

GPSG NEWS



INFORMATION FOR POLIO SURVIVORS IN THE GEELONG REGION AND BEYOND

MAY 2020 EDITION

Next Meeting:
To Be Advised



In The Chair:

Meetings are usually held on the 1st Monday of every month Main Conference Room, McKellar Centre, Nth Geelong.

Suspended Until Further Notice due to COVID19

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Covid-19 STOPS Our Meetings (& Life as we knew it)

As you know by now, due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis our regular monthly meetings have had to be cancelled in Geelong.

Yes, it's disappointing for us all but also very necessary given the diabolical nature of this disease and it's impact on the community especially those aged over 65 and those with underlying health problems, such as polio survivors.

As we told you last month, none of us can risk catching COVID-19 so please follow all recommended guidelines.

Help stop the spread! Stay 1.5 metres away from others, wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face and if sick, stay home.



Convenor's Corner

Hello from the comfort of my lounge room.

Like most other people I have become very intimate with my house.

My days are filled with challenges of "what to do today to keep myself busy?"

Surprisingly I have found things to do which I dislike doing but have no real reason not to do them now such as cleaning the oven, decluttering my wardrobes and drawers and then there are things which I love to do -crafts and projects that I have never before had time to do.

I am sure we are all now facing a very new reality which for some it is very worrying.

I have friends that have lost their businesses which will never reopen.

Other friends have found brand new ways of doing their business such as a good friend who

has a cafe who has had to offer take away and home delivery and has found she is doing very well at this time.

My family thankfully are still employed. My daughter's charity is still very busy and my son is a nurse at St John of God so he is also busy.

I am now starting to teach my two grandkids on Thursdays so my daughter has enough time to run her charity from her home.

Maybe after this is all over many of us will come out of this with new skills we would have never dreamt we would be doing. I find the most important thing to do during this pandemic is to keep in touch.

Winnie, Jan, Jennifer, Gary and myself will be phoning everyone on our polio list.

We will be checking to see if you are coping ok and see if there is

anything we can do to help. I am sure out of all this drama will come some very surprising lessons. I hope that we will have learnt to think of others more. Be not afraid to reach out for help when we need it and to appreciate all those services which hopefully will return soon.

Just this morning I went to one of my friends cafes who is struggling and bought 4 days worth of dinners. If we all did small things like this businesses would survive.

Until next time I write, or hopefully see you at a meeting stay well and happy.

This is only for a season and we will recover .

God bless,

Sharyn

Happy BIRTHDAY! to you.

May Celebs.

MARGARET COLLINS 3RD

MAY

SANDIE PRICE 6TH MAY

WINNIE TEO 15TH MAY



From The Editor's Desk

Over the past few days, most of you have had a phone call from a Geelong Polio Support Group member such as Jan, Winnie, Sharyn, Jennifer or myself. It's our way of helping keep the group together and to check on everyone's well-being.

During those calls we've shared some laughter, some tears and some heart warming stories. The overriding sentiment we've received is one of gratitude (but isn't that the polio survivors way?). Grateful for

the call and to hear a friendly voice at the other end. Grateful to be safe at home. Grateful for family and friends keeping a watchful eye during shared difficult times.

Staying at home can be quite boring, lonely and socially isolating. It's important that we all stay in touch as much as possible with family & friends and really it's quite an easy thing to do - just pick up that phone.

It's hoped that our calls will not only show you that we care but also brighten your day. If you haven't yet

got a call from one of us it's very likely we don't have a phone number for you (or you weren't home when we rang) so please drop us a line at the address on the front of this newsletter so that we can update our records with your current phone number and address.

Recently I saw this comment from a polio survivor on Facebook: "The isolation people feel today is nothing compared to what we felt as polio sufferers. As a very young 10 year old a long way from home, without phone contact or the

knowledge of what was going to happen, the virus set us up to become very resilient young people". I think it's fair to say that 'resilience' is still with us.

A special hello to our Queensland members Christine and Ron Williams. Christine asked in a recent phone call to be remembered to her old school friend Rosemary Morgan.

Till next time...stay well

Saryn



Extracts from 'Reflect on the greater collective good':

By Amanda Hooton
The Age 'Good Weekend'
APRIL 10, 2020

Joan Ford, 77, is a fragile-looking woman with blue eyes, fine features, and an air of hidden steel. Gathering lunch things in her big, light-filled house on Sydney's eastern beaches, she's quietly competent. But she limps noticeably, and she needs both hands to lift her glass of water.

