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Salt Skip News

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*The business address of the Salt Skip Program is Queensland Hypertension Association
PO Box 193, Holland Park, QLD 4121, phone (07) 3899 1659, FAX (07) 3394 7815.*

In Memory of Dr Trevor Beard

Trevor Beard was the leading light and inspiration behind the Salt Skip Program and it is appropriate that this issue of the BP Monitor (incorporating Salt Skip News – a newsletter he started) - is in memory of him. He died last month in Hobart, of an acute myocardial infarction following a successful total knee replacement, after living a very full 90 years. I am sorry at his passing, and grateful to have known him, worked with him and been inspired by him. This newsletter outlines what Trevor achieved during his life, the lasting impact he had on people and events, and is testament to the fact that passionate individuals make a difference in the world. The anthropologist Margaret Mead may have been speaking of Trevor when she said “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” Trevor Beard was a leader of thoughtful, committed citizens.



TREVOR CORY BEARD

11 MAY 1920- 2 SEPT 2010

By Jane Parris, daughter of Trevor C Beard

Mark Twain once said "If I had more time I would have written a shorter letter". This was often quoted by Trevor and he wrote and rewrote most of his work and even his emails. I have shortened this but Dad had a long and productive career so there is a lot to share with you:

Dad was born in Gloucester, the younger of 2 sons of George Francis and Katharine Elizabeth Beard. His grandfather owned a bookshop which his father worked in. He later owned three bookshops so they lived fairly comfortably. His brother Murray was 8 years older so Dad was almost a second 'only' child. He was very happy in his own company and very self reliant which stood him in good stead as an adult. He remembered a happy childhood with loving parents and extended family, roaming on his bike which he received for his 11th birthday. He also used to bring home all sorts of waifs and strays, either injured animals which he found or ones he thought were 'lost' – stray cats etc.

At the age of 8 he won a free scholarship to Crypt Grammar School in Gloucester which he attended from 1928 – 38. Despite a keen interest in veterinary science, when he went up to St John's College Cambridge in 1938 he studied medicine – he thought he might be more use to his family as a physician. While Dad excelled academically, he obviously wasn't interested in team games or sport. However he was a keen cyclist and enjoyed gymnastics, he was very flexible as you will see in some of the photos. He used to cycle between Cambridge and Gloucester and also later between London and Gloucester to return to his family home. Last year when we returned to England with him, we drove into the pretty village of Thaxted in Essex. Dad immediately said that he used to cycle there from Cambridge, a distance of about 30 miles.

In 1941 he won a scholarship to continue his

medical training at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. He completed his studies in 1945 and was appointed as a House Physician at Barts. During 1945-46 he worked for short periods in Medicine, Surgery & Casualty at Hertford County Hospital and in Obstetrics at the City of London Maternity Hospital where he earned a postgraduate diploma of obstetrics.

In 1945 and newly qualified he met Senior Staff Nurse Joan Frankau over a patient at Barts. He was most impressed when she told him exactly what treatment the patient needed and sure enough she was right! He was attracted to her jolly manner, her decisiveness and her pleasant 'can-do' personality and when they met again a year later there was a whirlwind courtship and engagement, and they were married on November 2, 1946.

In January 1947 Dad was called up to do his 2 years of compulsory military service and he was sent out to join the post war Army occupation of Italy. He was sent with other troops by train – conditions were difficult, trains were held up frequently and there was standing room only in most. With his flexibility and his tall slender physique he was able to travel comfortably lying in the luggage rack using his pack as a pillow. Because of his obstetric qualification he was posted to Venice as MO for the military families and supplied with his own chauffeur-driven motor boat. Mum was able to join him for 6 months between April/August 47 and he returned on the last troop ship out of Venice arriving back in England in early December. He was then posted to Hounslow Barracks where the British Army band was based – some of his

medical certificates were for trumpeters or buglers “excused blowing”.

Dad was granted early leave of the last three months of his military service because he had been offered a junior partnership in a practice in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire where he worked for 3 years. My brother Tony and I were born during this period.



