



St Vincent's Hospital Medical Alumni Association

Welcome to the summer 2022-23 e-newsletter of your association

In this edition – in brief

Where are you? Please, please help us

Keeping track of our members is a big problem[read more](#)

Your e-newsletter is in need of a new editor.....[read more](#)

Australia Day Honours.....[read more](#)

Expatriate alumnus, Dr John Gorman, in the news.....[read more](#)

Obituaries.....[read more](#)

Sir Peter John Morris

Dr Justin Henry Kelly

Dr Gregory Thomas Keogh

Dr George Mikolajunas

The Doyle-O'Sullivan Cup – a short history of the perpetual trophy for the annual golf day

including your invitation to the 2023 Golf Day.....[read more](#)

The 1965 RMO Christmas Ward Round.....[read more](#)

From the Archivist

Our links to the Royal Exhibition Building[read more](#)

News from St Vincent's Hospital[read more](#)

Where are you? Please please help us

Keeping track of our members is a big problem for our secretary. Every time our e-newsletter goes out, we find several members who have not notified us of a change of email address. How can we possibly locate them? **One way is for every member who reads this newsletter to pass it on to one other colleague or friend who is known to be or thought to be an alumnus of St Vincent's Hospital.** So **PLEASE** do us a big favour by taking a few moments to pass this newsletter on to at least one medical friend and suggest that they provide their email address to Sue Mabilia (Susan.MABILIA@svha.org.au). Alternatively, if any reader is unsure about their membership, they can register or re-register with the Association on our web site at <http://stvincentsmedicalalumni.org.au/>. Membership of the Association is free!

For members wishing to visit the Association Office, please note that Sue Mabilia is in the Senior Medical Staff Office, Level 2, Building A (Inpatient Services Building) at St Vincent's. Her phone number is – 9231 2304 (Monday to Friday).

Your e-newsletter is in need of a new editor

Call for expressions of interest:

The current editor of our association's six monthly e-newsletter, Dr Kerry Breen, is stepping down from the role. Your Committee is seeking expressions of interest from members who are willing to take on this task. If any member is interested, please contact either Sue Mabilia at Susan.MABILIA@svhm.org.au or myself at Michael.Henderson@petermac.org. Thank you. Prof Michael Henderson

Australia Day Honours

We congratulate the following St Vincent's Hospital Medical Alumni and Staff who were awarded Australian honours on Australia Day, January 26, 2023:

Professor Steven COLLINS, AO

For distinguished service to medical and health science research, particularly in the field of prion disease.

Professor Mark James COOK, AO

For distinguished service to neurological medicine and research through contributions to the treatment of epilepsy.

Clinical Associate Professor Edwin HARARI, OAM

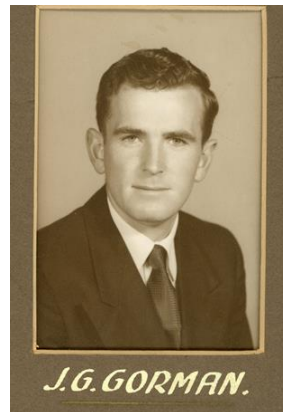
For service to medicine as a psychiatrist.

Dr Rodney James WOODS, OAM

For service to medicine as a surgeon, and to water polo.

Expatriate alumnus in the news, with the help of our Archives Department

ABC viewers may have seen coverage of 91 year old Dr John Gorman in the 7.30 Report on November 2, 2022. What especially caught the editor's attention was a photo of a young Dr Gorman as a resident doctor at St Vincent's Hospital in 1954 provided by our Archives Department. This style of photo was used for over thirty years as the means by which each year's group of resident doctors at St Vincent's was recorded for posterity.



