Lest we forget.....

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“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”—George Santayana

In the frantic pace of progress we are apt to forget what and who helped us reach where we are today. Cardiac surgery has evolved at a blinding pace in the last few decades, even in emerging economies like ours. Trainee cardiac surgeons today have access to better facilities, latest technology, exhaustive academic resources and better financial conditions. But how many of today’s young surgeons know what our past was—who were our pioneer surgeons and which were the great institutions that helped train our founding fathers and laid the foundations upon which we so proudly and sometimes arrogantly stand.

If our students today are ignorant of our past it is our fault for not making them aware of it. The era of great teaching institutions is gradually disintegrating. The practice of medicine is witnessing a sea change. The rapid expansion of private healthcare and the progressive decline of our public institutions has impacted the way young surgeons

today are trained in our specialty. Few are aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by our founding fathers when they struggled to perform cardiac surgery in the sixties and seventies. More importantly we need to remember the institutions that supported them and which in turn they turned into Meccas of learning.

Starting from this issue we will look at the great institutions that pioneered our specialty. Each article has been invited from a senior surgeon who has at some time or the other been associated with the institution and is likely to have a deep understanding of the history of the institution. This issue carries a write-up on the Department of Cardio-thoracic Surgery of the Christian Medical College, Vellore that was in many ways the birthplace of cardiothoracic surgery in our country. Dr. Muralidharan very kindly consented to work on the write-up and has come out with an elegant presentation on this great institution. Many have provided inputs and I would like to thank them for the same. I hope our members enjoy reading this and send in their comments and suggestions for future articles.

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