and a real "dress up" occasion.

Fees as I recall, were 4/6 at first then progressed to 5/- later – in our money 45cents and 50cents. I well remember sitting at the door with the Treasurer collecting the money and writing out individual receipts!

When our dear friend Audrey Cush was Secretary, she introduced a card system of names and addresses (her

Mother spent many hours writing out these cards) and we marked off attendance and payment on these cards. Invitations were mailed out at this time.

Audrey also introduced the Newsletter, which I think she typed up herself. When I took over as Secretary from Audrey, it was our practice to type the Newsletter onto stencils and then take them to a gentleman known as Mac, and with much complaining, he ran the stencils off on the duplicator. For his efforts we gave him a Lottery Ticket! (I never heard if he won anything.)

I can't recall when we first changed to Luncheons, but it was necessary because of increased numbers attending Reunions, plus the hospital venue not being available. I think the first luncheon was George's River Sailing Club, then St George Leagues Club and currently St George Motor Boat Club.

Now the Committee are faced with diminishing attendees and decisions need to be made re the venue, costs, etc. We are one of the oldest Graduate Nurses' Associations still functioning and we need the support from our graduates to keep functioning. Having held positions on the Committee I can vouch for the tremendous amount of work that goes into organising Reunions and I urge all who can to get behind the Committee to ensure the ongoing success of our Association.

Farewell to Chris Crawford

After more than five years as Executive Director of St George Hospital and Community Health Service it is with regret that we bid a fond farewell to Chris Crawford who has successfully led St George into the new millennium. Chris has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Rivers Area Health Service.

The new Executive Director, David

Pearce commenced on 25 September, 2000 and comes to St George having previously fulfilled the role of Executive Director, The Sutherland Hospital for 3 years and previously at Canterbury Hospital as the General Manager.

Congratulations to both Chris and David and best wishes in their new positions.

Reunion 2001 Saturday 27 October 2001

Please send your letters in for the next newsletter!

Nurse in Profile Deborah Latta

By Kirstie McKenzie, The Lamp (New South Wales Nurses' Association) Vol. 55, No.9, October 1999. Reprinted with permission.

Deborah Latta admits she occasionally has to remind herself that she's the boss. As the first non-medical Director of Surgery in the state, possibly the country, she still hasn't completely adjusted to the notion that she is responsible for the management of the St George Hospital Division of Surgery's budget, planning and staff which includes 20 registrars, 43 Visiting medical officers (VMO's) and five academics.

Since Deborah began nursing in 1981, she has seen St George grow from a small district hospital to a principal referral and teaching hospital. She moved from an orthopaedic ward to six years in critical care and post graduate course in intensive care. In 1991, she was appointed Nursing Unit Manager (NUM) of a new surgical high dependency unit and was responsible for all the tasks of its commissioning – the planning and reconfiguration of an old ward, purchasing of equipment, recruitment, orientation and education of staff, manuals for procedures and budget and operation for the next two years. In keeping with the new buzz phrase of the times "continuum of care" – she was appointed as the first clinical manager of the Admissions department.

Admissions traditionally came under corporate services, but as 80 percent of patients who came through Admissions were of a surgical nature it made sense to improve links with the operating suites. Deborah explains "it was a short term appointment to

restructure a poorly functioning area and the decision to have a clinical person in charge turned out to be a sound one. It's been used as a model nationally".

Deborah's next job was as the business manager of the Division of Surgery, another ground breaking appointment as she had a budget of around \$30 million and, apart from a graduate diploma in health policy, little formal business training.

"If anything I think my lack of expertise was an advantage," she says. "Because I was a lay person from a financial point of view, matters had to be simplified. If I could understand it, so could the people I was dealing with. My period in that job also helped me clarify what I didn't want in a career – I found that I needed to be involved with people and I never wanted to lose my clinical focus. To a certain extent I changed the job description, because I met with clinicians and tried to involve everybody in decision making processes".

Deborah was then appointed as the Nursing and Patient Services Manager responsible for a nursing staff of 400 full-time equivalents, including nurses, orderlies, ward clerks and technical and clerical people necessary to run 220 surgical beds in 10 surgical wards, eight operating theatres, the recovery room and out-patients services. At the end of 1997, she was promoted to her present position as the Director of the Division of Surgery, a post which put her in the once-unthinkable position of a nurse managing medical staff.

"When I was hesitating about accepting the position, one of the

professors asked me why I was holding back," she recalls, "I explained that I was nervous about what would happen the first time I made a decision which the medical staff didn't like". I've had a few problems but nothing like I feared might occur. I've developed relationships with the senior medical staff over a long period of time and we have a great mutual trust.

I sometimes feel a bit intimidated, but I remind myself that I'm the one in charge, and apply the principle that I've used throughout my career of keeping everyone informed and involved in decision making. It may sound obvious to have the NUM and the medical head of a division working together on their business plan, but in the past this hasn't been the case. It's led to some fairly radical changes – in some cases the medical staff now invite nurses to their morbidity and mortality meetings, which is a big step as they are peer review meetings and they tend to be very critical of one another."

A fervent believer that "education only supports the person you already are", Deborah has undertaken considerable further education on the job. In recognition of her need to acquire more business acumen, she is currently studying for an MBA by correspondence through the University of New England. "I'm always open to making improvements and I believe you can learn a lot from others, she says. "Ultimately, I'd like to move towards more general hospital management, but I never want to lose the people contact. I like working with others and communicating with them. That, I believe is critical to success in any job".