Both these physical details – and perhaps the steel, too – are the results of the events of May 7, 1949. Six-year-old Ford was on the bus on her way home from school in Garden City in Port Melbourne when her legs stopped working. When she tried to get off, she collapsed. She'd caught polio in one of the last great epidemics of the disease in Australian history. That year, about 750 people were paralysed in Victoria, and more than 1600 across Australia.

In Australia between the 1930s and 1960s, some 2000 people were killed by successive polio epidemics, and more than 40,000 were paralysed. Until recently, figures like these have been impossible to connect to our own lives: if we think of polio at all, it's only as a kind of dis-

tant horror story from medical history. Flat on her back in a ward of 20 children and babies, six-year-old Joan Ford was first bandaged into a Thomas splint (a wooden cross, onto which her arms and legs were tightly bound to keep them straight), then later a half-splint which she wore all day and slept in at night.

Her parents were allowed to visit her on the third Sunday of every month. She still remembers her father "sobbing and sobbing" when he was told of her diagnosis; her mother ringing up the hospital every morning, terrified she had died in the night.

Joan Ford attended university, married and had two daughters, and pursued a strikingly successful career in high-level management – all despite ongoing polio-related health problems. And she's now experiencing increasing, unpredictable muscle weakness in not only her "polio leg", but all her limbs.

"You learnt very early you had to just battle on," she says now. "Especially in the corporate world, you don't ask for help, you don't admit weakness." Sitting in her sunny dining room, she pauses. "I have never spoken publicly about polio

before. I've fought for women's rights, for refugees. But I've never talked about polio. I always knew it was there, but I've spent my whole life just pretending nothing's wrong."

If ever there was a man to pretend nothing is wrong, the new national patron of Polio Australia, Michael Lynch, is that man. A smiling figure with short white hair and a fondness for loose linen shirts, Lynch walks with a stick and a rolling, piratical gait – the result of weakness in his polio-affected right leg. He's the former head of the Australia Council, and former CEO of the Sydney Opera House, the Southbank Centre in London, and the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority in Hong Kong.

Now 70, he caught polio as a three-year-old in Sydney in 1953. He doesn't have a single memory of his year in hospital, but re-



members being teased at school for his callipers at aged six, until he threw them off the cliff at Maroubra, in Sydney's southeast.

He entirely dissociated himself from polio. "We never talked about polio in my family, I had no memories of it, and I never had any therapy or anything that might have brought it up." He laughs. "Oh my god, I'm so far beyond therapy – a whole lifetime of denial!"

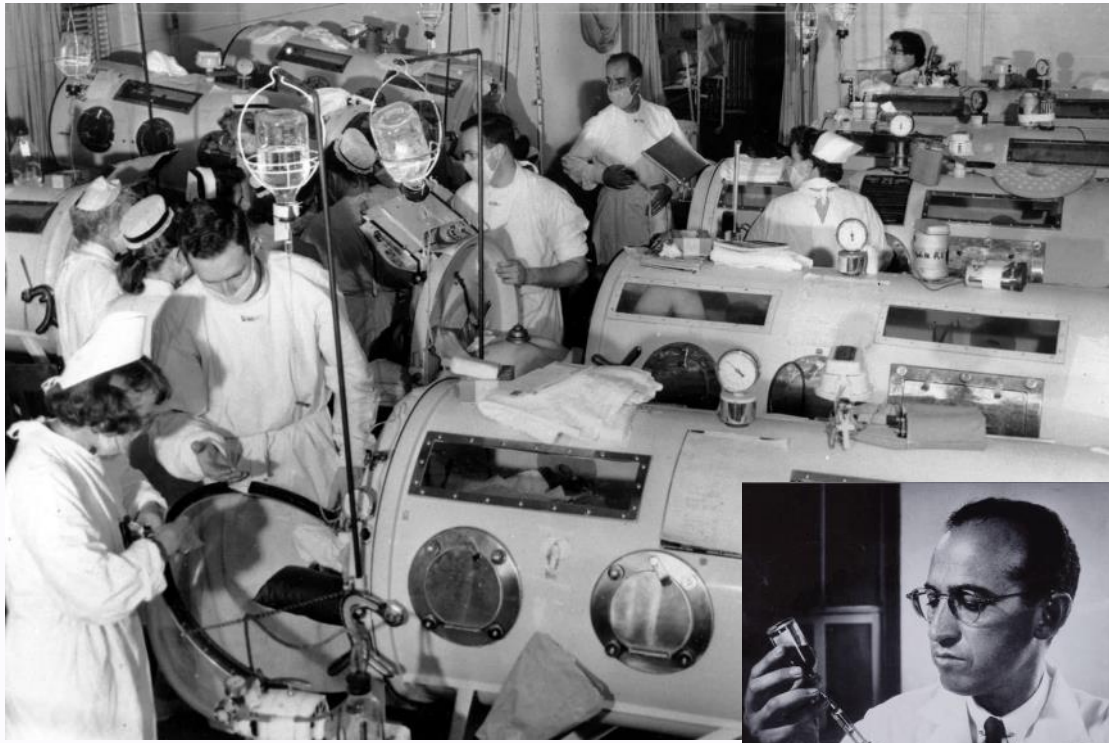
This is in line with what many polio families were once told about their experience: simply forget it ever happened. As Jessica Scheer wrote in the American medical journal Orthopaedics in 1991: "[Polio] rehabilitation regimes encouraged... a psychological process of denial and minimisation of loss, pain, and discomfort."

