



The *Great* Canadian  
Catholic Hospital History Project

Documenting the legacy and contribution of the  
Congregations of Religious Women in Canada,  
their mission in health care, and the founding and operation of Catholic hospitals.

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Projet de la *Grande* Histoire  
des hôpitaux catholiques au Canada

Retracer l'héritage et la contribution des  
congrégations de religieuses au Canada,  
leur mission en matière de soins de santé ainsi que la fondation et l'exploitation des hôpitaux catholiques.

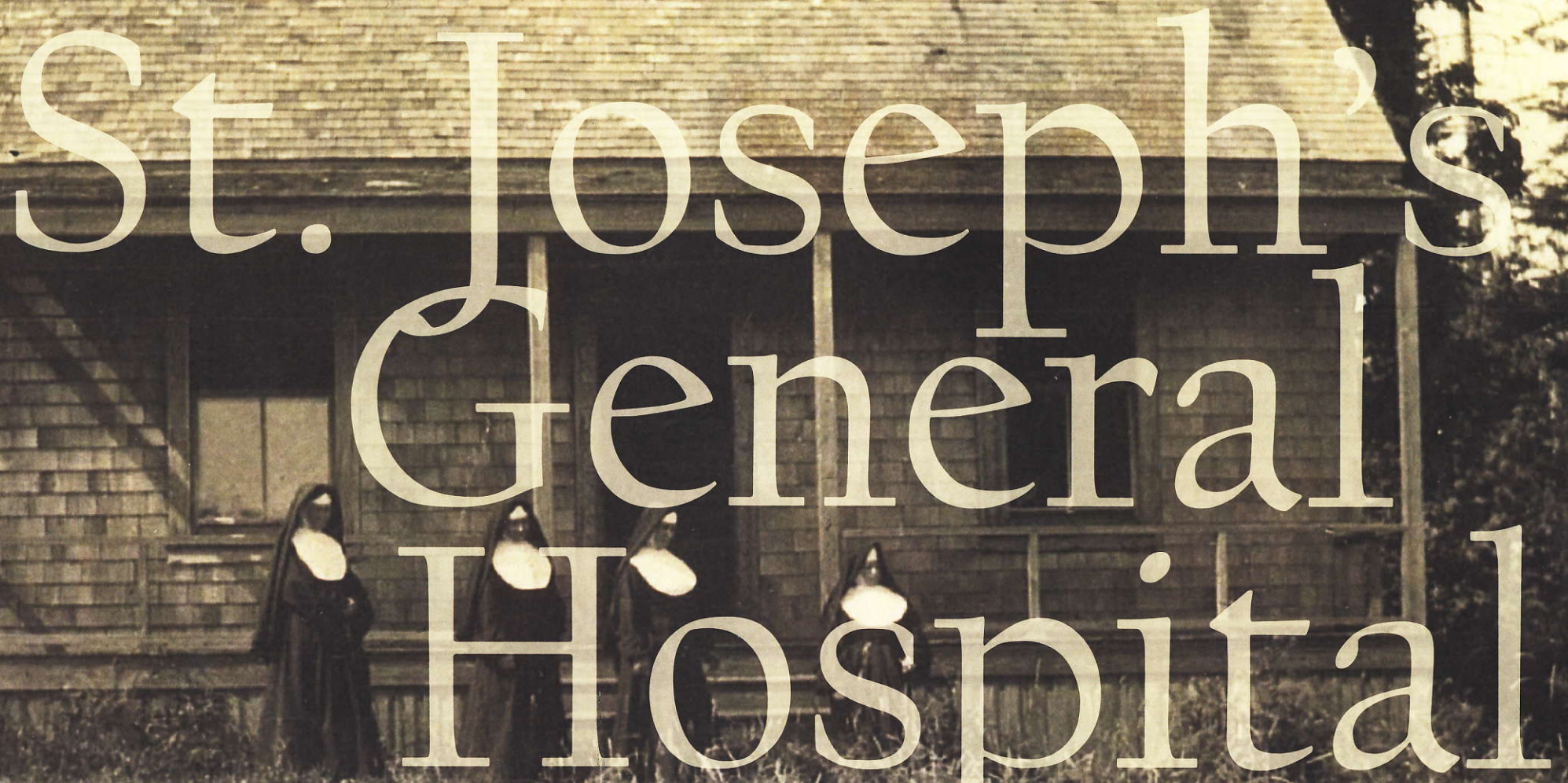
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**St. Joseph's General Hospital, Comox, BC**  
**Care with Compassion: 100 Years of Service**  
**2013**

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Comox, British Columbia

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# St. Joseph's General Hospital

**CARE WITH COMPASSION**

**100 years of service**

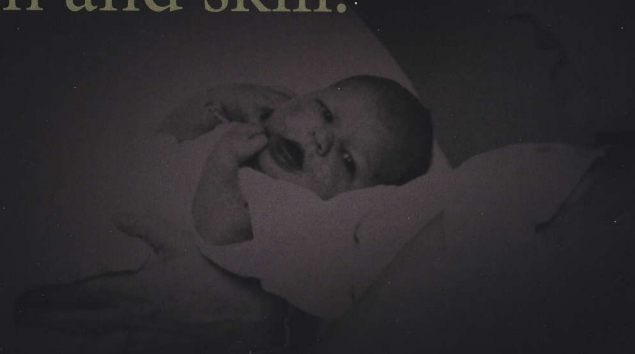
This book is dedicated to all those who have been part of St. Joseph's General Hospital and supported its mission for the past 100 years. It is the commitment and engagement of many generations of individuals, groups and organizations that has built and continues to support St. Joseph's in its work.

"Most important is to acknowledge and thank the patients and residents who have entrusted their care to St. Joseph's over the decades. It is a privilege to be of service. It is the support and engagement of our staff, physicians, volunteers and community that has made it possible for St. Joseph's to provide the care that it has over the years." – Jane Murphy

*COVER IMAGE First Cottage Hospital (1913)*



Our vision is to become ever more able  
to serve the needs of the community with care,  
compassion and skill.



# Preface

This book is a pictorial essay of St. Joseph's General Hospital, and was created as part of its 2013 Centennial Celebration. The pages that follow provide a glimpse into the rich history of our hospital, and highlight some of the people and events that shaped 100 years of service and commitment to providing "Care with Compassion" to the Comox Valley.

We are grateful to all those who created and preserved the wonderful visual and textual records of St. Joseph's General Hospital. The photographs, transcripts, publications, and other archival records were an invaluable resource as we pieced together the history of St. Joseph's. Special thanks go to Mary Lee, our Centennial Coordinator and Lynn Dashkewytch of St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation, for gathering source material, identifying and collaborating with the contributors, and for writing and editing the text and captions as needed to help bring this book to completion.

A huge thank-you goes to Kay Butka and Pam Mountain of The Comox Archives and Museum Society for creating a "100 Years of Service, St. Joseph's General Hospital" Powerpoint Presentation (2013), which largely formed the basis of this book. Contributions were also made by: Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto Archives – Linda Wicks; St. Joseph's Hospital Archives – Tess Dennis; Father Redican; the Union Bay Historical Society; and Karen McKinnon Photography who provided the Caring Spirit photos. Our thanks also go to Judy Hagen for her stories of the history of St. Joseph's that appeared in her column in the Comox Valley Echo and for sharing her many years of experience, knowledge and understanding of local historical events. We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing assistance of the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation and the Hospital Auxiliary for their help in funding this centennial publication.

