

mecwacare

WINTER 2024

matters

Celebrating stories

**The magic
of music**

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**65 years since
nursing school**

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vindicated**

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IN THIS *Issue*

This edition of *mecwacare Matters* is all about celebrating.

Celebrate the wonders of music and the mind with Sandra at Park Hill, learn about positive changes to palliative care in Australia, and read about O'Mara House's Mother's Day Market.

Enjoy the showcase that was our 2024 Volunteer Appreciation Event during National Volunteer Week and catch up with the John Atchison Centre team during their Open Day.

We celebrate the life of Lady Norma Trescowthick, who sadly passed in March at the age of 93, while reflecting fondly on the memories of the Hawthorn op shop as the doors are closed forever.

On International Nurses Day 2024, we travel back 65 years to the same day in 1959 as we learn about the beautiful friendship between former nurses Barb 'Lil' and Mary.

We head further back in time with Nellie and Ron, whose love story began in the late 1930s, then jump back to 2024 where the couple now reside at *mecwacare's* Park Hill, and enjoy the creativity and passion in 'These Wrinkled Hands' by George Kyriacou, inspired by the Trescowthick Centre's *These Hands* exhibition.

We hope you stay warm this winter, and enjoy this edition's stories. Until next time!

LETTER TO THE *Editor*

Do you have any suggestions, questions or story ideas for *mecwacare Matters*? Feel free to reach out via email at fundraising@mecwacare.org.au or on 03 8573 4812.

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ON THE COVER

The vibrant smile of the Malvern Centre's Mary Adamson greets readers in this edition. See page 14.



Travelling back in time through *music therapy*

Sandra, a resident of mecwacare's Park Hill aged care facility in Mornington, has a high degree of cognitive impairment due to dementia.

Sandra, now 83 years old, resides in the memory support unit of the facility, and often struggles with remembering names and recalling things from her short-term memory.

However, when Sandra picks up her flute, her much-loved days of music come straight back to her. Having started learning to play the flute at age 12, Sandra often played alongside her mother, who was an excellent piano player. The only two in a family of four to play musical instruments, Sandra's mother encouraged her often to play and was very proud of her daughter's musical inclination.

Today it provides the ability for Sandra to express creativity, connect with friends, family, and staff, and allows her to enjoy a pastime from her youth.

Sandra's husband David explains that she travelled around the country competing in competitions with her flute and with a variety of different orchestras and choirs. She was also regularly featured on the radio and recently played alongside the Chelsea Orchestra.

Music therapy, as we can see within Sandra's wonderful example, is a fantastic and rewarding way for people with dementia and other cognitive impairments to reminisce in a manner that would otherwise be very difficult.

Aside from enjoying the beautiful sounds and feelings that come with it, there are many other benefits to music therapy. Engaging in active music therapy – that is, playing instruments, dancing, or singing, it provides a channel with which regular communication just cannot compete.

Residents with reduced cognitive capacity can relive the soundtrack to their lives, invoking

a positive feeling of memory and nostalgia. Though there is currently no cure for dementia, music therapy can dramatically improve people's quality of life. Boosting mood through the brain's production of endorphins, stabilising the immune system, relieving reducing stress, agitation, isolation and anxiety.

Physical changes can even come about by playing and listening to music, with recorded benefits including reduced levels of pain, improving respiratory health, and releasing tension in the body.

Staff and fellow residents at Park Hill love listening to Sandra play, and she is encouraged to practice and further enjoy her flute playing.

Everyone benefits from playing and listening to music, whether they are young or old.



Industry News

MECWACARE MATTERS
WINTER EDITION



National Palliative Care Week (NPCW) ran from Sunday the 19th of May to Saturday the 25th of May 2024, and was aimed at deepening people's understanding of palliative care and encouraging action around end-of-life planning and care.

Facilitated by Palliative Care Australia (PCA), the national peak advocacy body for palliative care, this year's campaign follows the success of National Palliative Care Week 2023, which reached more than 2.13 million Australians, and revealed some surprising statistics.

The recent National Palliative Care Community Survey, conducted by PCA, showed that while 90 percent of Australians agree that end-of-life planning is important, only 40 percent of the population has acted on their own preparation.

Camilla Rowland, CEO of Palliative Care Australia, explains that as our country's population ages and levels of chronic disease rise, the demand for palliative care also increases.