John Gorman was born in Bendigo where his parents, Dr John S Gorman and Dr Jean Grant conducted a general practice for many years. Dr Gorman (jnr), who now resides in the USA, graduated via the St Vincent's Clinical School in 1953 and after a residency year at St Vincent's, travelled abroad with the idea of obtaining surgical training in the UK. He was side tracked into a career in paediatrics in the USA and became deeply involved in research. His idea about how to overcome the then untreatable [Rh factor disease](#) in pregnancy led to one of the most important advances in obstetric care. He with two colleagues won the

[prestigious Lasker award](#) for that breakthrough but, as the ABC presenter emphasised, many people believe that he was unlucky not to win a Nobel Prize. The full and amazing story about Dr John Gorman is [available here](#) .

Dr Gorman has strong family connections with other St Vincent's alumni. The late Dr John Niall who founded the Renal Unit at St Vincent's and John's younger brother, noted researcher Dr Hugh Niall AO, are his first cousins. Dr Gorman's younger sister, Jocelyn, also graduated via the St Vincent's Clinical School, winning prizes, and was a resident doctor at St Vincent's in 1958. Jocelyn married fellow St Vincent's graduate, Dr Peter Morris, and spent most of her life in the UK, where in addition to raising a family of five children, she had a successful career in respiratory medicine at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. Sadly, this edition of the newsletter carries an obituary for Jocelyn's husband, Professor Sir Peter Morris. As the obituary alludes, Peter Morris may well be our most famous alumnus. But his brother-in-law, Dr John Gorman, also deserves our attention. His discovery is [estimated to have saved millions of lives](#).

Obituaries

Sir Peter John Morris AC, FRS

17/4/1934-29/10/2022

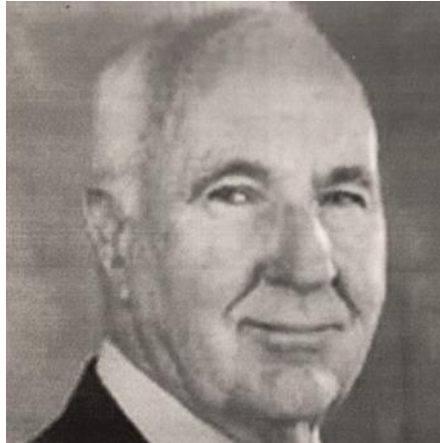
Peter and I met 75 years ago at Xavier College in year 8, in 1947. He quickly demonstrated his intellectual ability, being in the top five in a class of over 40 students, from the start. He was also a good sportsman taking after his father, who played Australian Rules football at the highest level (for Richmond) and played state cricket for Victoria, but unfortunately died at a young age, leaving his wife (Mary) who was a pharmacist, to raise Peter and his younger brother, Stanley.

At that time Peter most likely had a growth issue (possibly pituitary related) such that he appeared overweight and was given the nickname "Fatty Morris". Whilst he had all the style as a footballer his weight limited him. Not so in cricket however and in his last year at school was a reliable opening bat. He also represented the school in athletics in the shot put.

In 1949 tragedy, in the form of a motor accident, befell the family with Stanley dying and leaving his mother with severe skeletal injuries, requiring prolonged hospitalisation. Xavier College reacted quickly and provided Peter with accommodation as a boarder and a senior student mentor (John Doyle) for some months. Peter coped well with this misfortune and neither his academic nor sporting activities suffered significantly.

We both commenced medicine together at Melbourne University in 1952. Almost from day one Peter wanted to be a surgeon. He maintained his sporting interest, playing cricket and baseball for the University. We also had some fun in our 4th and 5th years, which were the first two years of the Melbourne Moomba Parade. We both took part in mounting a float for the parade (down Swanston Street, Melbourne's main thoroughfare), with Peter as a

surgeon operating and throwing blood-coloured water and sausages out to the crowd. Also on the float was a student sitting in a 'country dunny' to simulate the film 'Doctor in the House' which was showing in the city at that time. The city council banned medical student floats from then on. In later life five of those student larrikins were awarded Australian Honours for their medical work.