When Dad proposed he asked Mum not only if she would marry him but also if she would have no objection to ‘living in the colonies’. She answered both in the affirmative, so after 4 years of marriage they started considering their options. A Melbourne medical agency advertised that they would guarantee locum work for 12 months. They embarked on the cargo ship *South Africa Star* in February 1951 and began the slow journey south. Since they were self funded migrants they reduced the cost of their passage by Dad working as the ship’s doctor. Cargo ships usually didn’t carry a doctor but they were always happy to employ one if they could. He was put on the crew manifest and paid a salary of 1/- . Mum, Tony and I were paying passengers.

We disembarked in Melbourne in May 1951 with a crate full of household effects and a Vanguard car and after three weeks doing a locum in West Gippsland we crossed Bass Strait on the ferry (at that time *The Taroon*) and disembarked at Beauty Point. It was June 8th and a perfect winter’s day – chilly but with blue skies, green fields and snow on Ben Lomond as we travelled down to Campbell Town in the midlands of Tasmania in our Vanguard. We arrived to find a welcome from our hosts, a roaring log fire complete with a black kettle hanging over it gently steaming and a large black cat on the hearth. Mum told Dad that she had found her perfect spot and that when Dr Webster came back

he was to offer to buy him out.

And so began 21 years as a GP in Campbell Town with Dad being a sole practitioner on call 24/7, 365 days of the year. Soon after two more children, Simon & Lil, arrived to complete the family. With a busy practice we didn’t see much of Dad except at meal times. However with 4 children under the age of 6, Mum needed a bit of help at bedtime. We have strong memories of Dad reading to us with one child on each knee – first the two younger ones and when they were settled for the night, the two older ones. He read the *Just So* stories and *Winnie the Pooh* among others. We also spent time at the weekends going on rambles to gather fire wood, or pick horse mushrooms in season.



Dad was a keen DIY enthusiast, putting up shelves, building a chook house and generally enjoying using tools to create things. He encouraged us to follow his example and there is a photo of us all busily engaged in outside work as children. I remember giving dad a Father’s Day gift of a short piece of wood in which I had butchered a groove with one of his gouges so that he could have it on his desk to hold a pen. He kept it for years. Dad was a keen photographer and set up his own darkroom when they remodelled the house in Campbell Town in 1960. He used to take his own x-rays and quickly develop them while the patient was still there. By about the age of 10 or 12 we had all been given our own cameras – black and white, of course. And he taught us how to use the dark room to develop our own photos. He kept the exhausted chemicals from his x-rays for us to use but even so there was only a small window of opportunity to catch the developing photo in a good range of greys before the contrast got too severe.

On wintery weekends Dad helped keep us amused by pulling out his own childhood meccano set. Tony remembers being impressed when Dad built him a differential from memory and explained to him how this controlled the different speed of the driving wheels of the car as it turned the corner.

Life was pretty good in general practice in Campbell Town but then something happened which set him on the course for his first public health campaign.

Back at Bart's the senior lecturer in medicine was notorious for his fascination with rare diseases. On one occasion Dad remembers him showing a group of medical students a very large hydatid cyst removed in surgery from a patient's liver. As hydatid disease was extremely rare in the UK the lecturer assured them that they were unlikely to see another one in their lifetime.

He didn't know that one of those students would end up in Tasmania where hydatids were common in wool districts such as the Midlands. [*Hydatid disease is a parasitic infection of humans and other mammals such as sheep, dogs, rodents and horses. The formation of cysts is part of the parasites lifecycle.*]

For the first 10 years Dad didn't see any cases of human hydatid disease although he was looking out for it. In 1960 he saw three cases in nine months – all of them children. He found the first cyst in the chest x-ray he took of a 6 year old patient who had recovered fully from pneumonia – the x-ray was simply a precaution before the boy went back to school. The second was a 9 year old girl also recovering from pneumonia. In both these cases the cysts were safely removed by a Launceston surgeon. The third case ended in tragedy before he saw the child. A 7 year old boy was playing with his brothers and he felt severe pain when he was struck in the chest by his brother's knee. He went into shock and died at home. The post mortem showed that he had died of acute anaphylaxis after the rupture of a hydatid cyst in the liver. Dad understood very clearly the lifecycle of the hydatid tapeworm.