"Our research points to a 50 percent surge in demand over this decade, doubling by 2050... [underscoring] the urgent need for us to proactively address the growing needs of Australians," Ms Rowland says.

Early access to palliative care can help you manage the pain and symptoms of a life-limiting diagnosis, maintaining your quality of life.

PCA has long advocated for a national standard of palliative care practice to be implemented nationwide through legislation.

The federal government's new Aged Care Act aims to 'put the rights and needs of older people at the centre,' and is expected to be brought to Parliament later in 2024.



To find out more about palliative care visit
www.palliativecare.org.au



The new Aged Care Act will replace current legislation and address 33 recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

The federal government invited submissions and consultations from stakeholders, including aged care providers, clients, and bodies such as PCA. This consultation on the Act ended in March of 2024.

PCA's submission to the new Aged Care Act's Exposure Draft included the following priorities:

The need for definitions of and opportunities to improve wording used to describe palliative and end-of-life care.

The practical implications of the proposed age-based eligibility criteria for people under 65 with life-limiting illnesses who enter aged care because there are no appropriate non-clinical supports available in other settings.

The potentially complex interactions between the new approach to supported decision making, and

existing state and territory legislation.

PCA also welcomes the Act's inclusion of a right to equitable access to palliative and end-of-life care when required for all people seeking or using Commonwealth-funded aged care. It is also pushing for a compulsory palliative care assessment upon entry into aged care residences.

Planning for the end of your life can also reduce stress and worry you may feel by ensuring that your care has been prepared for and your wishes are implemented.

National Palliative Care Week 2024 aims to confront fears surrounding the end stages of a life-limiting illness, empowering people to have greater control over their own life and death.

National Palliative Care Week is just a small glimpse into the vital work that PCA is conducting to educate, empower, and provide access to palliative care as a human right.

To find out more about palliative care visit www.palliativecare.org.au.

Farewell to our Hawthorn *Op Shop*

Ever since mecwacare acquired the Hawthorn op shop in 2016, it has been a place for people to make friends, enjoy a chat, shop for amazing items, and support their community.

However, after thorough consideration and review, it was decided that the current retail space does not enable mecwacare to serve the community in the best way possible. Thus, the decision was made to permanently close the current Hawthorn op shop while the hunt begins for a new retail space. The location or timeframe of the new shop is not yet known.

The contributions of volunteers and staff at the Hawthorn op shop over the past eight years has been truly priceless. Staff, volunteers, clients, and strangers visited the store in its final week before closure, bidding goodbye to the store and snapping up as many last-minute bargains as possible.

The shop's last day of operation was Friday the 31st of May. mecwacare is deeply grateful for the dedication and efforts that all those involved with the Hawthorn op shop have displayed over the past years.



Open Day delights at the John Atchison Centre

On Saturday the 11th of May, the mecwacare John Atchison Centre in Hoppers Crossing threw open its doors for an engaging and informative open day, inviting the local community to explore the services offered.

The event provided a perfect blend of hospitality, entertainment, and education, giving visitors a comprehensive insight into the aged care and retirement living options available at the centre.

The day started on a warm note, as guests were welcomed with a coffee from the onsite coffee van and a delicious sausage from the barbecue. This set the tone of the day, encouraging mingling and conversation among visitors and staff.

After enjoying their refreshments, attendees were invited indoors for a guided tour of the John Atchison Centre. The tour showcased the state-of-

the-art facilities, highlighting the comfortable and well-appointed living spaces designed to provide the highest quality of life for residents.

Live music added a festive vibe to the event. The lively tunes created a cheerful and welcoming atmosphere that was enjoyed by all.

The centre's experienced admissions staff were on hand throughout the day, ready to answer any questions visitors had about transitioning into aged care. They provided reassurance and clarity to visitors, emphasising the supportive and caring environment for which mecwacare is known.



Private tours are available now.

For all the latest information visit www.mecwacare.org.au or phone **03 8015 2888**.





Vale Lady Norma Margaret Trescowthick

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Lady Norma Margaret Trescowthick. Lady Trescowthick passed away on the 16th of March, 2024, at the age of 93.

She is survived by her husband of 72 years, Sir Donald Trescowthick, her children Mark, Andrew (dec), Susanmary, Adam, and Caroline, her grandchildren Nicholas, Dominie, Alice, Oliver, Fletcher, Hennie and Mac, and her great-grandchildren Reece and Rylee.