We graduated in 1957, neither of us obtaining honours, although his wife-to-be, Jocelyn Gorman, gained the Exhibition in Obstetrics. All three of us did our internship (then called residency) at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne. In his third year after graduation Peter had the good fortune to be appointed registrar to Professor Claude Welch, from the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, who was visiting surgeon at St Vincent's for a month, in celebration of the opening of a new hospital wing, the Aikenhead building. Peter obviously impressed Prof. Welch in that month. His other good fortune in that year was to marry Jocelyn and I was proud to be his best man.

With the assistance of Claude Welch, Peter obtained a residency at the Hammersmith Postgraduate Medical School with Professor Ian Aird, whose great textbook we had used as students. Following that role, he was registrar to Mr. Tom Rowntree in Southampton, and in 1963 he obtained the English surgical Fellowship. (Peter, David Conroy and I, all in the same class at school, received our Fellowship in London on the same day.) Peter and Jocelyn, by then with a growing family, moved to Boston to work with Claude Welch at the 'Mass General'. There he worked also with a surgeon JF Burke in Boston, then David Hume in Virginia, where Peter was involved with tissue typing --AND THE REST IS HISTORY.

Back to Melbourne as First Assistant to Professor Maurice Ewing to expand the renal transplant unit, as well as developing vascular surgery, then to the Radcliffe Infirmary at Oxford as the Nuffield Professor of Surgery in 1974, where he developed a world-wide reputation as a transplant surgeon. He retained his interest in sport, which then included golf and many clinical conferences would end with a competition, usually in cricket. Whilst

Jocelyn was a gracious hostess for many of these events, she had returned to medicine as their five children grew up and she was an NHS consultant as a respiratory physician.

Peter was elected President of the Royal College of Surgeons (UK) in 2001, the year in which he retired from the Nuffield Chair. He was a very active President, developing a Research Fellowship Scheme and regularly visited many of the NHS hospitals to determine surgical standards. He also assisted in establishing the nation's Clinical Effectiveness Unit. As well as editing the Oxford Textbook of Surgery he authored Kidney Transplantation and was author or a co-author of many hundreds of papers. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1994, received a knighthood in 1996 and was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2004. Numerous other honours and awards included the Lister Prize for surgical science and visiting fellowships and lectureships were bestowed upon him.

Two colleagues from the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences wrote "Peter is one of the greatest figures of Oxford medicine". I believe it is not unreasonable to likewise say Peter is one of the greatest medical graduates from St Vincent's.

Contributed by Dr Brian Collopy AM who graduated with Peter Morris via St Vincent's Clinical School and remained a lifelong friend. Dr Collopy served as a general and colorectal surgeon at St Vincent's and is a past Director of the Department of Colon and Rectal Surgery.

Dr Justin Henry Kelly MBBS, FRACS, OAM

22/6/1936-30/10/2022

(Note: This obituary is reproduced with the kind permission of the Royal Children's Hospital Medical Alumni Association. It first was published here <https://blogs.rch.org.au/alumni/in-the-news/vale-justin-kelly-oam>)

Australia mourns the loss of Justin Kelly, perhaps our Rembrandt of Paediatric Urology?

Last week, Dr Justin Kelly passed away peacefully in his sleep at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, where 4 generations of his family have worked. Just before turning in he left a voice message on his wife of nearly 59 years Elaine's phone "I love you angel. I'm going off to bed now. It's a quarter to midnight. I'm so lucky to have you — it's amazing".

I lost an extraordinary friend, colleague and mentor.

When Rembrandt died, in 1669, his work was regarded as insignificant and he was buried in an unmarked grave. His unique style and technical mastery was born of single-minded curiosity and an ability to focus within. He would try new ideas, critically evaluate them, and progress with brilliant, yet unrecognised, results. To quote Gregor J.M. Weber, who leads the department of fine and decorative arts at the Rijksmuseum: "Now we think he's more or less a rebel, who always invented himself anew, who always changed his way of doing

things. He struggled and fought against himself and also against the standards of his time.”(1)

Justin, as a surgeon, was similar. Having worked with him for over 35 years, I soon realised the artistic and technical pre-eminence beside me. As Weber observed, “Every generation has its own Rembrandt” and, it is fair to say, Justin was such a once-in-a-generation figure.