Lynch was helped in this denial by the fact that, despite his "skinny" right leg, his body appeared to recover almost completely. But as the years passed, he began to notice more weakness – in both his polio-affected leg and, more worryingly, his "good" left leg. He had a hip replacement, a couple of bad falls, began needing a walking stick, and became progressively more furious at Qantas for how far he had to walk at airports and how frequently the travelators were broken. Then, in Melbourne last year, he was at dinner when he felt "just this very weird feeling". Within minutes, his whole left side – his "good" side – had seized up, and he was unable to walk.

"It was terrifying," he says now. "I did think, 'Is this the end?'" By the next day, he'd recovered enough to make it back to Sydney and spend a day at St Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst, where they could only tell him that "something neurological" appeared to have happened.

The shock of this experience prompted Lynch to finally acknowledge what he'd been feeling for years: slowly increasing muscle weakness in his legs. And this wasn't just old age creeping up on him, but a specific polio-related neurological condition known clinically as post-polio syndrome.

COVID-19 spreads in ways reminiscent of poliomyelitis



These are frightening times as the coronavirus spreads in ways reminiscent of poliomyelitis. It's instructive to remember what it took to nearly eradicate polio and a reminder of what we can do when faced with a common enemy."

The fear and uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic may

feel new to many. But it is strangely familiar to those of us who lived through the polio epidemic of the last century.

Like a horror movie, throughout the first half of the 20th century, the polio virus arrived each summer, striking without warning. No one knew how polio was transmitted or what caused it. There were wild



theories that the virus spread from imported bananas or stray cats. There was no known cure or vaccine.

For the next four decades, swimming pools and movie theatres

closed during polio season for fear of this invisible enemy. Parents stopped sending their children to playgrounds or birthday parties for fear they would "catch polio."

In the outbreak of 1916, health workers in New York City would physically remove children from their homes or playgrounds if they suspected they might be infected.

Kids, who seemed to be targeted by the disease, were taken from their families and isolated in sanatoriums. In 1952, the number of polio cases in the U.S. peaked at 57,879, resulting in 3,145 deaths.

Those who survived this highly infectious disease could end up with some form of paralysis, forcing them to use crutches, wheelchairs or to be put into an iron lung, a large tank respirator that would pull air in and out of the lungs, allowing them to breathe.

Ultimately, poliomyelitis was conquered in 1955 by a vaccine developed by Jonas Salk and his team at the University of Pittsburgh.

More Info: <https://bit.ly/3cVPnrS>

Polio Australia and Rotary: Working Together



The extraordinary work undertaken by Rotary International over the past three decades towards eradicating polio worldwide is an achievement that every one of Australia's polio survivors is aware of and fully supports. No one who lived through the pre-vaccine epidemics ever wants to witness the effects of this vicious virus on the community again. Without the visionary leader-

ship of Clem Renouf as the president of Rotary International (1978-79), we would not be talking about the possibility of global polio eradication today.

However, in addition to the lengthy "End Polio Now" campaign, Rotary International has an even longer history with polio than you might know, having helped establish com-

munity organisations over 80 years ago to support Australian children and adults who had contracted polio.