Lady Trescowthick's legacy extends far beyond her family, as her benevolent spirit touched the lives of countless members of the community.

In 1994 under the guidance of Aged Care Victoria, the Prahran Council began plans for a 50-bed aged care facility, to be constructed on a former State Electricity Commission site at Charles and Greville Streets in Prahran.

Lady Norma and Sir Donald helped to bring this new facility to life. Their tireless philanthropy, including a significant donation of \$500,000, ensured the community's dream came true.

Designed by architects Thomas Adsett and Partners, with 21st century features to support the elderly in a more modern and efficient way, construction of the centre began in late 1996 and was completed less than two years later.

The aptly named Trescowthick Centre was opened on February 27, 1998, and continues to be a popular and much-loved facility today. Lady Norma and Sir Donald's generosity has had a huge impact on mecwacare's aged care residents, past, present, and future.

Photos: Opposite: Susan and Santosh in the display suite. Top: John Atchison Centre team and residents, and Admissions team. Bottom: Chamandeep, Bibian, Eleanor, Siona, Susan, and Christopher.

Staff from mecwacare's retirement living and home care teams were available to showcase the centre's retirement living units. They provided information about the independent living options and home care services, highlighting the amenities available to meet the diverse needs of the elderly community.

"We are delighted with the turnout," said Santosh Kumari, Facility Manager at mecwacare John Atchison Centre.

"Our goal was to open our doors and hearts to show what makes our centre special. We're proud to offer such a warm, supportive environment and we hope today's event helped to highlight that."

The open day proved to be a resounding success, and providing invaluable information to those exploring aged care and retirement living. The centre looks forward to welcoming new residents and serving the community with excellence and compassion.

mecwacare honours *volunteers* with Appreciation Morning Tea

In celebration of National Volunteer Week, which ran from Monday the 20th to Sunday the 26th of May, mecwacare hosted a heartfelt Volunteer Appreciation Morning Tea at the prestigious Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club on Tuesday the 21st of May.

Acknowledging the vital contributions of volunteers, who form an impressive 20 percent of the organisation's workforce, more than 190 dedicated individuals attended the event and enjoyed a morning of delicious food, camaraderie, and recognition.

The morning tea featured an array of savory delights, including sandwiches and sausage rolls, followed by an assortment of sweet treats and homemade scones. The event was masterfully hosted by Rob Guest, Executive General Manager – People, Culture, and Safety, who kept the attendees engaged and informed.

mecwacare CEO Anne McCormack delivered a special address, extending her gratitude to all volunteers for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions across all areas of the business. Her heartfelt thanks set the tone for the morning, highlighting the significant impact volunteers have on the organisation's ability to deliver exceptional care and support to the community.

One of the highlights of the event was the announcement of the Volunteer of the Year Awards. There were several winners for each of the three categories, which were New Volunteer of the Year, ACVVS Volunteer of the Year, and overall Volunteer of the Year.

Service Awards were also presented to volunteers who had dedicated 10, 15, 20, 25 and 40 milestone years of service to mecwacare. They

were honoured with beautiful glass trophies, celebrating their long term commitment and dedication.

Adding to the excitement was the raffle held, with all attendees receiving complimentary entries. The prizes, generously sponsored by various businesses, included:

1st prize: One night for two at an RACV Club Resort with breakfast, sponsored by LeasePLUS.

2nd prize: A week-long experience with a BYD Atto3 electric car, valued at \$716, sponsored by Eagers Automotive.

3rd prize: A House of Orange gift voucher worth \$150, sponsored by House of Orange.

4th prize: A chocolate hamper valued at \$69, sponsored by Sweet As.

5th prize: A floristry gift voucher worth \$60, sponsored by Flos Forum.

6th prize: A delightful hamper valued at \$59, sponsored by Hampers with Bite.

7th prize: A bottle of Moet, sponsored by Julianne Neilson.

Photos: *Top right: Katarzyna Brzostek and David Stevens. Middle left: Lucie Claisse-Garrett, Julianne Neilson and Sami Robinson. Middle right: Linda Smart and Barry Fenton. Bottom left: Gaye Sheppard and guide dog Frank. Bottom right: Sonia Goubran and Francis Lee.*



Thank you to our wonderful volunteers

The morning tea not only provided an opportunity to celebrate and thank the volunteers but also to foster a sense of community and appreciation among the attendees. The event underscored the essential role that volunteers play at mecwacare and the profound impact of their dedication on the lives of those they assist.