Paediatric surgeons are interesting humans. They work in the area of the rare and bizarre; face unique issues in many children and attempt complex and heroic operations to restore normal function. Justin Kelly tackled the Everest of these problems with an intense desire to understand the issues and design radical solutions. His life work was centred around bladder exstrophy, where bladder, genitals and pelvic bones are born completely separate and exposed to the surface. Over 35 years he studied this problem intensely with a genuine desire to understand the issues and design radical solutions. He believed each child had their own unique anatomy and it was his task to understand their particular maldevelopment and tailor a solution accordingly.

Following his junior doctor years at St Vincent’s in Melbourne, he fell under the spell of a wizard-like genius Douglas Stephens, Head of Urology Department at the Royal Children’s Hospital. Douglas (a Tobruk WW II veteran) saw real talent in Justin and convinced him to research the disordered muscles in fetuses with complex ano-rectal anomalies. In 1969 he published 2 seminal papers on the abnormal pelvis and anatomy in anorectal conditions. Justin then spent 3 years in Boston, trained to an international surgeon standard by the remarkable teachers Judah Folkman, Robert Gross and Hardy Hendren. These surgeons were the envy of many centres around the world, providing Justin with a vast clinical immersion and technical surgical training.

Returning to The Royal Children’s Melbourne in 1971 he commenced 38 years of service to the children of Victoria. He started treating all the difficult cases of faecal and urinary incontinence in children, wishing to enable them to go through school without soiling. This is hard, tedious and frustrating medicine with few easy solutions. He saw all his boys with bladder exstrophy in nappies and determined to do better.

The creative genius that he was, Justin thought, pondered and wondered whether the pelvic floor and sphincter muscles were still present in exstrophy, in the form of a flat sheet between the pubic bones and lying above the pelvic nerves. He reasoned that this tissue might provide a continent sphincter for these boys if mobilised and wrapped around the reconstructed bladder neck.

He went to the mortuary and dissected the infant pelvis time and time again until he understood where the dangers lay. He developed scoring systems for continence and critically appraised his results. He then started a completely new technique in exstrophy surgery. The Kelly operation (where Justin would spend 6-8 hours with intense magnified vision) involved trying to find thin muscle and fascia overlying the nerves to the genitals. He would rebuild the bladder and wrap this tissue around its neck trying to make continent sphincter. This is so hard that only a few surgeons, way beyond my skill level, can even attempt this operation. Very dangerous, where ½ mm dissection in the wrong area leads to impotence or an ischaemic penis.

Over the next few years he refined the operation and published the technique in 1995. The world reacted in disbelief: “you got lucky”, “not repeatable”, “too hard to train others to do”, “our patients are more complex”. It went on. Justin buried his head in self-belief and quietly kept going. Great Ormond Street in London was the centre for this condition in the United Kingdom and they became curious. They invited Justin to work there for 6 months in 1999 and show the technique. Only 2 of the 4 surgeons there could master the Kelly procedure but it caught hold and persisted. The long term results from this centre show markedly improved continence and function in the very difficult group.

In his final decade of practice, Justin travelled the world mentoring, commentating and demonstrating his operation in India, China, New Zealand and England. Always humble, he would gently encourage surgeons to understand the complex anatomy and think about the complex repair. Like Rembrandt, Justin’s etchings were superb, he would simplify a 10 hour operation into 4 drawings that explained the exact anatomical repair.

On this journey, Justin quietly accumulated all the recognition of a surgical rock star. He was Chief of Surgery, President of the Australasian Society, Senior Examiner and Chair of the Board of Paediatric Surgery. The medals flowed: American Paediatric Surgical Society, The Coe medal, The Ghandi medal and the Australasian College of Surgeons “award for excellence in surgery”. He received the member of the order of Australia in 2003. This recognition made little impact on Justin. He kept thinking, writing and demonstrating his technique.