Thanks also go to individual writers for contributing materials, photographs and stories and for assisting with proofreading and editing: Pat Brandon, Dona Cameron, Brian Ducred, Pat Fish, Eric Macdonald, Jane Murphy, Michael Pontus and Kaylene Simmons. We thank Blackberry Creative – Po Wan and Sandy Robson – for the design and format of this book, for diligently working alongside all of the contributors, and for creating many new digital image files for our historical records. This book was an important undertaking and their wise counsel, ideas, contributions, and professionalism were greatly appreciated.

While we have done our best to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this book, we have relied upon numerous sources for that content, and we apologize if we have neglected to mention, have incorrectly named, or falsely attributed statements or information to individuals, organizations and historical events within the pages of this publication.



For the past 100 years, St. Joseph's General Hospital has proudly served the communities of the Comox Valley. In 1913 when the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto responded to the call to care for the sick and injured in the Comox Valley, they began a tradition of serving by invitation. When the Sisters established the hospital, their first mission in western Canada, they were continuing a tradition of serving that dates back to the founding of their order.

Since that time, St. Joseph's General Hospital has evolved to meet the needs of a growing population in the Comox Valley and surrounding area, focusing on providing outstanding care and service to all those who enter its doors. In 1989, after many decades of service the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto turned ownership of the hospital over to the Bishop of Victoria, and the Sisters withdrew from the ministry in 1992. Today, St. Joseph's General Hospital is owned and governed by the Diocese of Victoria and is an affiliate of the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

Since its beginning, St. Joseph's has maintained the philosophy of providing excellence in care while meeting the needs and valuing the dignity of every person. Our legacy is rich and builds on the example of service established by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto and the Catholic health care tradition. Today, St. Joseph's General Hospital upholds the tradition of community service set by the Sisters of St. Joseph and furthers their legacy of providing "Care with Compassion."

*RIGHT* The four founding Sisters and a friend in tall ferns near the first hospital: Majella, St. Edmund, Claudia, and Praxedes. Sister Majella, a 46-year old

*music teacher, became the first Superior Administrator. Sister Claudia, was a nurse, and Sisters St. Edmund and Praxedes assisted and taught Catechism classes (photo: 1913).*



*LEFT* Bishop Alexander MacDonald, Bishop of Victoria 1909 – 1923

*ABOVE* Original cottage: first hospital and home of the four founding Sisters

# Early Days

In 1913, James D. McCormack, a lumber mogul and head of Comox Logging Company, recognized the need for a hospital in the Comox Valley to provide healthcare to workers in the logging industry. He appealed to his friend, Archbishop McNeil, newly appointed to the Archdiocese of Toronto, who, in turn, lobbied Rev. Mother Irene of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Toronto, requesting them to send some Sisters to establish a hospital in the area. They finally agreed and Sisters Majella, St. Edmund, Claudia, and Praxedes left from Toronto on June 29, 1913. The Sisters stopped briefly in Vancouver where they visited St. Ann's Convent, and were hosted by Mrs. McCormack and Miss Laura Lavery. They then sailed aboard the SS *Charmer* to Union Bay, finally arriving at the dock in Comox to be greeted by the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Downey.

Bishop Alexander MacDonald (Bishop of Victoria from 1909 to 1923 and head administrator of the hospital) had agreed to give the Sisters land at the top of Siwash (Comox) Hill where the

Catholic Church was situated. The Church had purchased a five-acre plot of land from Mr. Patrick Murphy, whose cottage was to become the hospital and first home of the four founding Sisters in 1913.

July 5, 1913 was to be the Sisters first night in the Comox Valley but the Sisters learned that news of their arrival date had not preceded them, so their cottage had not been prepared. After spending their first night with the Downey's, the Sisters were offered an interim home in the house of Father Mertins while he stayed nearby in a tent. They were to spend much of their first summer scrubbing floors, painting and papering walls, and—led by Sister Majella who it seems had considerable carpentry skills—making their own furniture as well as an altar for the chapel.

The land where the first “cottage hospital” was situated and the seaward property where the current hospital now stands is within the traditional territory of the K'omoks First Nation.



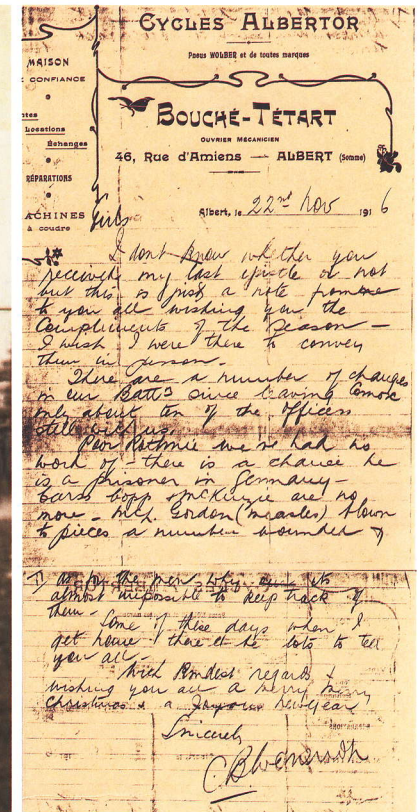


*THIS PAGE* Sisters Majella and Claudia with a crew of men at the hospital site. Harry Vogal, standing with his team of horses, and his uncle Tom Hudson, holding the reins of his horse and ox team, were frequent volunteers.

*FACING LEFT* 102nd Battalion marching through Comox (c. 1915)

*FACING* Correspondence from the battlefields

# The Great War



In November 1915, the 102nd Battalion came to Comox – 1,200 soldiers in total – for training prior to being deployed overseas. Colonel Warden arranged with the Sisters to provide care for any sick men. During a measles outbreak in January 1916, soldiers who contracted the illness were cared for and quarantined in a woodshed at the farmhouse. In return, two men from the battalion were sent each day to the hospital to help clear land until the battalion shipped out on June 10, 1916.

By August of that year, the men had taken part in the Battle of the Somme. “Warden’s Warriors,” as they were known, served with distinction and great sacrifice taking part in the attack at Vimy Ridge in 1917, and playing a major role in the 100 Days Campaign that ultimately ended the First World War.

“There are a number of changes in our Battn (sp.). Since leaving Comox only about ten of the officers still with us.

As for the men, why it’s almost impossible to keep track of them.”