“We are immensely grateful to our volunteers for their generosity and commitment,” said CEO Anne McCormack.

“Their selfless service is the backbone of our organization, and this morning tea is a small token of our appreciation for their invaluable contributions.”

The Volunteer Appreciation Morning Tea at Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club was a resounding success, leaving attendees feeling valued and inspired.

mecwacare looks forward to continuing to honour and support its volunteers, who are crucial in fulfilling our mission to provide exceptional care and services to the community.

Top left: Anne McCormack, mecwacare CEO and Barry Fenton. Middle left: Linda Smart and Geoffrey Wenham. Middle right: Michelle Smith and Jacinta Rochecouste. Bottom left: Jackie O'Donnell and Eda Vistac. Bottom right: Samuel Sharma, Gaye Sheppard and Debbie Bryant.

Congratulations

Volunteer Award Winners and Service Award recipients

10 years of Volunteer Service:

Tony Browne, Windsor op shop
Susan Buda, Windsor op shop

15 years of Volunteer Service:

Margaret Bell, Elstof House
Jenny Pickering, Rivendell House

20 years of Volunteer Service:

Claire Gregory, Noel Miller Centre

25 years of Volunteer Service:

Peter Vawdon, Rivendell House

40 years of Volunteer Service:

Barry Fenton, Barry Fenton Centre

New Volunteer of the Year:

Brady Massari
Stacey McKercher

Aged Care Volunteer Visitor's Scheme (ACVVS) Volunteer of the Year:

Eda Vistac

Volunteer of the Year:

Geoff Wenham, Fisher Street Centre
Melissa Doyle, Malvern op shop
Debbie Bryant, Pascoe Vale Gardens Retirement Village, Squires Place, John Atchison Centre

Meals on Wheels Volunteer of the Year:

Rob Blanco



Interested in volunteering?

To become a volunteer, visit www.mecwacare.org.au or phone **03 8573 4962**.





“Their selfless service is the backbone of our organization, and this morning tea is a small token of our appreciation for their invaluable contributions.”

Anne McCormack





Magic at the O'Mara House *Mother's Day* Market

The atmosphere was festive and the community spirit palpable as mecwacare O'Mara House hosted its annual Mother's Day Market on Sunday the 5th of May, drawing families and friends for a day of fun and philanthropy.

Located at the not-for-profit residential aged care facility in Traralgon, the event successfully raised \$1800, with all profits donated to the Traralgon Country Fire Authority (CFA).

Designed to entertain, entice, energize, and engage all members of the family, the market featured a diverse array of attractions and activities that ensured a memorable day for attendees of all ages.

Coffee aficionados enjoyed brews from the onsite coffee van, while the artistically inclined indulged in face painting and browsed the craft stall.

Sweet treats were abundant, with stalls offering a delectable selection of baked goods, ice cream, and fairy floss. The garden and plants appealed to green thumbs, while the trash and treasure stall provided a trove of bargains for savvy shoppers.

For those looking for unique and personalized gifts, the cards and art stall showcased local talent. Fun and games were plentiful, with giant games and a popcorn machine adding to the lively atmosphere. An onsite DJ kept the energy high with a mix of tunes that had both kids and adults dancing.



Photos: O'Mara House Mother's Day Market, Traralgon.

A community raffle added an extra layer of excitement, with lucky winners taking home a variety of prizes generously donated by local businesses. The funds raised will significantly aid the Traralgon SES and CFA in their critical operations, ensuring they can continue to protect and serve the community.

“We are thrilled with the turnout and the generosity of our community,” said Dayolen Kistnen, Facility Manager at mecwacare O'Mara House.

“This event was not just about celebrating Mother's Day but also about giving back to the local heroes of the SES and CFA. We're grateful to everyone who participated and made this day such a success.”

On Wednesday the 29th of May, the O'Mara House team welcomed members of the CFA for high tea, where the firefighters were presented with a cheque for \$2000; \$300 of which was a donation from O'Mara House staff.

The Mother's Day Market at mecwacare O'Mara House has proven to be a highlight of the local calendar. We eagerly look forward to next year's event, promising to be even bigger and better.

“This event was not just about celebrating Mother's Day but also about giving back to the local heroes of the SES and CFA. We're grateful to everyone who participated and made this day such a success.”





