

## **DR. JOHN HARGRAVE**

### **AND THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART.**

Traditional Owners of this land, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning!

I had the privilege of working with Dr. Hargrave through the Port Keats Health Clinic.

He was a gentle, kind, humble, dedicated, and gifted man who had enormous respect for Aboriginal people and especially the male Aboriginal Health Workers. He recognised their gift for learning, teaching them the diagnosis, treatment, and care of those with Leprosy .... and so much more.

It is well to remember that it was the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, together with Br. Lilwall, msc, who at Chanel Island Leprosarium, pioneered the road to recovery for those who suffered with Leprosy or Hansen's Disease as it's known. Chanel Island Leprosarium was opened by the Commonwealth Government in 1931.

With the beginning of World War 11 the Sisters were evacuated from their ministries in Darwin and Chanel Island, however, in 1943 at the end of the war, the Sisters returned North. At the request of the Commonwealth Government, Sisters Campion, and Gabriella, went to Chanel Island to care for those with leprosy. Chanel Island Leprosarium was closed in 1955 with the opening of the new East Arm Leprosarium which was staffed by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Over the years, many dedicated OLSH Sisters worked alongside Dr. Hargrave at East Arm, lovingly ministering to those who were 'unwanted' and seen as 'unclean.'

Thanks to the to the untiring efforts of the OLSH Sisters, to the extraordinary advances of medical science, and to the arrival of Dr. John Hargrave in 1959, the first full -time doctor to be appointed to work with Hansen's disease in the NT, the stigma for those suffering with leprosy was gradually broken down and removed.

Dr. Hargrave is remembered for his determination in exploring new methods of treating leprosy – always, the needs of the patients were his first concern. He opened an operating theatre at East Arm in 1962 and was the first surgeon in Australia to perform reconstructive surgery and micro-surgery on Leprosy patients. Later he pioneered the use of prostheses which greatly enhanced the people's ability to live normal lives. All-the-while, the Sisters were at his side ably assisting him.

After many years of selfless, dedicated service by Dr. Hargrave, Dr. Dyrting who was now on the staff, the OLSH Sisters and health workers, mainly Aboriginal, the Leprosarium was closed in 1982. This closure was to make way for the new Shipping Port of Darwin. Because of the advances made in the treatment and care of those with Leprosy, many patients were able to return to their own communities, however, some wished to remain in Darwin. The OLSH Sisters insisted staying with them at East Arm until the Government found suitable accommodation for all.

Once all the patients were settled, Dr. Hargrave with Dr. Dyrting, organized for Sisters Lorna, Joan, and Kathleen to move to Katherine. Sr. Lorna oversaw Leprosy Education at the Katherine Hospital, Sr. Joan became the contact person for all ex- patients of Hansen's

Disease, while Kathleen became a member of the newly established Institute of Aboriginal Health, specialising in Leprosy Disease. Eventually, with the decline of leprosy in the NT these Sisters moved on to other ministries leaving a wonderful legacy behind. Dr. Hargrave eventually retired and moved to Tasmania.

In 2008 two special events took place.

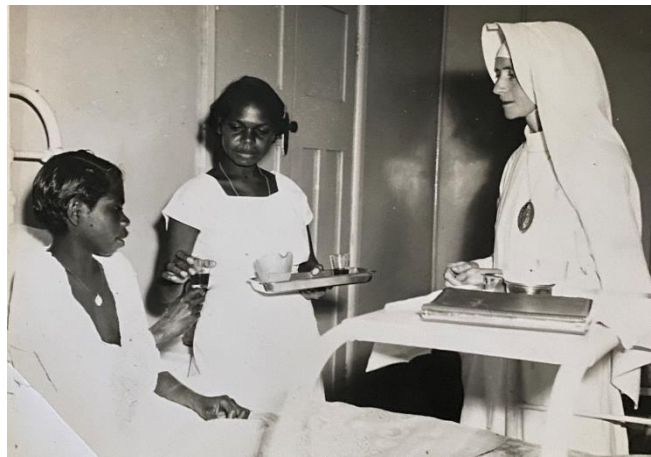
Firstly, the NT Government's Information Kiosk on the site of East Arm Leprosarium was built and opened. Dr. Hargrave was in attendance as were the OLSH Sisters. A warm and wonderful reunion ensued.

He also attended the 100 years celebration of the OLSH Sisters in the NT. It was on this special occasion that we who knew, loved, admired, respected, and had the privilege to work with, bade Dr. John, a truly beautiful human being, our deeply felt final farewell.

Today, it is a great privilege for Sr. Anne Gardiner and I to be here, to remember Dr Hargrave anew, and to pay tribute to him at the naming of a hospital building in his honour. This renowned Australian Surgeon whose work resulted in the near elimination of leprosy in the Northern Territory and with whom the OLSH Sisters worked so closely, will never be forgotten by us.

Thank you!

Sr. Mary Stevens, olsh.  
06-02-23



Taken at Chanel Island Leprosarium