[excerpt of a letter from the French battlefield, November 22, 1916]

CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT

*The Democrat buggy was the mode of transportation used by the Sisters. (c. 1913)*

*Sister coming out of chicken coop – 200 chickens were raised at one time.*

*A vegetable garden in front of the 1915 wing and 1923 addition (much of the money for the addition raised by the Women's Auxiliary)*

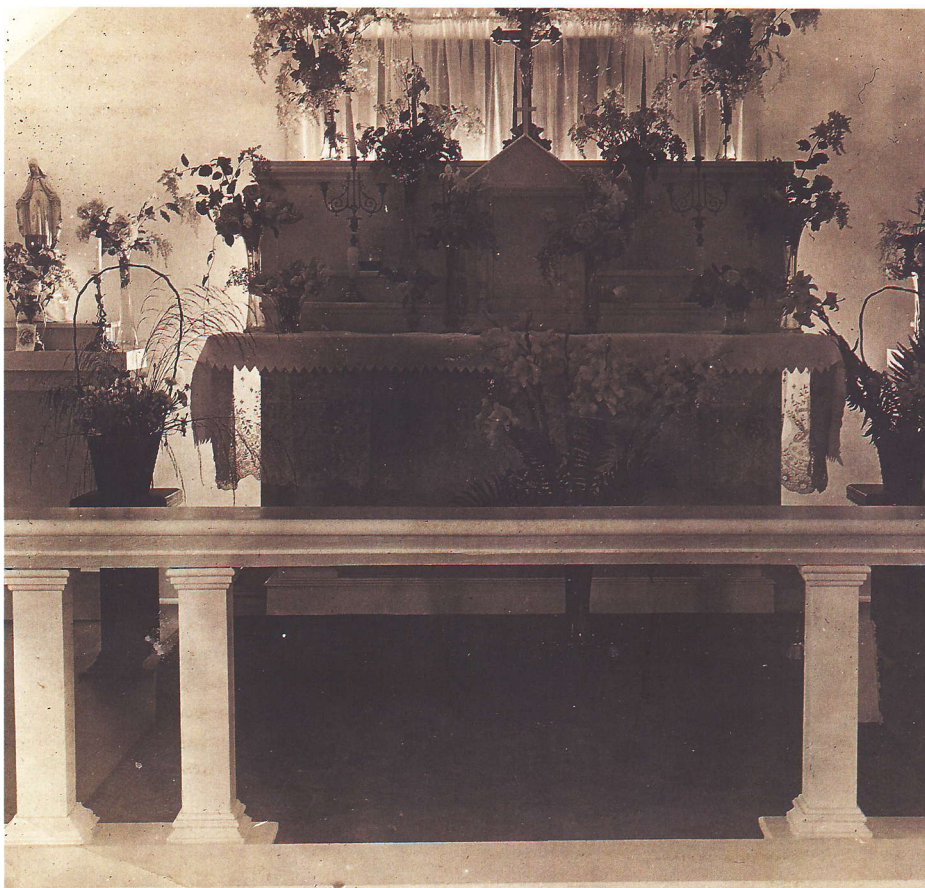
*In 1929, the first ambulance was purchased with funds raised by the Women's Auxiliary and used for the first time on the 1st of March. Sadly, in 1932 a fire broke out in Simms Garage in Courtenay where it was kept and the ambulance was destroyed. It was never replaced.*

FACING FROM TOP

*First reception room in original farmhouse hospital*

*Chapel and altar of first hospital*





# A Busy Ministry Ushers in Exciting Hospital *Firsts* 🌿

The day-to-day work undertaken by the Sisters was considerable for their ministry involved more than the running of a hospital. They were concerned with the physical, spiritual and general welfare of the community. They had a diverse set of skills that they added to over the years in order to fulfill their mission to serve and did everything from tending to the sick and administering The Sacraments to conducting summer Catechism classes and teaching the piano to local children.

Physical work took up much of the day as the Sisters collected berries, gathered bottles for jellies and jams, raised chickens, grew their own vegetables, and looked after general repairs and upkeep, often hammering a nail or two as required. As improvements were made to the hospital and some of the burden of this work was lifted, more time was made available for tending to the needs of their patients and community. Electricity came to Courtenay in 1920 and Mrs. Fletcher, the first President and founder of the Women's Auxiliary, was instrumental in ensuring this provision was brought to the hospital thereby replacing the Sisters' kerosene lamps with light bulbs. In 1926, "the day of the well and old oaken bucket passed out of existence" to be replaced by the luxury of piped water. Other notable improvements included an electric sterilizer, stove and washing machine.



*LEFT* At center is the wing built in 1923, later to be renovated and clad in brick.

*INSET* Original wing built in 1923

*BOTTOM LEFT* The original cottage

*CENTER* Eight-room farmhouse

*RIGHT* Further expansion would see the eight-room farmhouse incorporated into the 1915, 25-bed hospital.





# Leadership

Leadership roles have been taken on by many individuals throughout the history of St. Joseph's, from Sr. Majella, first Sister Superior of the hospital to James Carthew, founder and Chairman of the first hospital Board of Management in 1924. This first board was made up of active community members and officials – much as it is today – and included Mr. J.M. Mitchell, Secretary; Mr. R.J. Filberg, Mayor of Courtenay; and a government representative. Through the years, many others have stepped forward. Henry E. Schellinck 1965–84, William (Bill) H. Vincent 1985–89, Joseph (Bud) R. Faubert 1990–92, Jim Landry 1992–95, Pat Brandon 1995–2001, Ron Philip 2002–2012 and Jim Bennett 2013, have each in turn taken the helm as hospital board Chair. Physicians and members of the medical staff have also stepped forward with expert guidance to serve as board members and have been instrumental in shaping and enhancing the level of care and services provided to patients.

*ABOVE Hospital Board (1956) front row Dr. Theal, R.J. Filberg, J.M. Mitchell, Geof Browning, Jack Carthew; back row Drs. Briggs, Coleman, Miller, Williams, Mooney, Cobb & Lunam*



*RIGHT James Carthew, Chairman – first hospital Board of Management*

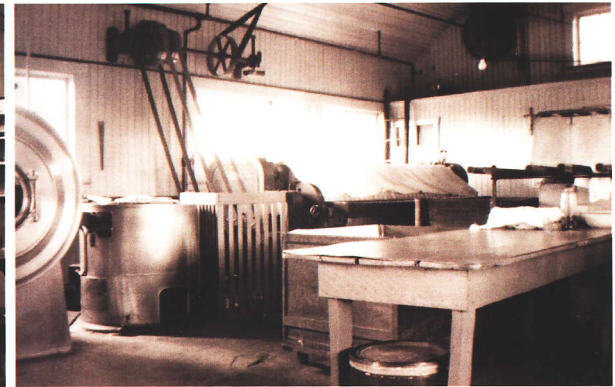
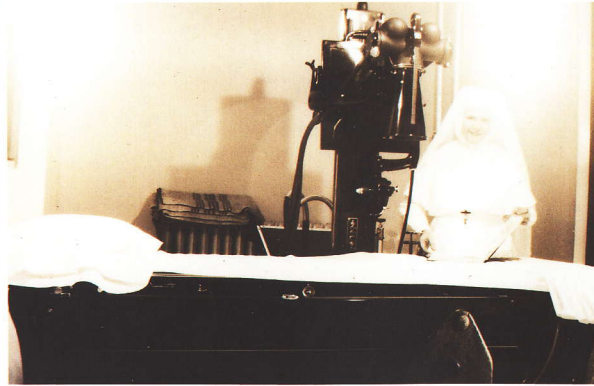
*BOTTOM Signing of affiliation agreement with the Health Authority (2004)*



In 1913, along with the fledgling community, St. Joseph's four founding Sisters planted a tiny seed of faith by caring for the sick. From this act of faith and service eventually came an Acute Care Hospital that with the approval of Medicare in the 1960s grew still larger, led by the Board, the Sisters and management within the framework of the Canada Health Act. In 1989, the Sisters transferred ownership of the Hospital to the Diocese of Victoria and with the advent of regionalization in 1995, the hospital developed a new model of affiliation with the government. A denominational master agreement was signed in 1995 by 32 faith-based providers of healthcare in BC.