Justin was a complete delight to be around. Insanely funny, tears would be wept over his cat stories, love of opera and his unique family. He was immensely proud of his children and grandchildren and deeply involved in their lives. He was the consummate gentleman, always had time for every patient and very dedicated to his work. As he aged he continued to love

the arts. Social events with Justin and Elaine, his wife of nearly 59 years, meant witnessing a parody of sparkled banter, deepest affection and complete devotion. He was a superb dancer and throughout Covid lockdown, even with his advancing Parkinson's, he continued dance therapy with physiotherapist and Elaine.

I always felt Justin had my back; surgically his advice was thoughtful and insightful. Personally he cared for your well-being and development. Socially he was a complete hoot. He is the giant on whose shoulders we stand.

Vale Justin

(1)New York Times March 3, 2019, Rembrandt Died 350 Years Ago. Why He Matters Today.

Contributed by Dr Chris Kimber FRACS, a paediatric surgeon and urologist at the Royal Children's Hospital.

Dr Gregory Thomas Keogh MBBS, FRACGP

23/06/1939-12/08/2022

Greg was the eldest of 3 children and grew up with his two younger sisters in Tallangatta in north-eastern Victoria where his father was a pharmacist. After attending a local primary school, he commenced city life as a boarder in 1950 at Xavier College, initially at the preparatory school Burke Hall, and later at the senior school until 1957. He started first year Medicine at Melbourne University in 1958, taking up residence at Newman College and spending his clinical student years in the St Vincent's Hospital Clinical School. He graduated in 1963.

During his time at University he excelled at football, initially with the Old Xaverians and subsequently with the University Blues in the Amateur competition. He was a regular member of this Victorian Amateur team and gained selection for the Australian Amateur team in 1962.

After graduation, Greg was a first year Resident Medical Officer at PANCH (Preston & Northcote Community Hospital) in 1964. Subsequently he took up medical positions in Darwin Hospital in 1965 and in Perth in 1966 before returning to Victoria. Here, he joined an established general medical practice at Belgrave which included Dr Peter Champion, also a St Vincent's graduate. After 7 years he moved to Cairns with his family and worked with the Royal Flying Doctor Service for 2 years before returning to Victoria and commencing general practice at Monbulk where he worked for the next 20 years.

Greg married Shirley Heywood from Seymour in 1965 after meeting her first in 1962 when she was an Arts student at Melbourne University. They had 3 children – Luke, Simone and Ben. Both Luke and Ben live in northern Victoria and work in rural/agriculture industries. Simone studied medicine at Monash University, graduated in 1993, obtained her FRACGP and worked in general practice for 5 to 6 years before studying psychiatry and obtaining her

post graduate degree in 2012. She is currently at Frankston, Head of Adult Psychiatry for the Peninsula.



Although Greg worked in general practice at Monbulk for 20 odd years, the lure of returning to his more remote country life led to his buying a grazing property, 'Cobwell', in 1990 at Barham, NSW on the Murray River. He ran this property with the help of his sons. However, Greg still had more to offer medically, and bought into a general practice at nearby Kerang where he was a much loved doctor for the next 20 years before his retirement. However, his love of rural and remote medicine was such that he started doing country locum work, which must have been a 'godsend' for the isolated, deprived remote country GPs.

Greg's life at 'Cobwell' was saddened by the death of his dear wife, Shirley, in 1999 and other than throwing himself into his work, his life seemed empty. He even went back to his roots when he visited a 'Back to Tallangatta' gathering in 2001. Here he met Maureen Johns who had been a primary school friend. Maureen had worked in Alice Springs for 5 years and more recently for 10 years in Cairns as a family therapist. This meeting later led to Maureen joining Greg during the next year at 'Cobwell' where they lived happily until 2019. After selling 'Cobwell', they shifted to a smaller home at Castlemaine where they lived together up until six months prior to Greg's death, when he was taken into aged care where his needs as a dementia patient could be fully met.