Photo: Mary and Lil, Malvern Centre

International *Nurses Day*

On Sunday the 12th of May, we celebrated International Nurses Day. mecwacare's 548 nurses care for an amazing 20,000 clients each week.

The enthusiasm, effort and kindness nurses at mecwacare and around Australia is deeply valued, and their sacrifices aren't overlooked. On behalf of mecwacare, we warmly thank all the nurses out there and express our most sincere appreciation for everything they do.

To celebrate International Nurses Day, we spoke with Mary and Barb, former nurses, and current residents of mecwacare's Malvern Centre. Mary Adamson and Barb 'Lil' Cooper first met in 1956.

Mary, born and raised in Hobart, Tasmania, was 17 years old. After finishing school, like many others, Mary was unsure of her future career path. Feeling panicked, Mary decided on nursing. She moved to Melbourne after her father secured her a spot in the Alfred Hospital's competitive nursing program.

Having never lived out of the family home before, let alone an entire state away from them, Mary felt somewhat overwhelmed.

Luckily, a young lady called Lil was starting the nursing program alongside Mary. The same age as Mary, Lil had grown up around the inner eastern suburbs of Melbourne - Kew, Balwyn, and Camberwell.

In those days, the pair explained, nurses lived in shared accommodation very close to the hospital to ensure easy access to their charges. Lil and Mary were assigned to share a room together, thus beginning their long-enduring friendship.

Six months into their three year course, the girls were exposed to one very raw reality of the job.

“One day, we were taken into the wards to see what a bedsore was,” Mary explained, as she patted Lil’s knee while the two women smiled at each other.

“Do you remember that day, Barb? The poor man had a festering wound full of gauze that the matron pulled out like a ribbon,” she chuckled.

“We just about had to leave the room. We were distressed and thought, ‘oh no, this job isn’t for us,’ but we kept going.”

Lil and Mary laugh as they reflect on some pivotal moments in their early lives as nurses. The girls were paid three pounds per week for their work, in addition to receiving free onsite housing. In a group alongside Mary and Lil were more of their nurse friends. Now, almost 70 years later, they still enjoy yearly reunions.

Shortly after completing their course and while working as a nurse, Lil met her future husband, Barry. The couple were married shortly after, welcoming two sons and a daughter together.

Having left her nursing role, Lil helped care for others in a different way - by opening a women’s fashion store, Eva’s, on Glenferrie Road in Malvern. Having only sold the shop in the 2000s, Lil spent decades pouring her heart and soul into Eva’s, and her children look back on it fondly.

“We used to get the tram from school and stop in at the shop on the way,” smiled Gus, one of Lil’s sons.

The shop was more kind to Lil, who had polio as a child and experiences the aftereffects to this day. Lil helped women to feel confident, equipped, and secure in themselves and their identities through her fashion at Eva’s.

Mary married husband Mick aged around 26, and the pair moved to London, where Mary worked as a district nurse, personal carer, and nanny.

Mary also worked as a nurse in Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong. Despite a few somewhat stressful experiences, including a pirate waving a dagger under the door of her room, as the only female onboard a cargo ship to Hong Kong, Mary enjoyed her adventures.

Despite the different roads they took, the friends kept in touch throughout the years before being reunited at mecwacare’s Malvern Centre. It is at this residential aged care facility where Mary’s daughter-in-law, Bec, is also a much-loved team member.

Lil now faces some speech challenges, but Mary knows just what she means, and Lil will always reach out to grab Mary when they meet. Despite this boundary, the women are as close as ever, nearly 70 years after first becoming friends.

“My favourite thing about our friendship is that we understand each other,” Mary grinned.

As two young women in a big new world, Lil and Mary clung to each other as trainee nurses. They forged a timeless friendship in the face of fear, uncertainty, and ghastly bedsores. These nurse friends will undoubtedly be part of each other’s lives forever.

Mary and Lil shared many adventures during their nursing days.



International Nurses Day 1959.

Nellie and Ron

Born in London during the Great Depression in April 1930, Nellie is one of eight children. Her father, a chimney sweep, struggled to care for his children following the passing of their mother when Nellie was very young.

The kids were placed in a care home in London until 1939 when World War II broke out, and London was being bombed in air raids. The children in Nellie's care home were transported to the English countryside in Maidenhead and placed with foster parents.

Nellie's foster mother had a physical disability which caused difficulties with her mobility. This meant that Nellie had to help with the cooking and cleaning a lot more than was usual for the time. Later in life, Nellie would become an excellent cook, and she believes that it was during this time that she began nurturing her skills.