# Early Changes to Technology & Facilities

As the Comox Valley population has grown so has the need for more advanced and improved health care services. In 1923, an addition to the hospital was completed and expanded its capacity to 35 beds. By the next decade, a third floor was added to this wing and a new three-storey building of brick construction (which still stands today) was also completed by 1938, bringing the bed count to 68 including 11 bassinets. New x-ray equipment arrived in 1942 and new radiology equipment went into service in 1949.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

*Radiology equipment (1953)*

*An autoclave which was used to sterilize the equipment and tools for surgery*

*The Laundry (1958)*

*Hospital Kitchen (1952)*

*"New cafeteria" in the lower level of the 1938 wing*



FROM TOP

*At the beach*

*Farewell reception  
for Sr. Teresa Marie  
and Sr. Theophane*



# A Popular Retreat

Word of the Comox Valley spread throughout the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph and many Sisters arrived from across Canada on retreat. While taking part in prayer, study and reflection, the natural beauty and serenity of the area provided inspiration for those visiting. Members of the community would often open their homes to the visiting Sisters. A new "cottage" was built in 1959 as a Sisters Retreat and was situated on the hill atop the hospital grounds overlooking the beach. In 1989, the retreat cottage became the Women's Auxiliary Thrift Shop and began providing a source of revenue for the hospital much as it continues to do today.



TOP ROW (l to r)

*Hospital Farmer (1940s  
& 50s), Albert Bessette*

*Former cook, Mr. Foy  
(1945)*

*Women's Auxiliary  
Garden Party (1965)*

*RIGHT A Women's  
Auxiliary Garden  
Party (1948). In the  
background is the  
kitchen (center) and  
1923 wing (left);  
photo taken from the  
the seaward side of the  
hospital.*





FROM FAR LEFT (l to r)

*For 25 years, a standing order for a box of Rogers' Chocolates was delivered to the Sisters at the hospital once a week, courtesy of Mr. Filberg.*

*Henry "Hank" and Tucky Schellink*

*Sister Teresa and Mary Campbell, one of many devoted hospital volunteers. Mary donated her time to the hospital until her passing in 1995.*

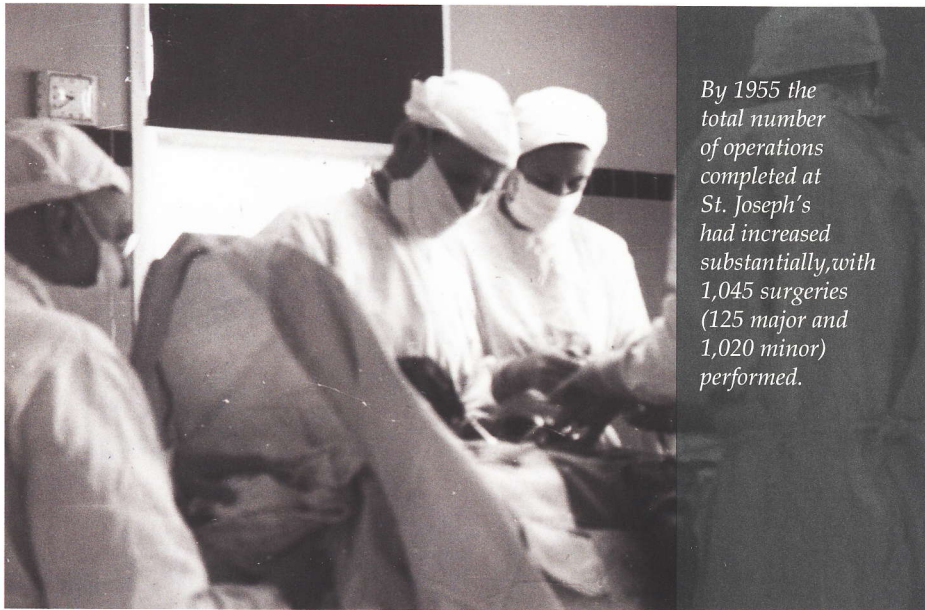
## Helping Hands

Since 1913, the greater community has responded *in kind* to the care and service given by the Sisters of St. Joseph's. When the Sisters first arrived, it was the wives of loggers in the area who introduced them to life in the Comox Valley. These women assisted with laundry, food preparation and even cleaned rooms. Local fishermen delivered some of their catch each Friday. Noted businessman and philanthropist Robert Filberg arranged for a box of Rogers' Chocolates to be delivered to the Sisters every week for more than 25 years. Henry "Hank" and Tucky Schellink, were known for a "Friendly Visitors" program delivering care packages and Christmas hampers to staff, patients and residents throughout the hospital for over 35 years.

A Women's Auxiliary was formed in 1914 and was presided over by Mrs. William Fletcher. This group was devoted to fundraising and hosted annual garden parties, bazaars, and Strawberry Teas, selling baked goods and crafts. The monies raised were donated to hospital projects, large and small.



*Kay Slater and Muriel  
Dann with Mrs. Zarechi  
and babe (c. 1965)*



By 1955 the total number of operations completed at St. Joseph's had increased substantially, with 1,045 surgeries (125 major and 1,020 minor) performed.

### **Patients treated**

1913: 7  
1934: 427  
1955: 2509  
2012–2013: 130,000 annually

### **Babies delivered**

1913: 1  
1934: 54  
1955: 360  
2013: 730



# Patient Care

Before the Sisters arrived, limited medical services existed in the area, and were available only in Cumberland. At the time babies were delivered at home by midwives. And “home” included the Lorne Hotel where many loggers and their families resided. At the end of the Second World War, St. Joseph's – by then a well-established hospital – would enable the Comox Valley, along with the rest of Canada, to cope with a post-war *baby boom*. During this period, the number of registered births in the area jumped astonishingly from 54 in 1934 to 360 in 1955.

Today, one hundred years after it first opened, almost 130,000 patients come through the doors of St. Joseph's annually, and they are served by a medical staff of 150 physicians, including 53 general practitioners and 65 specialists. These physicians and staff from a variety of clinical and non-clinical disciplines and professions come together as a team to meet the needs of patients and residents. There are also four midwives in addition to the 1,080 employees including 314 registered nursing staff, 166 paramedical staff, 564 medical diagnostic and support staff, and 34 administrative staff. To complement the services provided by staff and physicians there is an army of approximately 1,000 dedicated volunteers who collectively donate more than 63,500 hours of their time to St. Joseph's every year.



