

Vale Norma Muriel West OBE (8th July 1933 - 4th July 2018)

Norma West's family and her many friends and former colleagues were saddened by the news of her passing on 4th July 2018. Norma was born in Proserpine, the fourth child of six (three boys and three girls) and was the middle daughter. Norma is survived by her youngest sister, Barbara. Norma's schooling was to Junior level, and when the opportunity arose, she completed Senior subjects after moving to Rockhampton. Her first job was as a Stenographer for a Solicitor in Proserpine for 12 months, then as a Stenographer for a Company selling Earth Moving equipment in Townsville. Norma said that her first paying job was actually delivering ice blocks in her little cart for the ice chests of a few neighbours.

Nursing had always been her goal, and when eligible, she commenced the four-year general training course in Bundaberg. The newspaper photograph below shows Norma on the far left at her graduation ceremony in 1955.



Norma followed her basic nurse training with midwifery at the Queen Alexandra Maternity Hospital in Hobart. Norma said that she loved this field of nursing.

As a DC Sister, Norma first worked at the Queen Alexandra hospital, then in a Private Hospital in Adelaide, and then home to Proserpine for a year at the local hospital. From Proserpine she went to Monto and after two years as a DC Sister on staff there, she was persuaded to take on the role of Matron which she held for two years.

Norma left Monto to obtain the Maternal and Child Welfare Certificate in Brisbane. After she completed the Certificate, Norma worked at the Baby Clinic in Mackay, travelling to Sarina by car and St Lawrence by train to conduct clinics. Next was to Mount Isa which included visits to Cloncurry in a DC3 and Cammowearl in a Fokker. Amazingly, married women were not permitted to do Maternal & Child Welfare at that time.



Norma West (2nd from right) as Matron of the Monto Hospital 07 Jun 1961, (Source : Queensland State Archives)

While Norma enjoyed this work, she preferred the variety of experiences offered by the smaller hospitals and accepted the position of Matron at the Longreach hospital where she worked for seven years. Ever keen to advance her professional education, Norma took one year's leave while at Longreach to complete the Diploma in Nursing Administration at the College of Nursing in Brisbane. With the added qualification, her next step was to accept the position of Matron at the Rockhampton Hospital in 1971. During her long career, her title changed from Matron to Nursing Superintendent then Director of Nursing and finally Executive Director of Nursing. She retired from this position in 2001. While holding this position she also completed a Graduate Diploma of Management through Central Queensland University.

Another major milestone was when she was awarded the Imperial Award of Order of the British Empire - Officer (Civil) (OBE) for Nursing in 1983.

Norma was known as an often daunting and strict disciplinarian when managing her domain within the hospital. However, she was also known as being very caring and supportive of staff who came to her seeking help and support in times of difficulty. She was also known for dealing with such issues in absolute confidence. Of course, her overriding priority was the needs of the patients who were dependent of the quality of the professional care provided by the nursing staff.

Norma was very fond of ceremonies and formality, and was always ready to come forward with a speech. Graduation ceremonies provided an opportunity for such celebrations. The Country Hospital Museum has a number of group photos of graduat-

ing classes with Norma in a central position in the front row. However, she would have also been proud of the opportunity to congratulate students one at a time, as in this 1971 photo.



Norma's well known knowledge and expertise as a professional nurse was based on a combination of formal study, of which she was strong supporter, and years of practical nursing. However, central to her success as a Matron/Director of Nursing/ Nursing Superintendent was her ability to develop and articulate her vision for the hospital and then successfully sell it to the Hospitals Board. There are numerous photos of Board Members over the years, always with Norma in a central position. This photograph from 1st October 1986, the opening day for the new Medical Services Building, is one such example. On Norma's right is the long-serving Chair of the Board, Mr Ted Loane and on her left, the Medical Superintendent, Dr Winton Barnes. The other members are leading local citizens.



Norma was always a strong proponent of University-based nurse training and again used her negotiating skills to make this happen. To illustrate her success with a beautiful photograph, this shows Norma

with the University's Foundation Professor of Nursing, Amy Zelmer, turning the sod for the first nursing building at the University in 1989.



And finally, those of us involved with the Country Hospital Museum at the Heritage Village are eternally grateful to Norma for her years of support for the developing venture. While we acknowledge Yvonne Kelley as the person who "made it happen" on the ground, we know that if Norma had not been very supportive, it could not have happened in the context of the Rockhampton Hospital. The precursor of the present museum was within the hospital grounds. This photo shows both Norma and Yvonne Kelley (L) with the Health Minister, Hon. Leisha Harvey, when Ms Harvey opened the Base Hospital Museum on 5th March 1988.



Of course, Norma's life was much broader than her role within the Hospital. She was a Charter Member of the Rockhampton Zonta Club in 1983. Zonta is an international organization which works to improve the life of women worldwide. Fundraising is a key task. She was involved in Meals on Wheels, ADFAS, St Luke's Church and U3A and played a leading role in the on-going annual celebrations of International Nurses Day.

So many people owe you so much, Norma.

Thank you from all of us.

Errol Payne
Secretary, ACHHA