Greg had a long career in general practice where his clinical skills were augmented by his extra special caring attitude to his patients, as was attested to by the numerous online tributes just prior to his funeral at Barham, where he was finally laid to rest with his dear wife, Shirley.

Contributed by St Vincent's alumnus, retired GP, Dr Peter Rush, who graduated with Greg Keogh.

Dr Jurgis (George) Kazimeras Mikolajunas MBBS, FRACGP

21/5/1935 - 25/11/2022

George Mikolajunas died on November 25, having retired after serving for more than 40 years as an outstanding general practitioner in Frankston/Mount Eliza.

George was born in Lithuania in 1935, living with his parents and older sister through Russian and German fighting, destruction and occupation, until in 1944 when they followed the retreating German forces in travelling 1000 kilometres to Germany by whatever means were available, chiefly boat and train. After living in Germany for 4 years, they were able to join a migrant ship to Australia, where they arrived as refugees in 1949.

George was 14 years old, spoke very little English, but made up for it rapidly, and shone as a student at St Bede's College, Mentone, after which he entered the University of Melbourne, where he was a resident student at Newman College and graduated in Medicine in the Class of 1960 as a St Vincent's student, where he made many friends and was popular and much respected. In the last years before his graduation, and after his sister had completed training as a teacher at Melbourne University, the Mikolajunas family decided to migrate to Chicago, but George had set his sights here.



As a resident medical Officer at St Vincent's Hospital, George continued to impress at all levels, completing his residency and beginning surgical training. Although he thought originally of a surgical career, he decided to enter general practice in Frankston, where he did everything – general practice, family medicine, paediatrics, obstetrics and surgery. Because in those days Frankston had no surgeons, George was given admitting rights for surgery at the Frankston Hospital and retained these until he retired, because he was skilful, showed excellent judgement and cared so much for his patients. He was a great credit to St Vincent's.

George was a wonderful doctor in all respects, the skills and experience he brought to bear, and the compassion and support he invariably showed to his patients in all these areas. George married Anne Haley, who with her twin sister, Ruth, was a St Vincent's nurse. In Anne's prolonged illness before she died in early 2022, George was a constant and devoted

carer. He and Anne had a great impact on the local community in bringing their family up in Frankston and Mount Eliza. George made many friends of patients and others alike, with his easy-going charm and great ability to relate well to people at all levels. He was a widely known and respected member of the Peninsula Golf Club, where he spent much time in the years after his retirement.

Contributed by St Vincent's alumnus, Emeritus Professor T J (Jack) Martin, who graduated with Dr Mikolajunas.

The Doyle-O'Sullivan Cup – a perpetual trophy for the annual golf day

And your invitation to the 2023 Golf Day (see below)

The St Vincent's Hospital Medical Alumni Association was formed in 1933 and surgeon Dr Leo Doyle was its inaugural president. Not long after this, Leo Doyle and radiologist Dr John O'Sullivan donated a large handsome silver plated cup as the perpetual trophy to be played for at the newly established annual golf day. The first winner in 1935 was Dr John Lewis, a 1919 graduate of the Clinical School. The most recent winner was Dr Simon Jones in 2022.



Photograph provided by Dr Simon Jones

Younger members may be interested to learn about the contributions of Drs Leo Doyle and John O'Sullivan to St Vincent's Hospital*. In his time Dr Leo Doyle was regarded as a technically superb surgeon. He was a medical student at St Vincent's soon after the Clinical School first opened, graduating in 1913. He obtained all his training at St Vincent's and did not seek experience abroad until he was well established. He was appointed to the senior staff in 1918 at the age of only 25 years. He was made an inpatient surgeon in 1932, serving until compulsory retirement in 1951. Like most of his peers of that era, he was a general surgeon. Thus he undertook abdominal, thoracic, orthopaedic and neurosurgical procedures. He pioneered the conduct of major surgery under local, regional and spinal

anaesthesia. Ivo Vellar describes some amazing surgical events including the removal of a cervical rib under local anaesthesia, with the patient going home that day. Although competent in all areas, he welcomed and supported the pre-World War II introduction of specialist surgery at St Vincent's in the fields of orthopaedics (Dr Tom King Snr), urology (Dr Henry Mortensen) and neurosurgery (Dr Frank Morgan).