**SOUVENIR**  
OF THE  
**OFFICIAL OPENING**  
OF  
**St. Joseph's General Hospital**  
**Comox, B.C.**

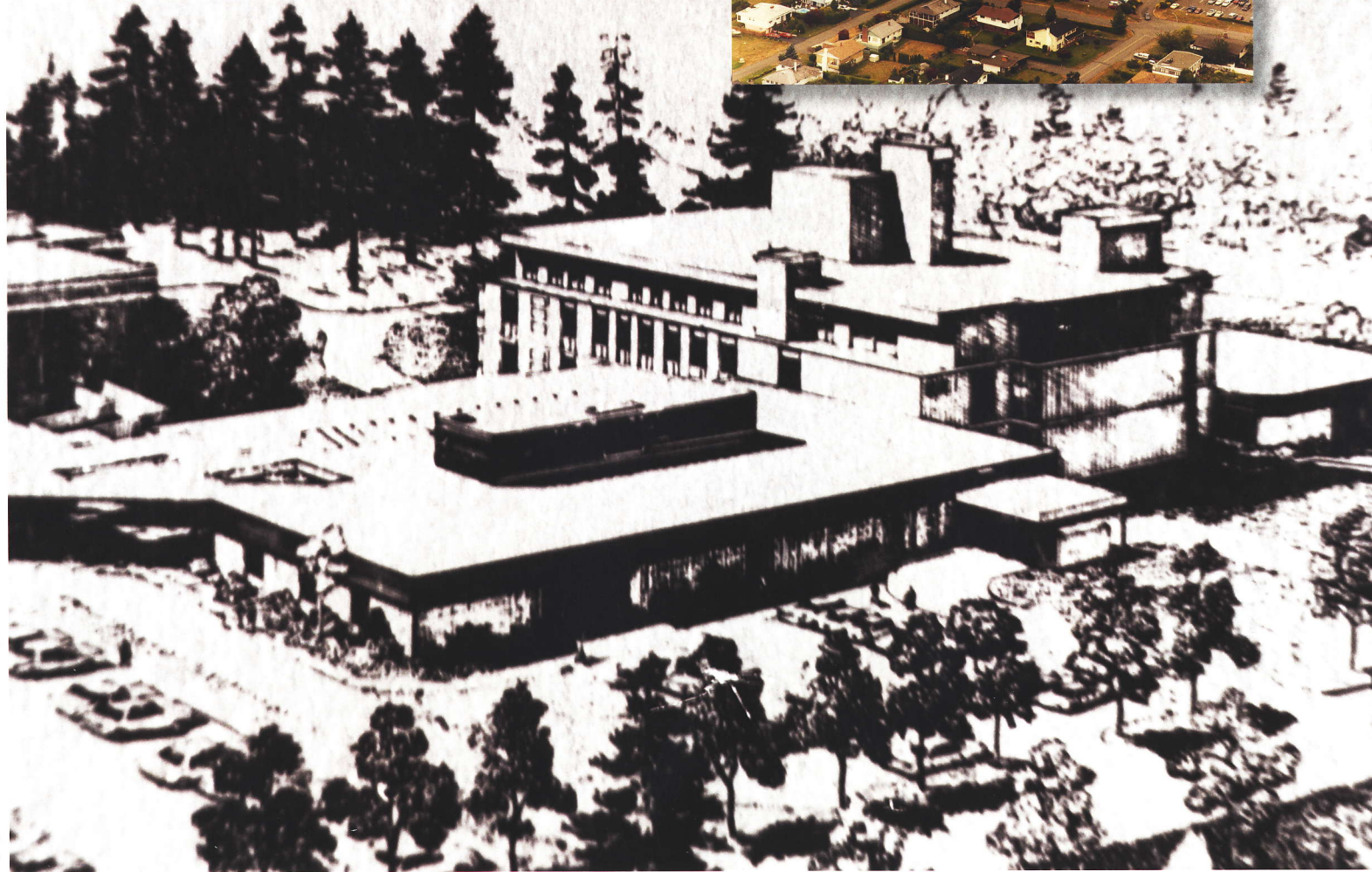
*Saturday, June 17, 1967*

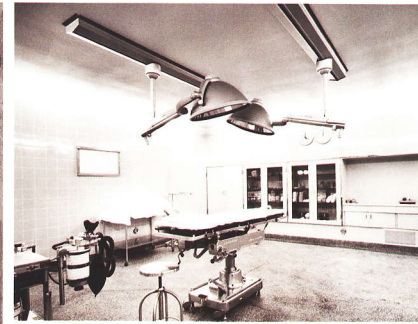
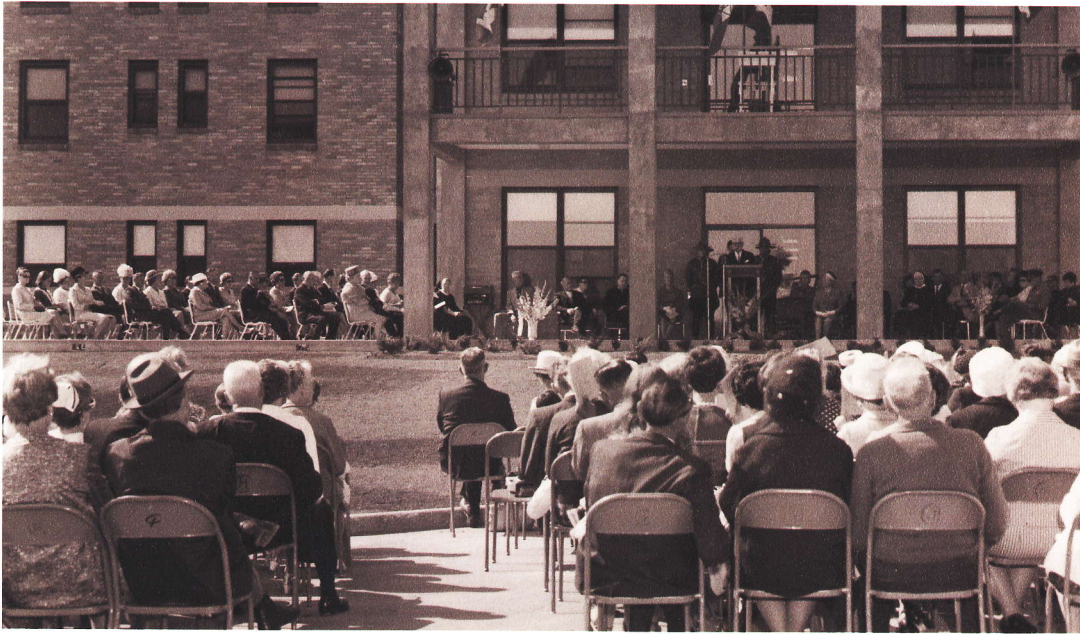
*TOP Demolishing  
original farmhouse  
hospital wing*

*ABOVE Souvenir  
Program*

*RIGHT Architectural  
rendering depicting  
the hospital grounds  
following the major  
construction of 1967*

*INSET Aerial photo  
of St. Joseph's (c.1990)*





CLOCKWISE  
FROM FAR LEFT

Opening Ceremonies were held in September 1968 for the hospital's first Extended Care Unit located in the renovated 1938 wing. Also in 1968, St. Joseph's became a regional general hospital.

New operating room (c. 1970)

Psychiatry Unit (1973)

1967 Acute Care building

# Exciting Developments

An influx of residents to the Comox Valley had strained the facilities once again by the 50s and 60s and brought further expansion. Construction of a new acute care building, designed to house 75 beds, began in 1965; the wing built in 1938 was renovated to become an Extended Care Unit (ECU); and the older original buildings were demolished.

The "new" St. Joseph's General Hospital opened June 17, 1967. Henry Schellink,

then Chairman of the Board (a position he held for nearly 25 years) and Robert Filberg, a long time board member, addressed the several hundred people who turned out to witness the grand opening. Bishop Remi De Roo Bishop of the Victoria Diocese dedicated the building and the keys to the new facility were presented to Sister Matilda, the hospital's administrator.



# Nursing

While the Sisters continued to participate in and deliver vital health care services until the administrative transfer of the hospital to the Diocese of Victoria in 1989, by the 1950s, nursing had become one of the leading professions available to women and Registered Nurses (RNs) were steadily increasing in number on the hospital staff.

Throughout the decades, changes in the nursing profession and the rest of society can be readily seen in nursing attire. Nurses were wearing their classic starch-white nursing caps and uniforms into the early 1980s. Over the years these were replaced by uniforms of varying colours and patterns. Roles, duties and dress have changed but nurses have remained central to the care giving services provided by St. Joseph's, which continues to serve as a training hospital for men and women entering the nursing profession.