In 1925 the Rotary Club of Sydney sent one of its Directors, Mr B R Gelling, to the USA to examine the support that Rotary was then providing to polio survivors. There he was introduced by Paul Harris (Rotary's founder) to Mr Edgar 'Daddy' Allen who had recently established the National Society for Crippled Children. Paul Harris and Edgar Allen were fellow Rotarians and close friends and in the early 1930s framed the Declaration of

Rights of Crippled Children. Paul Harris became the Patron of the National Crippled Children's Society and for the rest of his life maintained a keen interest in the support of polio survivors.

In December 1929 the Rotary Club of Sydney convened a meeting of 'concerned citizens' in the Sydney Town Hall and as a result the New South Wales Society for Crippled Children was established. The then President of Sydney Rotary Club, Sir Henry Braddon, became the first President of the fledgling New South Wales Society for Crippled Children. In fact, of the seven state wide community organisations around Australia once known as "Crippled Children Societies", six were established by Rotary.

More Info: <https://bit.ly/2VKq721>

Footnote: I am a proud member of the Rotary Club of Geelong East, a club fully committed to helping eradicate polio from our planet—Ed.

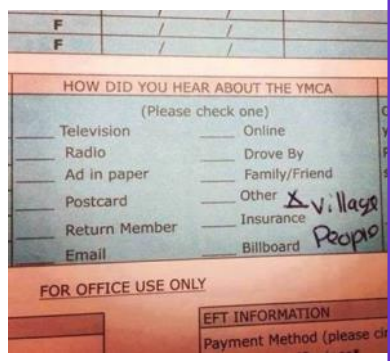


Some Lighter Moments—to brighten your day



Not to brag, but I just went into another room and actually remembered why I went in there.

It was the bathroom, but still....



Polio Doctor Jean Macnamara's Work Reminds Us That Viruses Can Be Vanquished

Living through a global pandemic will have a wealth of unintended consequences positive and negative, but one will certainly be a greater appreciation for those in the medical professions — from those on the front lines treating patients to those researchers laboring behind the scenes, seeking to isolate viruses and to discover vaccines both now and in the past.

Dame Jean Macnamara was one such heroine. She witnessed and made remarkable contributions in her chosen profession — medicine — principally in the area of polio research, and her work with patients with partial or complete paralysis.

Macnamara was born in Victoria, Australia, April 1, 1899. She was born into a family that prized hard work and education, and she excelled at both. Macnamara attended Presbyterian Ladies College and became the editor of the school's magazine, winning the prize for general excellence. She distinguished herself at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1922 with degrees in both surgery and anatomy. She went on to become a resident medical officer at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Macnamara was just 23 when she was appointed resident at the Royal Children's Hospital in May 1923, where she worked until 1925. It was a critical time as a horrifying disease — poliomyelitis, also known as polio — was sweeping the globe. After leaving the hospital, Macnamara worked as a clinical assistant at the Children's outpatients' physician and entered private practice to focus on poliomyelitis patients.

But it was in Macnamara's research where her light shone brightest. It was her conclusion that immune serum needed to be used in polio treatment during the pre-paralytic stage. She published and defended her results in both Australian and British journals, though it was a treatment that was never widely administered.

However, it was her discovery in 1931, along with Australian virologist Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet, of more than one strain of the polio virus that made her reputation. Their finding is credited as one of the first steps toward the eventual discovery of the Salk vaccine. She traveled to England and North America on a Rockefeller Fellowship from September 1931 to October 1933, even meeting with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, himself a victim of polio.

In addition to her keen interest in curing disease, Macnamara sought to alleviate the pain and suffering it left in its wake. She is credited with ordering the first artificial respirator (or ventilator) in Australia. She introduced novel approaches to rehabilitation and splinting damaged limbs, most developed in conjunction with conversation with patients and her own splint-maker. Macnamara proved to be a tireless advocate for people with disabilities long before it was in vogue.

She married a fellow physician, dermatologist Joseph Connor in 1934, and in 1935, Macnamara was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) for her services to the welfare of children. She died in 1968 of heart disease.



Dame Jean Macnamara worked tirelessly for the disabled, but it was her research that helped lead to the polio vaccine that she is most remembered for. ©HOWSTUFFWORKS

More Info: <https://history.howstuffworks.com/historical-figures/-jean-macnamara.htm>