Dr John O'Sullivan was also a pioneer but in a different field for as a radiologist he introduced radiotherapy at St Vincent's. Dr O'Sullivan graduated via the St Vincent's Clinical School and was an intern at the hospital in 1922. He sat and passed the MD examination in 1923 and then went abroad for three years to obtain training in the new field of radiology. In 1928 he joined the senior staff at St Vincent's as a radiologist and in 1933 became head of the department. He introduced the use of radium needles in the treatment of malignancy. Running into criticism of surgeons over supposed lack of knowledge of anatomy, he sat and passed the first part of the College of Surgeons exams. In 1938 he was made a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and was a foundation fellow of the College of Radiologists of Australia and New Zealand. In the latter part of his career at the hospital, he was in charge of the new radiotherapy department and was thus an early radiation oncologist. He retired from St Vincent's in 1958.

**This information is drawn from Dr Ivo Vellar's 2002 book entitled "The Doers: History of Surgery at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne 1890s-1950s"*

And your invitation to the 2023 annual golf day

Calling all golfers! The St Vincent's Medical Alumni Association golf day for 2023 will be held at the Kew Golf Club on Monday 27 March. Please note the change of venue and the new day, a Monday. These changes have been necessitated because of course renovations at Green Acres. For more information and to register please contact Sue Mabilia (Susan.MABILIA@svha.org.au or tel. 9231 2304).

An account of the RMO's Christmas Ward Round on December 25, 1965.

First, the context. Resident medical officers in 1965 (and for decades before – but not for much longer) were truly resident. We lived in full-time and were allowed to leave the hospital on two evenings a week, from 6.00 pm until midnight, and on every second weekend from 1.00 pm on Saturday until midnight on Sunday.

Between Christmas and New Year we were split into two groups and each group was given five days off in turn, such that half of the RMOs were not on duty on Christmas Day. That time off may help you to sense that what happened on this Christmas Day was joyous conduct rather than unprofessional behaviour. As a new group of RMOs, we were well attuned to the expectation that we would maintain the long tradition of conducting the RMO Christmas Ward Round, an event involving a group of RMOs moving from ward to

ward singing Christmas Carols to those patients who had to remain in hospital over Christmas.

In 1965 in the two main wings of the hospital (the Healy Wing and the more modern Daly Wing) there were twenty or more separate wards that were to be visited. In addition to 'entertaining' every ward with a Christmas Carol, by the same tradition, our group was expected to serenade the Sisters of Charity and their Senior Medical staff guests in the beautiful Board Room in the Healy Wing (repurposed in the 1990s) at around midday. We were then to join the throngs in the courtyard between the Healy and Daly Wings who were there to welcome the fire brigade from the Eastern Hill Fire Station whose members had arrived to cheer up the children in our paediatric wards (these wards were closed in the 1980s).

Part of the well-established tradition of the ward round was that one RMO would dress up as Santa Claus and (to aid anonymity) all the other RMOs would don fancy dress. As social secretary to the RMOs Club, I was responsible for obtaining the costumes and for arranging two other key elements of the ward round. J C Williamson's Theatre Company had a store of old stage costumes in the building in Fitzroy Street that is now the home of the Bernard O'Brien Institute. The staff at J C Williamson's made me very welcome and invited me to borrow as many costumes as I wished – so a Santa costume and twenty other items were carried back to the RMOs' quarters. As the photo below shows, the costumes included some for pirates, clowns and American Indians.



Mrs Vadas, the secretary to the Medical Superintendent, Dr Bill Keane, kindly agreed to type out a selection of Christmas Carols and she provided us with twenty roneo copies of these. Last of all, we chilled many bottles of beer and loaded these into a linen trolley to accompany the carollers from ward to ward.