The dog has the adult worm and is the host – other animals, mainly sheep but also cattle and pigs and to a lesser extent humans carry the larval worms inside hydatid cysts and are the intermediate hosts. In sheep raising districts farmers kill sheep for their own food. Most of these sheep have hydatid cysts in the offal. This offal is fed to farm dogs as it is readily available and costs nothing. If the farmers stopped feeding their dogs on diseased offal the life cycle would be interrupted and there would be no more hydatid disease in Tasmania.

He went to see the Chief Veterinary Officer (Keith Meldrum) who was keen to help but unfortunately when Meldrum approached the government for funding he was knocked back. Hydatids wasn't a disease which caused large economic losses for the agricultural industry and although surgeons were doing about 1 operation a week to remove dangerous cysts, it was only killing 2 people in Tasmania a year. One day Meldrum gave Dad an article about a NZ campaign being run by an enthusiastic paediatrician who toured all over the South Island with a collection of slides which he showed at public meetings in farming districts. At each meeting he was able to form a local hydatid eradication committee to carry out voluntary control in their area. Dad already had a collection of his own slides and for about 12 months he tried very hard to think of any Tasmanian who might have the qualifications, the interest and the spare time to conduct such a campaign. As a busy rural GP who never had a weekend off it seemed obvious to him that he couldn't do it. Mum told him that if he felt that strongly about it, nothing would happen unless he did it himself. So he called a meeting in Campbell Town and was surprised how easy it was to form a local committee there and shortly afterwards in Ross and Oatlands. He soon received invitations to give his talk all over the island and the gathering campaign created political pressure for government support.

During the school holidays one or all of the children would go along to these meetings. Tony remembers in particular going to one meeting where he ran the projector, waiting for Dad to snap his fingers as a signal to advance the next slide.

In 1963 on a private family visit to England Dad took the opportunity to visit the UK Health Education Council in London. They were very interested in the Tasmanian campaign and offered a lot of advice. They suggested a regular newsletter for the groups and also suggested that he get hold of a wonderful new tool – the overhead projector. They suggested that farmers should never sit in a blackened room for an after lunch meeting – you must face them and use a visual aid which works in broad daylight. They referred him to a place where he could purchase one and on return to Tasmania regular meetings continued to great effect. By the time 63 committees were up and running, Keith Meldrum received his government funding and THEC (Tasmania Hydatid Eradication Campaign) was officially formed as an advisory committee to the Department of Agriculture, and resourced with a paid secretary.

Just in time, Winston Churchill died. Money was raised in his name to award fellowships for overseas study. Fellows were expected to bring back innovations and fresh insights into problems of importance to the Australian community. Dad was one of four Tasmanians granted a fellowship in the first year 1966. This allowed him to study for a degree in Public Health majoring in Health Education at the University of California campus at Berkeley near San Francisco. The Berkeley program was a world leader in community development in public health. On his way home he spent a week in Iceland to assess their 100 year old hydatid eradication campaign.

While Dad was away an English locum and his wife came to keep the practice going. Mum stayed at home to help with the smooth running as the practice manager, accountant, assistant surgery sister for out-of-hours patients, etc. The four of us children were all in boarding school in Hobart. Before Dad returned to Tasmania, Mum dashed off to England to attend her father in his final illness and was away for two months.

Dad was concerned that his children shouldn't feel neglected with both parents overseas and found the time between his studies to write an air letter to each of us once a week. I remember them as being full of interesting commentary on his life in California, the study he was doing and the trip that he made to the World Fair in Montreal with one of his great mates from Cambridge who had settled in the United States. I don't remember any mention of hippies or flower power which was what San Francisco was known for in 1967 as I'm sure all of that went over Dad's head although he did grow some long side burns!

Back in Tasmania the THEC was now more or less running itself with less input from Dad although he did continue to write the newsletter. The human incidence of hydatid disease fell dramatically once the official campaign started. The last new human case under the age of 10 years was diagnosed in 1972 and the last under 20 years of age in 1976. Symptomless cysts apparently acquired before 1970 still persisted in a few old people, but the age distribution shows that human transmission must have stopped in about 1972 only 10 years after the campaign started.

In February 1996 Tasmania was declared provisionally free of hydatids in humans, dogs and livestock.

Five years after he received his degree in Public Health and with the success of the hydatid campaign, Dad felt the urge for a greater challenge than a country practice in Tasmania. He moved to Canberra in 1972 as a Senior Medical Officer in the Commonwealth Department of Health. He also worked later as a consultant to the Better Health Commission in Canberra.

