

Vale Judith Cornell



“The world of perioperative nursing has lost one of its shining stars. Judith Cornell was a role model who inspired so many of us to become perioperative nurses; an advocate for both nurses and patients and even in retirement continued to dedicate herself to supporting the profession. Our hearts go out to her family, especially her husband Tony as well as her many friends. We will all miss her dearly. “

~ New South Wales Operating Theatre Association ~

It is with great sadness that ACORN and NSW OTA inform our members that Judith Cornell passed away on Monday 14th April 2014.

Our hearts go out to her family especially her husband Tony and sister Beverley and her many friends and colleagues.

Judith was an excellent advocate for her patients and a wonderful role model and mentor.

Her passion for the profession inspired many to take on theatre nursing and her thirst for learning left her taking on many challenges along the way. Her dedication was exemplary and even in retirement Judith wouldn't stop supporting us and the Profession she so greatly admired.

Judith commenced her training in 1957 at St George Hospital Kogarah and then moved onto Brisbane Womens' where she completed her Midwifery. She then ventured into the theatres eventually becoming the Nursing Supervisor theatre and then onto her passion as an educator.

In 1978 till 85 Judith was the Assistant Director of Nursing Operating theatres Westmead Hospital. After focusing on the profession for many years she then took on another challenge as the Executive Director NSW College of Nursing. She was previously a past President of the Royal College of Nursing, Australia, Orator for The College of Nursing and in recent years the Honorary Archivist for The College of Nursing and the Australian College of Nursing.

Judith was also a key figure with the Operating Room Nurses and was honoured with Life memberships of NSW OTA in 1987. Judith has held the position of NSW OTA President in 1979-1980 and 1986- 1987 and was the editor for Forceps magazine. Judith also wrote the NSW OTA history in 2007

In 1975 she met with 10 other nurses to look at the possibilities of organising a national conference and inturn then became the chairperson of the inaugural Australasian national conference-1977.

Judith then became the first chairperson for the Australian Confederation of Operating room nurses and has delivered the ACORN oration in 2002 -which is duly named after her.

Her significant contribution to nursing and education was acknowledged in 1995 when she received the Australian Honour - in recognition of service especially pertaining to improving access to education and enhancing the quality of nursing.

Her passion and her love of history can be seen in the various activities and associations she was a member of over her prestigious career. Judith was the Chairman of the Health & Medicine Special Interest Group, National and State Committees, the Hon curator and Chairman of the Society for the Preservation of Artefacts in Surgery and Medicine (SPASM) and a member of the NSW Society for History Medicine, the National Trust, Powerhouse Museum and the St George Historical Society.

On a personal note, I know I will miss her dearly; her cheeky (almost wicked) sense of humour and the support she has given me over the years has been invaluable. If not for Judith I would not have made it into perioperative nursing.

Tracy Kerle

NSW OTA President on behalf of the NSW executive, Ruth Melville and the ACORN executive



Judith and Jenny Cubitt at the NSW OTA 50th Anniversary Celebrations

Tributes to Judith Cornell

"I am very sad. Judith was a dear friend and mentor."

~ Phyllis Davis, NSW OTA Life Member ~

"A very sad day with the news of the death of Judith Cornell, AM, former OTA and ACORN President. She inspired many of us to become perioperative nurses and we will have our own special memories and stories to tell. A day for reflection. Vale Judith."

~ Menna Davies ~

"Judith was the Educator in the Operating Suite at St George when I was a student nurse, and then when I returned as a registered nurse. A fabulous nurse and a wonderful person. A great loss"

~ Deb Cansdell ~

"I am very sorry for the loss of such a dynamic woman. Your kind words bring back my own memories of a wonderful woman. I remember being a new perioperative nurse and Judith the theatre manager at Westmead. We had a AAA crash through the doors and Judith and I the only available staff. She looked at me as she was opening on to my trolley and asked "am I doing it right?"; I loved the woman from that moment on. A true inspiration who gave many of us the wish to achieve more. May she rest in peace."

~ Corinne Egan-Hirst ~



"Beautiful email, thank you Michelle for passing on Tracy's heart-warming sentiments about a very special person. You remind us that we must respect, remember and value our pioneers in nursing. God bless Judith and her family."

~ Wendy Burnside ~

"It is very sad. I had great admiration for Judy. I shall never forget her."

~ Lynne Redknap, NSW OTA Life Member ~

"This is indeed sad news. In many ways and in many people's minds, Judith Cornell was synonymous with NSW OTA and even ACORN. The world of perioperative nursing has lost one of its shining stars. May she rest in peace."

~ Terri Pinkis, NSW OTA Life Member ~

"Sad news I also have fond memories of Judith both when I was active in the OTA & as a charge nurse (that makes me feel old) at Westmead...she kept us on our toes. My condolences to her family."

~ Susan Stewart ~

"On behalf of our zone, our deepest condolences to Judith's family and those in the perioperative nursing profession for whom she was close to. She has left an amazing legacy for us all to honour."

~ Angela White ~