**THIS PAGE**

*LEFT Evelyn Forbes and Ruth Gibson during a mock disaster (1984)*

*BELOW Candy Stripers (c. 1970). This service began at St. Joseph's through the Women's Auxiliary in 1968 and has expanded to become a Youth Volunteer Program today.*

**FACING PAGE**

*TOP Janice McCusker (child) with Sisters Theophane and Theresa Marie (c. 1930)*

*BOTTOM LEFT Nurses Station (1982)*

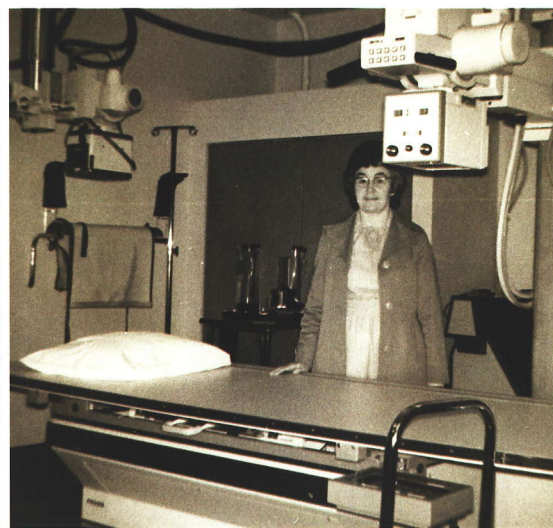
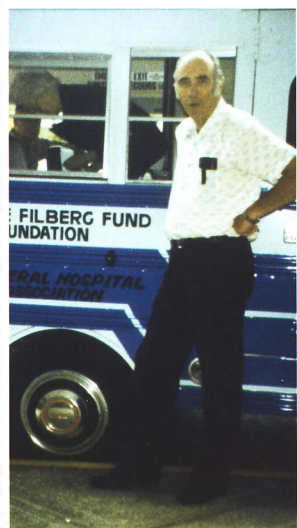
*BOTTOM RIGHT Nursing (2011)*





# The 80s

The 1980s saw additional growth and expansion at St. Joseph's, as new facilities and equipment kept pace with the growing needs of the community. In 1982, the lobby was redesigned, laboratory facilities were improved and a residential care addition, was built. St. Joseph's ability to keep up with expanding and changing health care needs of the community has been augmented by generous donations and countless hours of support from community partners and individuals.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

ECU under construction. Completed ECU. Radiology (1980). Bus donated by the Filberg Foundation, Vancouver Foundation & Employees Association. Mac McNeil, driver and long-time employee of 41 years stands in front of the vehicle (1985). Mac is but one of the many service employees who have made significant contributions to the hospital throughout the years. Ultra Sound. New Laboratory (1982).

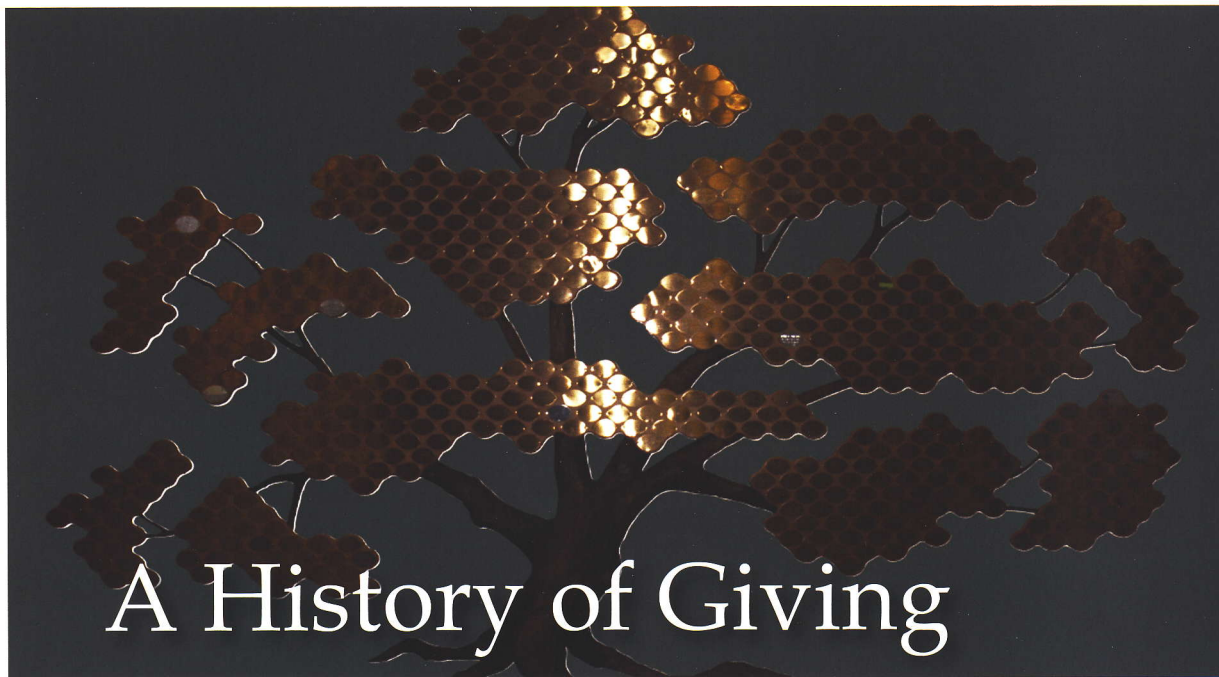


# Emergency

St. Joseph's received victims from a 1984 accident in which a bus full of students from Victoria crashed on its descent from a ski trip. Four students were airlifted to Victoria by personnel from Canadian Forces Base, Comox. The Women's Auxiliary had raised funds to have a helicopter landing pad built on hospital grounds allowing patients to be directly flown in and out of the hospital for emergency care.



*A 442 Squadron Search and Rescue helicopter stationed at CFB Comox sits on the helicopter pad in front of the Emergency Department (1972).*



Giving has always been central to success at St. Joseph's. From the four founding Sisters themselves to the community they served, this history of giving includes generations of donors who have made generous contributions of time, money and services. In 1988, to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the hospital, a Tree of Life was created. Designed by Comox Valley artist David Blamire, it was donated by the Diocese and blessed by Bishop Remi De Roo at the unveiling. The Tree of Life continues to honour donors who contribute \$1,000 or more to the St. Joseph's General Hospital Foundation. The Foundation was established in 1993 and with a Board of Directors made up of 11 volunteers from the community and two staff, its mission is to raise funds to sustain and enhance quality healthcare at St. Joseph's. The 2013 Board Chair is Patti Fletcher.



## Pastoral Care –

tends to the spiritual needs of patients and their families as well as hospital staff. Physical and emotional care has always been a part of St. Joseph's Hospital and continues to this day. The Pastoral Care department plays an important role in organizing and providing these services.