Also in 1930, though in August, Ronald was born to his parents Ron and Rose. Ronald recalls fond memories of his childhood home in Maidenhead and reminisces on being able to see Windsor Castle from the road near the house. Ron used to hide under the kitchen table amid active bombings during the war, and he would often hear German planes flying overhead as he left school in the afternoons.

Ron left school at the age of 14 and became a carpenter with the help of his parents. He and his father would work long and hard to repair damage done to buildings from bombings. Living and working around Maidenhead, it wasn't long until Nellie and Ronald crossed paths.

Both aged 14, Ron received a framed photo of Nellie from a mutual friend who had gifted it on her behalf, along with a written message in which Nellie professed her love for Ron. This was the beginning of a timeless, nurturing relationship that would endure for nearly 80 years.

Four years later, aged 18, Ron was called up to serve in the army. During this time, Ron carried Nellie's photo and a lock of her hair with him everywhere he went. Ronald attended 10 weeks of training close to Stonehenge, before he was advised that his company would be sent to Africa. However, due to his ability to play the flute, Ron was placed in the army band allowing him to stay in England and see Nellie on some weekends.

Despite the distance, the couple's fondness for each other never faded. After two years in the army, Ron returned home in 1950. There, at All Saints Church, the two were married and became Ron and Nellie Roadnight.

Sometime after their wedding, Nellie and Ron moved to Australia. The couple initially stayed





A life well lived, and a great love that endures through hardships.

Nellie and Ron



with Nellie's uncle Jack in Somers before spending 10 years living around Mount Eliza, Somerville and Mornington. During this time Nellie and Ron became the proud and loving parents of five children: Ronald, Steve, Tina, Paul, and Tara.

After 10 years in Australia, Nellie moved back to the United Kingdom where she stayed for 18 years. She owned a hotel called the Wyhn Bay Hotel on the coast of North Devon, cooking the meals for each of the hotel's 22 rooms. Following the sale of the hotel, Nellie purchased the Rock Inn Pub in North Devon, living and working there for around five years, cooking all meals at the hotel.

Meanwhile, Ron was running his successful building business and renovating a farmhouse with son Steve. After many years in England, Nellie returned to Australia again to live with Ron and the family in Dromana for around five years. There, the couple ran a large commercial egg farm, until selling it when they became ready to retire.

Upon their retirement, Ron and Nellie settled at the Mornington Retirement Village. Ron enjoyed creating scale models, carved by hand, and carefully painted. Nellie enjoyed dances, music,

ball games, bowls, and other active games. She was also a fan of crocheting, making baby clothes and blankets in her knitting circle at the village.

Now, both aged 93, Ron and Nellie live at mecwacare's Park Hill residential aged care facility, next to their old home at the Mornington Retirement Village. Despite living in separate rooms and experiencing age-related issues, Ron and Nellie know they are a special couple.

"I like to see Ron every day," Nellie said. "I know I am very lucky to have him."

"I am so happy being with Nellie and spending this time with her," Ron said.



These *Wrinkled* Hands

(Abridged Version) – by George Kyriakou

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR GRANDPA,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU."

Colourful ribbons, streamers and floating helium balloons filled the Jackson house.

Oliver had 10 balloons last birthday. Grandpa Stan had one very large cake, reading 'Congratulations on your 90th.'

"Why can't Grandpa have 90 candles?"

"The cake won't hold that many," said Mum. "The chocolate is too sticky."

"And I haven't got enough puff," smiled Grandpa.

"Nine candles. Each one representing 10 years," Oliver nodded.

"What will you do next year for your 91st birthday?"

"Not sure," said Grandpa. "I can't even remember how many I had last year."

Since my grandmother had died, he had begun to forget more.

Mum brought out an old-fashioned black and white photo.

"Grandpa, this was you at Oliver's age. Both of you had similar hair."

"Really?" Grandpa laughed and his wrinkled hand touched his bald head.

Oliver smiled too. But then Grandpa's attention faded.

Oliver stared at his grandfather's weathered, skinny, wrinkled hands. The blue veins, carrying

blood to his frail body, were bulging. His hands were folded in his lap.

He didn't seem to be able to concentrate on anything for long. Oliver wondered if one day, when he was old, he would be the same.