The group assembled in the RMO quarters at around 7.45 am on Christmas morning where some of those RMOs with the least singing ability and/or the least confidence fortified themselves with a couple of Scotches. We did indeed visit every ward where costumed RMOs received kisses from the nurses on duty, and even from one of the nuns. Some of our group sang a carol at the entrance to the ICU where there were only two patients, both of whom were unconscious. The quality of our singing did not improve as the linen trolley emptied but the empty trolley came in handy as our Santa Claus, a little worse for the wear after a demanding four hour tour, appreciated the ride home.

We did join the Sisters in the Board Room at midday and our ward round ended, as planned, joining the Fire Brigade in the courtyard in front of the old Casualty Department entrance (now the entrance drive to the Outpatient Clinics). From there we adjourned to the RMOs' dining room where a fine Christmas lunch awaited both the carollers and the RMOs on duty.

The 1965 year of RMOs had done their duty to maintain a long-standing St Vincent's tradition.

[From the Archivist](#)

Our links to the Royal Exhibition Building

This year the Archives Department has worked extensively with the educator who provides Mission formation training to St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne staff, providing stories and images to inspire connection and interaction and drawing on hospital records to devise tailored pilgrimages and trails highlighting aspects of the heritage of the Fitzroy campus precinct. These trails have included both older features such as the 1905 Wing (rear Healy Wing) and newer additions such as the COVID reflection space in the hospital courtyard and the Wilam Ngarrang Aboriginal Health Unit.

The story of the Royal Exhibition Building summarized below has featured in a number of the tours. The building was built for an international exhibition during Melbourne's 1880s boom years. At one stage with annexes (since demolished) it was the world's largest building under one roof, extending towards the northern boundary of the Carlton Gardens. It has since served many purposes. Not unsurprisingly given its proximity to the hospital there have been significant connections with St Vincent's through the years. Most recently as we know St Vincent's operated a highly effective COVID vaccination hub there at the height of the pandemic.

In the foundation years of St Vincent's, Mother Rectress Berchmans Daly organized a month long fundraising bazaar in the building, a stupendous feat that cleared 10,000 pounds. The opening crowd in attendance of the bazaar was said to exceed that at the opening of Federal Parliament in the same building two years later in 1901. Events in the bazaar included a living whist game where doctors and nurses dressed up as cards and were played and an exhibition soccer match between Chinese and Hindoo teams. Another highly

popular feature was a police and warders' stall featuring Ned Kelly armour that was said to be 'still blood-stained'. The funds raised by the bazaar provided a very solid deposit toward the hospital's first purpose-built wing opened in 1905.



Hospital precinct in 1898 with Brennan Hall in the foreground and the Exhibition Building in the background

The hospital's silver jubilee was celebrated in the Royal Exhibition Building in 1918 with an event for thousands. The following year the building was converted to an emergency hospital during the Spanish flu pandemic and at one stage Mother Berchmans was asked to manage this (the offer was however later withdrawn due to sectarian pressures).

Beyond the hospital, the Archivist has worked with the Curator of the Mary Glowrey Museum in another collaboration to develop a St Vincent's stop on the Catholic Precinct Walking App. The app provides an introduction to significant sites in the Fitzroy/East Melbourne precinct and is freely available via the Apple store - <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/catholic-precinct-walking-app/id1628133545> St Vincent's is at stop 13 on the tour.

Contributed by archivist Ms Barbara Cytowicz.

If you are interested in learning more about elements of St Vincent's history or have photos or other memorabilia documenting hospital people, services, development or achievements that you would be happy to share with the collection, please contact the Archivist on email Barbara.Cytowicz@svhm.org.au or phone 9231 3040

News from St Vincent's Hospital

General hospital news and the regular newsletter, Pulse, are available on the St Vincent's website <https://www.svhm.org.au/> .