During their 15 years in Canberra he enjoyed working a 9-5 job with four weeks annual leave and every weekend off. In Campbell Town they had had a huge vegetable garden mostly kept up by Mum, and in Canberra they grew another one. As Mum was now working, this garden was a joint responsibility. Dad often said that if he was having trouble writing one of his papers he would take a break and do 30 mins of weeding and come back to it refreshed. They also both had bikes and would ride around Lake Burley Griffin. Dad's bike was a Bickerton which folded up. He used to ride to work each morning – about 3 kms. His office was on the 7th floor of the Woden Valley Hospital building and he would come into the foyer, fold up his bike and put it on his shoulder and climb the first two flights of stairs one at a time. The next two he took two at a time and the last three flights three at a time. He would reverse the journey on the way home.



Part of his work involved promoting health in the community and this included better dietary habits. The Whitlam government had money for health prevention rather than a cure. He was very interested in the Pritikin diet and in 1979 Mum & Dad started following this regime of low fat, low saturated fats and sugars. Pritikin didn't actually require a low sodium intake but about this time Dad had read a paper about the effects of sodium and

hypertension and felt it important to reduce their salt intake as well. His parents had both died from strokes brought about by hypertension and he was determined to die from something else. Not much attention was being paid to the salt content in diets but Dad got a group going which they called No Sal. He started seeing hypertensive patients who had been referred to him by doctors around the Australian Capital Territory.

A dietician in the Health Department suggested that the local TAFE college run a series of cooking classes to show interested participants how they could change some of their standard meals into low salt meals by changing how they cooked them and by adding herbs and spices to make them tasty. They also learnt to make no added salt bread because it was difficult to persuade bakers to make it and bread making machines were not available then. Dad went along to all these classes and although Mum didn't let him do much cooking, he was allowed to make the bread. Later they got one of the first bread machines on the market and continued to make their own bread until only a couple of years ago.

They also bought the first domestic microwave oven that I ever saw and it was in continual use until only a couple of months ago after 33 years. The No Sal group changed into Salt Skip and so started the second great public health campaign which would continue for his final 30 years.

After 15 happy years in Canberra, retirement lead my parents back to Hobart to be nearer to 3 of their 4 children and 9 of their 10 grandchildren. Although he was 67 Dad started to work as a Research Associate with the Department of Community Health, University of Tasmania, followed a couple of years later by becoming a Senior Research Fellow with the Menzies Centre for Population Health Research (now the Menzies Research Institute.) He continued to see patients until he was 85 and finally retired to work at home.

He got into computers early having used electric typewriters from when they were introduced in the 1960s. He was fascinated by the internet and started up his own web site www.saltmatters.org in October 2004. He actively ran an email discussion forum as an adjunct to his website and continued to provide useful advice even from his hospital bed. He was fascinated by the power of search engines and loved to google information. The laptop he used in hospital shows that the last thing he googled was the line "I am the captain of my soul" which is from the poem *Invictus* printed in the Order of Service.

He was also an active gym goer and member at the University gym. Back in July an article was published in the *Sunday Age* called *Salt – the Silent Killer We Can't Seem To Live Without*. The reporter was obviously quite intrigued that a 90 year old was going to the gym and made sure the photographer took some shots there. He was also photographed at home in his kitchen preparing healthy food. We remember Dad as a friend and mentor. If there is one thing he taught us, it is if you want something enough you really **can** make it happen.

Thanks Dad

INAUGURAL CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP

"Trevor never forgot the opportunity given to him via his Churchill Fellowship, regarding it as both an honour and a privilege. I believe that he was everything a Churchill Fellow should be – passionate about his fellowship and wholehearted in his desire to use it to advantage others. He also recognised that once a fellow, always a fellow – the commitment should be lifelong, not just to do the best in your chosen field then but to do it in ways which would bring benefit to others wherever you may be or whatever new path your life may have taken - even years later. He also recognised that a Fellow has the responsibility to encourage others to apply for fellowships and to nurture in each new Fellow the fire and zeal his fellowship promoted in him, to show them by example that it is both an honour and a responsibility to receive this award. "