"Grandpa, can I visit you next week? To have a talk with you? I'm doing a school project about old people," said Oliver.

"Visit me?" Grandfather asked. "I never have visitors."

Mum looked sad. "I visit you twice a week, but you don't remember."

Grandfather didn't see too much of his grandkids. They found it hard to talk with him when his mind drifted off, or he told the same stories over and over again.

The following Tuesday after school, Oliver kept his promise.

He caught the Number 78 tram along Chapel Street, carrying his list of project questions and a gift to go on the old man's wheelchair.

"Hello, Grandpa. How are you?"

"Much better having seen you, Oliver," said Grandpa Stan with a grin.

Oliver sat down, and once again noticed his grandfather was sitting with his wrinkled hands folded in front of him.

"Grandpa, what sort of work did you do when you were young, and why are your hands so wrinkled?" Oliver curiously asked the stooped man, who reflected before answering.

"My hands used to be as smooth as yours, but I had to leave school at 13 to get a job. My family needed money to survive."

"What sort of work did you do, Grandpa?"

"Shovelling coal in an underground coal mine. I was paid two pounds, six shillings per week, which is around six dollars in today's money."

"WHAT?" Oliver was shocked. "For the whole week?"

"When I turned 18, I joined the Air Force and became a fighter pilot."

"Did you fight in World War One?" Oliver questioned.

"No, I was only a young boy then. I was one of few Australian pilots, along with the British, to fight during the 1956 Suez Canal conflict."

"Did you ever kill anyone?" Oliver gasped.

"Yes, Oliver, I did. Let me tell you, it's the most gut-wrenching thing that these hands of mine ever did," he said solemnly.

"To know your hand has killed gives you nightmares for years after. If I hadn't allowed my hands to do that though, I wouldn't be here telling you about it."

More stories followed before Oliver spoke during a pause in conversation.

"Grandpa, I brought a gift for you. It's a numberplate for your wheelchair, and I'll put it on before I go. I've got one on my bike, too."

"Would you like me to come again soon?" Oliver asked as he fiddled, fixing the small numberplate to the wheelchair.

A week later, Oliver took his school project on the tram ride back to Grandpa's place.

"I'm writing a story about old people. Can you look at the questions and let me know what you think, Grandpa?"

"I'd love to read what you've written. You mightn't know this, but I wrote two books," he chuckled.

"Can't remember their names, but one was about my life in the Air Force, and the other about my great grandfather, a general in the Australian Army."

They both watched as Grandpa opened and closed his gnarled fists.

"After the Suez War, I became a carpenter. With these hands I built my own home, hammering thousands of nails into freshly sawn timber."

He turned his open palms and looked at the gold ring on his left hand.

"They held your Grandma Elizabeth's hands as we walked up the aisle when we got married. These hands held your father as a baby."

Later, Oliver told his brother and sister about their grandfather's wrinkled hands.

"Grandpa has done so much with his life. When I grow up, I want to do something important with my hands," he explained to the other kids.

"Not all old people are boring, you just have to ask them the right questions and listen."

During their next visit, Grandpa had asked Oliver what job he wanted to do with his hands. Grandpa had smiled knowingly when the reply came that he didn't know, but that he wanted to help people.

Late that night, Oliver's father gently woke him up.

"I have some bad news, mate. Grandpa has just been taken to hospital. He fell over and really hurt himself," Dad explained.

Oliver was scared to hear Dad's next words.

"How is he?" the young boy asked, tears threatening to spill onto his cheeks.

"Not good, kid, I'm sorry. I don't think Grandpa will be coming home from hospital," said Dad as he wiped at his red eyes.

"I do know for sure though, that he loved having you visit him, Oliver. He told me every time I saw him."

Oliver's grandfather Stan passed away peacefully in the early hours of that morning at 90 years old.

Occasionally, Oliver would look at his hands and smile. As an adult, he now used them to help people as a skilled surgeon at a hospital nearby to his home. Oliver reflected fondly on their memories over the years. Now hanging off his new bike was Grandpa's wheelchair numberplate, below his own.

As Oliver would pedal to and from work shifts, gripping the handlebars of his bike and listening to the clack of the two numberplates, he would often wonder if his grandpa would be proud of him.

To read the unabridged version of George's story, visit mecwacare.org.au.



About the author:

George Kyriakou

George (far right below) and his wife, Aileen Hall, regularly visit Aileen's mother Norma (pictured far left, and below in green). George was inspired to write *These Wrinkled Hands* after seeing the Trescowthick Centre's 'These Hands' project in 2021.



