

## From the Editor

# A *festschrift* for Major General John Pearn, AM, RFD

I HAVE CHOSEN TO DEDICATE THIS ISSUE of *ADF Health* to the recently retired Surgeon General, Major General John Pearn. A *festschrift* is a collection of distinguished writings published in honour of a scholar (*fest* — celebration, *schrift* — writing), and I hope that the broad range of articles in this issue of the Journal may be taken as a proper tribute to John Pearn's wideranging achievements.

The Australian Defence Force is particularly sensitive to the correct recording of its illustrious history, paying homage to brave men and women who have served their country and recognising those members with distinctive and notable attributes. Major General John Pearn is most certainly one of these distinguished soldiers.

Major General Pearn commenced his military career in 1965 as a medical officer attached to 1 Casualty Clearing Station, Brisbane. He completed 36 years of continuous and distinguished service on 31 December 2000 as the inaugural Reserve Surgeon General ADF.

During his time of service, Major General Pearn has served with NATO forces in north Germany, the 4th Guided Weapons Regiment, Royal Artillery (including training in the Norwegian Arctic) and with the 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment in the UK, where he gained his parachute brevet. Later he served as the commanding officer of 2 Field Hospital. He saw active service with the Pacific Islands Regiment, Vietnam, and was part of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda. He was awarded the Reserve Forces Decoration in 1984 and thereafter was awarded three clasps.

A medical career devoted to teaching, research and clinical work in paediatrics and genetics was justly rewarded in 1979 when he was created a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to medicine. In 1986 he was appointed Professor of Child Health at the University of Queensland. In 1996 he was appointed the Deputy Head (Student Affairs) in the university's developing graduate school of medicine.

Major General Pearn's publications embrace an astonishingly wide range of topics: clinical and scientific research; public health; modern, military and ancient history; herbicide toxicology; marine life and ciguatera poisoning; herpetology; coin, medal and stamp collecting. By 1998 he had published 56 books on subjects covering a vast spectrum of scholarly interest, the lasting legacy of his enthusiasm and endless curiosity for the world around him.

Major General Pearn has pursued an abiding interest in St John Ambulance Australia. His work in this excellent organisation began three years after he joined the RAAMC, and

he has performed splendid service throughout the gamut of appointments, from the junior post of divisional surgeon through to National Director of Training, St John Ambulance Australia. For his dedicated service, the Dignity of Knighthood within the Order of St John was bestowed on him in 1995.

There would be few members of the Defence Health Service who have not met or contacted their former chief. Major General Pearn's works in representing Defence Health are extensive and have embraced every State and Territory of the Common-

wealth, South East Asia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. He initiated and keenly assisted the development of this new Journal. His imprimatur has been applied to all the advances within the Defence Health Service over the past two and a half years, and this is recognised by all.

The Australian Defence Force acknowledges Major General John Pearn as a distinguished soldier, scholar, Samaritan and clinician, and gratefully recognises all his initiatives, contributions and dedicated service to the Defence Health Service.

**Air Vice-Marshal Bruce Short**  
Editor *ADF Health*  
The Surgeon General ADF



Major General John Pearn with a sick child in the United Nations Military Hospital, Dili, East Timor.