Patricia Corby, Secretary,
Churchill Fellows Association, TAS

SALT RESEARCH

"Trevor was involved with numerous research projects largely around salt intake and hypertension. One of these was the first large scale community survey of sodium intake in Australia. While in practical nutrition he developed a low salt soup which was still tasty. This was done in conjunction with his friend and colleague Dr David Woodward who I acknowledge as a contributor to much of the detail I am sharing with you now and also psychologist Peter Ball. In addition to Trevor's research he was a passionate health promoter and advocate promoting low salt diets in the prevention of hypertension and effecting change in the food industry. He played a pivotal role in having the official sodium intake recommendation lowered in Australia in 2005. Closer to home, he convinced the Royal Hobart Hospital to introduce low sodium meals. This year he set a challenge for Drysdale house, which is the training ground for Chefs in Tasmania to provide monthly lunches which meet so called traffic light requirements in the UK for food labelling, that is highlighting food low in salt, total fats, saturated fats and sugar. He also campaigned to see the introduction of such a system of labelling introduced in Australia.

In addition to his own research and that in which he collaborated with others, Trevor was a long term mentor and encourager of both research students and other researchers."

Professor Allan Carmichael, University of Tasmania.

HONOURS

In addition to his OBE, Trevor received many other honours. He was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship in 1966, the Johnston Medal from the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1987, honorary life membership of Nutrition Australia in 1997, and honorary Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in 1995. He was declared Senior Australian of the Year 2006 for Tasmania.

One of the many privileges of working with Trevor was his passion for his work. He was a man of formidable intellect, tenacity, good humour and personal warmth. We have lost a truly remarkable colleague and friend.

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Salt Skip News will
continue to be distributed
in hard copy in The BP
Monitor (QHA newsletter)

A Practical Man

I first met Trevor many years ago when he was in Canberra. He was setting up a low salt cooking course and had enrolled as the first student. For a doctor to decide to learn along with his patients was quite revolutionary at the time (and probably still is). Talking to others who enrolled in these courses, many did so because Trevor, in his quiet and gentlemanly way, had been such a marvellous salesman for the cause. They all had a great time cooking and learning together.

Trevor and I communicated frequently over the years and especially over the last few years when we were both keen advocates of traffic light labelling as a practical way to help shoppers make better choices.

I feel so sad that Trevor didn't live to see this particular dream fulfilled. However, he can rest in peace because I, and many others, will continue to push for traffic lights. It may take time, but Trevor's enthusiasm and energy for the cause will not go away or astray.

Most of us don't get to meet and know many people of Trevor's calibre. He was quiet and always respectful, but behind that gentle facade was a will of iron. We shall all miss him greatly.

Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM, nutritionist and colleague

We farewelled a truly remarkable colleague and friend today...

"I have returned in the past hour from Trevor's funeral in Hobart. About 200 people, I'd estimate, about 75% not known to me personally (most unusual in Hobart!) Those I did know included a range of university people, a number of medicos and a number of dietitians (including veteran Johanna Coy). It became clear that many of Trevor's descendants were there, and many people from Salt Skip and Meniere's Group - and even former patients from his days (1951- 1972) as a GP in midland Tasmania. Speakers included Allan Carmichael (Dean, School of Health Sciences, and thus ultimate boss of the Menzies Institute where Trevor worked until his trip to hospital a couple of weeks ago), Trevor's daughter Jane, and Patricia Corby from the Churchill Fellows group (Trevor was an inaugural Churchill Fellow in 1966). They praised his professional contribution and Trevor the loving family man.

A simple but moving service."

Dr David Woodward, Hobart

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Salt Skip Editorial Committee: Prof Michael Stowasser (Director, Hypertension Unit, University of Qld School of Medicine, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane), Sister Dianne Robson (Hypertension Nurse, Hypertension Unit, Greenslopes Private Hospital, Brisbane), Prof Caryl Nowson (Nutrition & Ageing, Deakin University, Melbourne), Clare Rawcliffe (Cardiology Dietitian, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney), Jane Brown (Home Economist, Salt Skip Program, Hobart), and Dr Jennifer Keogh (Dietitian, Australian Institute of Weight Control, Adelaide). Text drafted (edited where other authors are named) by Dr Malcolm Riley, Nutrition Science Manager, Dairy Australia. Printed by Snap Printing, Edward Street, Brisbane.