Wordsearch

R K N O I S S A P M O C O H T
N T E O R F N O A T U R T V S
F O U N D A T I O N N A K O N
A I N E R M U A A C T E R L A
P A L A C I H T E A F E O U L
P N U P F L A E O C P O W N T
R C F S U Y O R I T U M M T L
E M T L O I G E R A N D A E C
C A C C O U N T A B L E E E E
I L E L T F I N M O O T R A
A V P C T M R I C C L O C T N
T E S O O E A W V C C S T A T
I R E W N N C I D C O C D G S
O N R N E T W O R K N O L A A
N A A T O E M A T T E R S S U

ETHICAL
RESPECTFUL
TEAMWORK
FOUNDATION
VOLUNTEER
ACCOUNTABLE
WINTER
COMPASSION
FAMILY
APPRECIATION
CARING
COLD
MATTERS
NETWORK
MALVERN

Wordsearch solutions
on page 22.



CREATIVE

Submissions

Do you have an artistic hobby?
Are you a painter, knitter,
woodworker, quilter, or poet?

Send any submissions to:
media@mecwacare.org.au.

Keep your eyes peeled for your handiwork in
the next edition of **mecwacare Matters!**



Our proud team at John Atchison Centre prepared this delicious spread for their Mother's Day celebration.



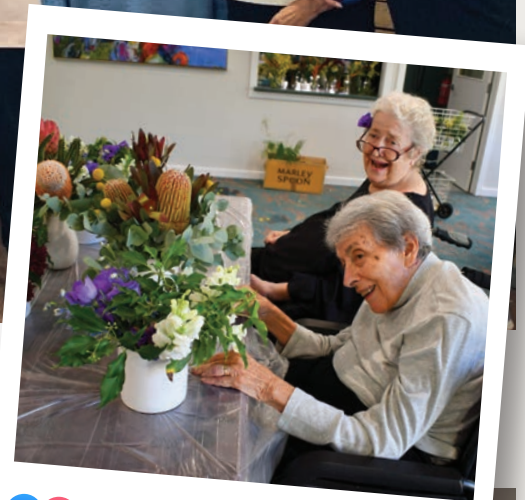
Our Ballan team had a fantastic time meeting our community at the Ballan Autumn Festival in March.



Betty and Tony from Robin Syme Malvern celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in April.



Check out our growing Strength Training group at the Garfield Community Centre! This energetic and sociable group is led by volunteer Adrianna and trainer Samantha.



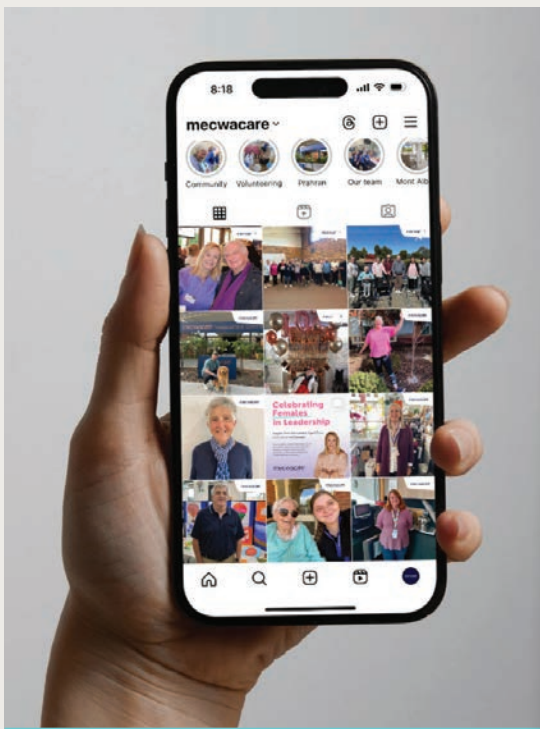
Trescowthick Centre was thrilled to receive an incredible flower donation from the F1 Australian Grand Prix.

Wordsearch solution

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Our team at Susan Barton House had fun dressing up for International Nurses Day.



"Following mecwacare on social media helps me feel connected to the wonderful community I am a part of."



Social media spotlight

Join our #caringcommunity to learn more about the wonderful people of mecwacare, along with exciting activities across our aged care homes, retirement villages and community centres.



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