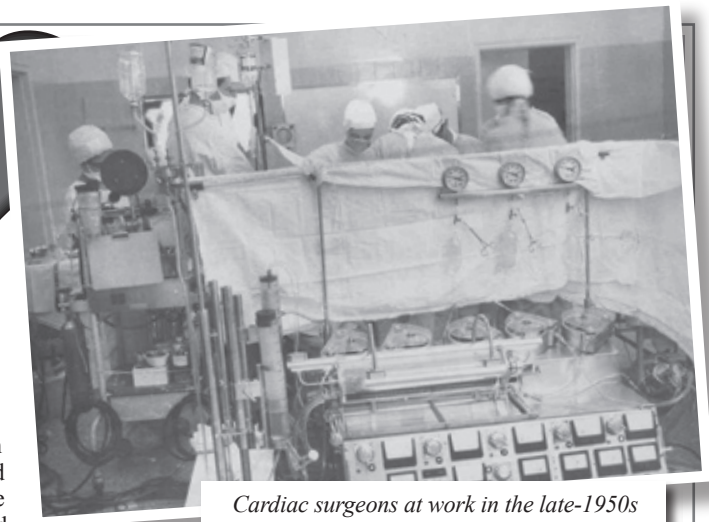
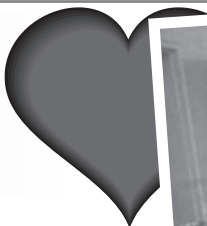


50 years – A history that’s all heart



Cardiac surgeons at work in the late-1950s

March 26 will always be a special day in the decorated history of The Alfred. During that morning in 1957, a team of Alfred surgeons repaired a ventricular septal defect in an eight-year old boy.

While this is now a common surgical procedure, it was on that day 50 years ago, that the first successful open heart operation was performed in the southern hemisphere. The operation was the first to employ the use of a pump oxygenator, putting the function of the heart and lungs on complete mechanical bypass, allowing the team to complete a procedure that had previously been impossible while the heart was still beating.

The 50th anniversary of this landmark operation will be celebrated at The Alfred on March 26, in an event that will see three surviving members of the original surgical team reunited at the hospital. Current and past staff will gather to honour the work carried out by pioneering cardiac surgeons and their cardiology colleagues.

“That operation paved the way in establishing a tradition of excellence in cardiac surgery at The Alfred,” said Associate Professor Ian ‘Cas’ McInnes, who was a junior medical officer in the unit at the time of this historic operation.

“The operation was the result of years of dedicated research by (then Director of Thoracic Surgery) Sir James (Jim) Officer Brown, Mr Ken Morris and Mr George Stirling, in conjunction with The Baker Institute,” said Cas. “Jim had visited the United States and observed their new surgical techniques. He was then instrumental in pioneering these practices in Australia and the southern hemisphere.”

Today, the CJ Officer Brown Cardiac Surgery Unit is named in honour of Jim and the work he did at The Alfred. The pioneering work of Jim and his colleagues, paved the way for many advances in surgery for congenital heart disease and subsequently coronary artery bypass surgery.

The establishment of valve replacement, valve repair techniques and particularly human tissue valve implants is attributed to Associate Professor Bruce Davis, Head of Cardiothoracic Surgery between 1988 and 1995. Bruce will also be honoured at the anniversary event, in recognition of his contributions to the

cardiothoracic discipline at The Alfred and in Australia.

The initial use of the heart-lung bypass machine in the inaugural operation was also a landmark in The Alfred’s evolution as a major heart and lung transplantation centre. The current Director of the Cardiothoracic Surgery Department, Professor Don Esmore who has worked with extensively with artificial heart devices said “the ability to completely stop the heart and lungs and drain them of blood made removing either or both a realistic possibility”. “This was one of the pivotal breakthroughs that serendipitously led to clinical heart and lung transplantation as we know it today”. *Perfusionists are another key team involved in cardiac surgery. Read more about this team on Page 8.*

A reunion to remember

In a year that The Alfred celebrates 50 years of open heart surgery, one of the very first patients to undergo an open heart procedure here has been re-united with the surgeons who changed her life.

Aged seven, Josephine Joynson had a hole in her heart repaired at The Alfred, and nearly 50 years later is a successful design artist with perfect health.

Josephine recently approached the ABC television program, “Can We Help?” to find out what happened to the surgeons she credits as saving her life. In response, the program’s

researchers tracked Dr James Gardiner and Dr George Stirling and, earlier this month, were reunited with Josephine in emotional scenes filmed at The Alfred.

“It’s great to see them again,” a tearful Josephine said. “They saved my life and I owe them so much.”

“I’ve since had five children and now have 15 grand children – that wouldn’t have happened without these men.”

The program, which will air in May, will focus on The Alfred as a pioneer in cardiac surgery, and profile the role that Dr Gardiner

and Dr Stirling played in the early years of open heart procedures.

“Can We Help” will air on Friday, 18 May at 6:30pm on the ABC.



ITS: Your one-stop shop for communication inquiries!

As of April 3, IT Services will start taking over telephony services from Bio-Medical Engineering who have been managing these services to date. The main reason for this move is that telecommunications are becoming more and more dependent on IT-based technologies.

That means that calls for any assistance with regards to areas such as phones (LAN lines or mobiles), pagers, LANPage, handsets, headsets, line cabling, phones, patient phones, patient TVs, video conferencing, voice messages, PABX systems, paging systems, nurse call systems,

answering machines and duress systems should now be directed to ITS rather than Biomedical Engineering. This reporting process will impact Alfred and Caulfield staff however, the process will remain unchanged at Sandringham Hospital.

To receive assistance, staff must log a call through the ITS Help Desk by phoning Ext. 63300, Fax 66523 or email its.helpdesk@alfred.org.au

For more information about the transition of telephone services to ITS, please contact Con Mimididis on Ext 66957.