*"Our distinctive vocation in Christian healthcare is not so much to heal better or more efficiently than anyone else; it is to bring comfort to people by giving them an experience that will strengthen their confidence in life. The ultimate goal of our care is to give those who are ill, through our care, a reason to hope."*

- Joseph Cardinal Bernadin



## Sister Pat Macaulay Mission Award

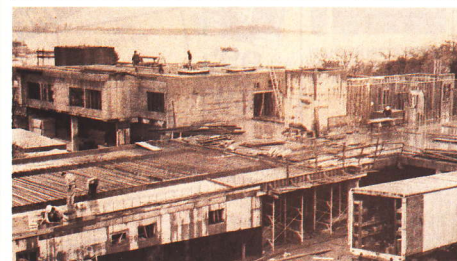
This annual award recognizes individuals – volunteers, physicians and staff – who blend respect for human dignity with their excellent professional skills as they serve those who seek medical care at St. Joseph’s. The Sisters of St. Joseph have touched countless hearts within our community over the past 100 years. Sister Patricia Macaulay who served two terms at St. Joseph’s: 1978–1989 and 1999–2002, established the Pastoral Care Department and is warmly remembered to this day by many who knew her. A service award was established in her name to recognize staff, physicians and volunteers who embody the St. Joseph’s tradition of “care with compassion.”

*ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT 2013 recipients of the Sister Pat Macaulay Mission Award  
Sister Pat Macaulay (c. 2000)*

*Artist Bunny Reimer’s sketch depicting the growth of St. Joseph’s Hospital was unveiled in 1993 in celebration of the hospital’s 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is a collage of the many buildings that have been part of St. Joseph’s over its 100-year history.*

*BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT Extensive renovations made to kitchen, new cafeteria, staff lounge & conference rooms (1994); Medical Daycare added; Surgical Daycare renovated (1995)*

*New Ambulatory Care Unit (1997)*



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT

Most Reverend Richard Gagnon, Bishop of Victoria with the 2004 recipients of the Long Service Award at the annual ceremony and tea that recognizes hospital staff for their dedicated service

Rehabilitation Services—As Bruce Sanson recovers from knee surgery, he builds mobility and strength on a Nu-Step Bike with Lyne LHeureux, St. Joseph's Rehabilitation Coordinator.

First group of physicians and staff recognized with the Caring Spirit award

Glen Scott, nurse at St. Joseph's and a Caring Spirit recipient. The Caring Spirit program allows patients, family members and friends to express their gratitude to the people that were there when they needed it most. Since the program started in 2010, 132 staff and physicians have been recognized as "Caring Spirits."



In the gospel of Luke, Jesus described the Kingdom of Heaven like a tiny mustard seed from which sprouts a large and flourishing tree. In 1913, along with a small fledging community, the first four Sisters of St. Joseph planted a tiny seed of faith by caring for the sick and from this act of faith and service eventually came an Acute Care Hospital.



*ABOVE Melissa King (left) Instructor with Excel College demonstrating a proper lifting technique with Views resident Norma McLeod. The student Care Aide is Mildred Wong.*

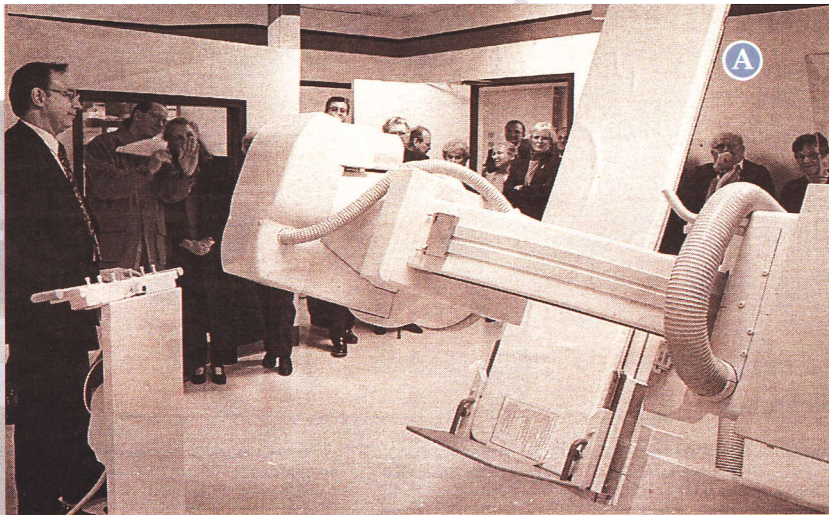
# A Pioneering Spirit of Innovation

St. Joseph's has always had an innovative and pioneering spirit rooted in the healthcare values of stewardship and creativity. In the early 1990s rapid population growth in the Comox Valley was accompanied by abundant talent but scarce capital resources, so St. Joseph's seized every opportunity to improve quality of care while maintaining growth through innovation.

St. Joseph's became the first BC hospital to install an overhead lifting system in all resident rooms for patients unable to bear their own weight. It was also first to make its own oxygen and in doing so, created a reliable supply for patients while saving on costs. Programs and clinical pathways developed for medical daycare, surgical outreach, and hip & knee replacements helped conserve valuable inpatient resources, reducing the length of hospital stays and decreasing surgery wait times. St. Joseph's became a provincial leader in the development of electronic reporting, voice recognition and digital storage systems that allow information to flow quickly between medical departments, staff and physicians. And in 2012, the Transitional Care Unit Project team received a BC Healthcare award of merit for top innovation affiliate. The team created a new unit to provide patients who no longer required hospitalization with an alternate level of care (ALC) more appropriate to their needs.

These and many other innovations that continue to be explored despite limited resources have been fostered by an organization-wide creative attitude and a desire to serve, combined with the gifts and dedication of a talented staff.

# New Technology & Community Support



**A** In 1999, a \$1 million investment in Digital Imaging equipment was made through the generous financial contributions of the community. The Ministry of Health provided \$453,000 in funding, while the Regional District added another \$302,000. St. Joseph's General Hospital Foundation contributed \$203,000, and the Strathcona Sunrise Rotary Club added \$31,000 to the cause along with many other community members and organizations.

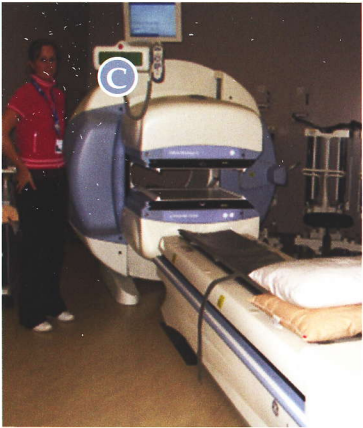


ABOVE President & CEO, St. Joseph's General Hospital (1990 - July 2011)

**B** A decade-long struggle to bring the CT scanner to St. Joseph's came to a happy ending in June 2001. The \$1.3 million x-ray equipment was unveiled before a crowd of many grateful community leaders and crusaders including Pat Brandon, former Hospital Board Chair and Stan Hagen, then Comox Valley MLA. Its arrival marked a "quantum leap" giving a "much better and complete diagnosis" in healthcare, stated Michael Pontus, then hospital CEO. Dr. Bob Clarke was one of the key individuals who "tirelessly spearheaded the community push" to raise funds and advocate for its arrival (*Comox Valley Echo*).

*BACKGROUND IMAGE (THIS PAGE) Nuclear Medicine facility under construction*

*BACKGROUND IMAGE (OPPOSITE) In December 2006, all operating rooms were re-fitted with new, cooler, long lasting LED lights that, according to Michael Pontus, would eliminate shadows and be a "real bonus" for surgeons. St. Joseph's was the first hospital in North America to acquire this latest configuration of lights supplied by German manufacturer TRUMP Medizen Systeme who used our hospital as a demonstration site and thus lowered St. Joseph's lighting costs below that of other hospitals.*



**C** In October 2006, a new Nuclear Medicine Suite opened named in dedication to the late Ian Anquish, a VIHA staff member instrumental in working on the site. The \$1.36 million unit, which includes a gamma camera and non-diagnostic CT scanner is the only one of its kind to be installed in Western Canada and was funded by VIHA, Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District and private donations.

