

History of Bernadette Hart Award

Bernadette Hart was a friendly, warm, outgoing, capable woman with a love of her work and her patients. Interested in furthering her education in Stomal Therapy she attended national seminars and was welcomed onto the Enterostomal Therapy Committee, becoming Treasurer when the National Section was formed.

Bernadette was sponsored by the Southland District Health Board to attend the first New Zealand Enterostomal Therapy Course in October 1984 but unfortunately ill health prevented this.

Bernadette Therese McTigue (known as Tiggy) was born in Southland, 12 October 1933. Before marriage she completed her General Nursing training at the Southland School of Nursing. Her first love was surgical nursing and she worked in a surgical ward at Southland Hospital from 1958 to the 1960's when she took leave to complete her maternity training at Timaru Hospital and later the one year post graduate Nursing Diploma in Wellington in 1965.

On her return to Southland she became Ward Sister of Men's Surgical (Ward 9) until her death.

The Southland Cancer Society sponsored Bernadette to a cancer conference in Melbourne which she attended but on her return she became ill and was admitted to Southland Hospital for surgery. She was transferred to Dunedin Hospital for further surgery which was unsuccessful.

With a short terminal illness Bernadette chose to be cared for at home by family and friends. She planned her Requiem Mass and funeral and as always she was a wonderful organiser. She died aged 52, survived by her husband Lovell.

Rachel Peek, former Matron of Southland Hospital and long time friend of Bernadette, says Bernadette was an outstanding person, loved by everyone at Southland Hospital. She had a wide range of interests, a great compassion and empathy for people and was an extremely knowledgeable person. Her photo has hung in Southland Hospital and will be hung in the new Southland Health Services Museum which is presently being built.

An obituary in the Southland Times of Bernadette's life included a history of her nursing career. It stated she was an outstanding nurse who had worked for the Southland Board for 30 years. She was interested in all aspects of nursing and education and especially interested in the care of patients with ostomies, working both in the hospital and community to assist these people.

Bernadette is buried at Green Point Cemetery in Bluff overlooking the sea.

Memories of Bernadette will remain for many people and it was a fitting tribute to her life that the Bernadette Hart Award and criteria was established all those years ago and is still alive today.

Written by Betty Vodanovich, Life Member, NZNO College of Stomal Therapy Nurses.

On a personal note I worked as a staff nurse for Bernadette Hart in Ward 9. She was an amazing lady and I learned so much from her. One of her dreams was for Southland to have a Stomal Therapist. I was fortunate enough to become that person. I was also lucky enough to have Mrs Hart as a resource person as I started into the role. We spent many hours on the phone discussing stomal issues through the months of her illness. I would never have managed without her support, information and inspiration.

Jackie Hutchings
Secretary, NZNO College Stomal Therapy Nurses
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