Deborah has now been appointed to a six month secondment as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Illawarra

South East Health Staff Elected Member

Yvonne Brugmans, Nurse Educator, St George Hospital and Community Health Service

In June 2000 I was elected to the position of Staff Elected Member of the South East Health Board. Throughout my campaign I enjoyed the opportunity of visiting our many facilities and talked with all categories of staff. I look forward to my term of

office over the next four years with enthusiasm and interest in the variety of issues set before the Board.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those staff who have supported my candidature. My extensive background in health as a Registered Nurse, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nursing Unit Manager, Director of Nursing (private sector) and for the past ten

years, educator, will assist in my role. Therefore, I am confident that I can make a significant contribution along with the other Board members to the health service outcomes.

I look forward to my involvement with staff and area facilities in the course of my Board and related committees activities.

Vale Edna Harper, OAM

Hospital Matron, 1905–1999

By Judith Cornell

To be a leader in a major hospital is something few people come to achieve. To be the leader for half of one's working life is still more rare. Matron Edna Harper – Miss Harper as she was known – died at 94, and served thousands of Sydney-siders during the 36 years she worked at St George Hospital. For roughly half that time she was the hospital matron.

Edna May Harper did her obstetric training at the Royal Hospital for Women during 1933-34 and began her general nurse training at St George in 1938. He was appointed as staff sister in the same year.

Like many of her generation she was eager to serve in World War 11, a desire swiftly and surprisingly thwarted by the redoubtable Matron Prichard who intervened to have many of the staff sisters' posts declared as "essential" services.

Harper remained on the staff at St George, working in various capacities until she was appointed deputy matron in 1950 and then matron in 1953, a position she held until her compulsory retirement in 1970.

St George Hospital increased its bed capacity and underwent many changes while Miss Harper was matron, not the least of which was its transformation into a teaching hospital of the University of NSW.

Harper, Dr David Storey and the late Tom Griffiths made a formidable trio to steer the hospital through many changes. She was an active supporter of the many changes to upgrade and expand the hospital.

In 1963 she spent nine months overseas, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, studying hospital and nursing management with a view to improving the nursing care and training given at St George.

Harper was proud of the training that the St George nurses received and always pointed to the number of graduates who went on to hold senior appointments.

A foundation fellow of the NSW Council of Nursing, she was elected to the council in 1955 and during the 1950s and 1960s served as its secretary, treasurer, vice – president and president. She served terms as the vice-president and councillor of the NSW Institute of Matrons and was also a Florence Nightingale Committee member.

Not only was Harper a stalwart member of the nursing organisations, she gave generously of her time and expertise and actively supported their aims and fundraising efforts. She was also not afraid to speak her mind. In 1965, the Matron's Institute attacked a shortage of nurses by setting up a committee to determine whether nurses were being exploited. Harper reckoned then that NSW nursing standards were world class "but the techniques of training to produce this standard were pre-World War 11". "The clock stopped about 1938" she declared.

Harper was a regular and very welcome guest at an annual lunch held by members of her hospital's Graduate Nurses' Association. She had a nice knack of surprising graduates with her extraordinary memory for not only their names but also the details of some escapade in which they had been involved. That acute memory stayed with her all her days, though in recent years she had failing sight and hearing.

Matron Harper will be remembered by many hundreds of nurses who passed through St George, all of whom would have a story to tell of their encounter with matron. Most of them will remember that inside that stern exterior was a warm and compassionate woman – with great taste in hats.



To all those who have suffered a loss this year, we extend our sympathy.

Joyce Morrison (Johnson, 1954)
22 August 2000

Dr Peter Parnell, husband of Marie
(Chadwick, 1953)

Achievements in Nursing Monograph

(complimentary copies will be available at the Luncheon)

Wednesday 10 May heralded the launch of "Achievements in Nursing" monograph at St. George Hospital. This special event served to not only highlight the work being done by nurses within the hospital and the community, but also provided a forum for nurses to promote, present and publicise their research projects, the main focus being on improving patient care.

The Research Council reviewing the research studies is comprised of Area staff as well as representatives from University of Technology.

This year's study topics offered a range of subjects from trauma management to health promotion, with several awards were presented on the day.

Two major winners were Clinical Nurse Consultant Shelley Tranter, who examined the introduction of complementary therapies into nursing practice and the team of Julie Curtis and Noreen Murray who conducted a "HULA study (Habitual Urinalysis is a Laborious Activity) looking at urine testing in pregnant women.

Jenny Phillips, Acting Executive Director of St George Hospital opened the morning by comparing the hard work, ability and professional intelligence of nurses, to the same achievements of our Olympic athletes. Ms Phillips went on to say these nurses clearly strive to reach their vision and to make a difference in their own profession and for the patients they "are honour bound to serve".

Guest speaker Judith Donoghue, Professor of Acute Care at St George Hospital spoke on the many achievements that have been made in nursing from the time of Florence Nightingale to the present day. However, she went on to say that, even though the nursing profession had evolved over time, many of the core values remain the same..."

Maria Savvides, The South Easterly, Vol.5 No.6, July 2000. Reprinted with permission.