**D** *Physical Activation and Recreation Centre (PARC) 2011*, is an addition onto the existing Eagleview residence. This new space includes a gym area with equipment and space to carry out group exercise classes, and one-to-one therapies. It is also being used for family gatherings and big screen presentations. All funding came from businesses, service clubs, personal donations, grants, and community fundraising efforts.

**E** St. Joseph's General Hospital became the only hospital on Vancouver Island to treat benign enlargement of the prostate with *GreenLight Laser Therapy* (2011). Prior to this, the condition was treated with *traditional* surgery followed by an average hospital stay of two to four days. Due to the non-invasive nature of *GreenLight Laser* surgery the length of stay has been reduced to one day. The new procedure is simple, effective and reduces risk to patients. It may also help to shorten surgical wait lists and reduce demand on acute care beds. St. Joseph's General Hospital Foundation partnered with service clubs, men's groups and individuals to raise the \$195,000 needed to acquire the technology.





**F** The annual *Scrubs* event is an example of how the staff and community work with the Foundation to raise funds. This event supports the Maternal Child Unit and Y.A.N.A. (You are not alone).

**G** Another of the many events that the staff supports is the Annual Head Shaving fundraiser for Cancer Care. Since 2007, St. Joseph's staff and the community have come together every summer for the event and have raised an astounding \$79,000 to date.



**H** RBC Royal Bank, Quality Foods, Crown Isle, 97.3 Eagle FM, Dundee Wealth Management, WestJet, local businesses, hospital staff and members of the community have been playing golf to help support St. Joseph's Hospital. More than \$454,500 has been raised over the past 23 years to help enhance equipment in various departments.

“Our community has always displayed an amazing spirit of generosity; together we have been able to raise the funds needed to help sustain and enhance quality healthcare for our families and friends.”

—Lynn Dashkewytch, Executive Director of St. Joseph's General Hospital Foundation



**I** *The Cancer Care Unit (2007)* This unit provides a bright new space equipped with a patient education centre, two examination rooms, telehealth, patient & staff washrooms and a restful outdoor deck.

**J** *Comprehensive Breast Care Health (2013)* This program is part of a greater vision of changing the way women



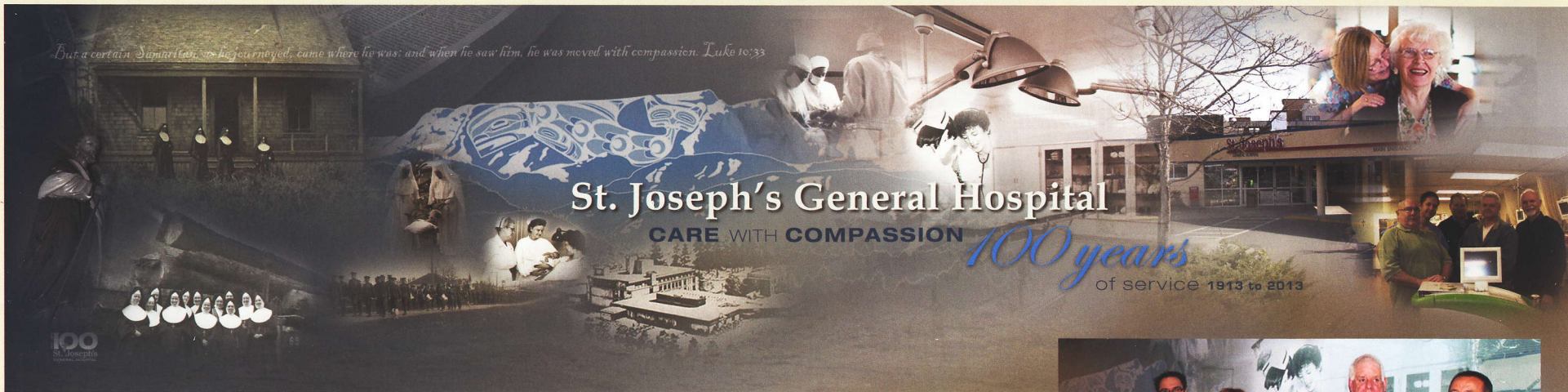
with breast problems experience care. From screening and diagnosis to biopsy and post-procedural support, this model helps accelerate access to expert care. Funds for this new high-tech equipment, renovations and educational enhancements came from an anonymous donation to the hospital by a family in the Comox Valley who saw a need to enhance breast care and education.



**K** The North Island's new mobile Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) unit officially opened its doors in Comox in November 2012. The unit will cycle between Port Alberni, Campbell River, Duncan and St. Joseph's, staying for one to two weeks at each site before moving on. Until now, patients requiring MRIs have had to travel to Nanaimo or Victoria for the diagnostic test.

*RIGHT First Responders pictured with St. Joseph's General Hospital Cardiac Care Team (2012). This care team and many medical professionals put new technology and equipment purchased for the hospital to good use every day.*





# Celebrating the Past Turning to the Future

As we look back over our past 100 years of service to the Comox Valley, there is much to be proud of. Today we turn to the future, where the master plan for healthcare in our region includes the transition of acute care services to the Comox Valley Hospital, currently under construction and scheduled to open in 2017. With the endorsement of Bishop Richard Gagnon, Diocese of Victoria, owner of St. Joseph's, and with the continued invitation of the community, St. Joseph's is excited to pursue its future role in continuing to provide healthcare related services, with a focus on seniors' care to the community for many years to come.



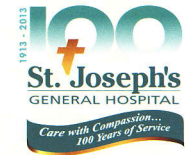
*TOP* A Commemorative mural depicting the hospital throughout its 100-year history was unveiled on February 22, 2013 during a ceremony that officially opened the Centennial Celebrations.

*ABOVE* (l to r) Father Marek Paczka representing the Diocese of Victoria, Jim Bennett-St. Joseph's General Hospital Board Chair, Jane Murphy-St. Joseph's General Hospital President and CEO, Christy Clark-BC Premier, Don McRae-Comox Valley MLA, and children of hospital staff. Photo courtesy of the Comox Valley Record (CVR).



To honour our legacy and to acknowledge the community for entrusting its care to St. Joseph's for the past 100 years, a healing garden is being built on the hospital grounds. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Beaufort Range and Comox Bay, this healing garden will incorporate the tranquility and beauty of our region – a special place that amidst the challenges involved with healthcare, will provide the comfort of nature and quiet reflection.

This project will be funded by proceeds from the St. Joseph's Charity Golf Classic and the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation Legacy Years "100 Years, 1000 Stories" donations.



*Archival sources for this publication include: Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto Annals (photo albums and other collections); a 1999 presentation to C.H.A. BC by Sister Anne Purcell; the St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary collection; St. Joseph's General Hospital website; St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation website; and display boards created for the 75th Anniversary.*

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St. Joseph's

GENERAL HOSPITAL

MAIN ENTRANCE

THIS DOOR  
CLOSED  
PLEASE USE  
ENTRANCE  
IMMEDIATELY  
TO THE RIGHT

DOOR  
CLOSED  
PLEASE USE  
OTHER  
ENTRANCE