



Circle of Life: events that have helped to shape me

Joan Russell
with her daughter Sarah



This is my story – a story through my eyes and my memories. I do not claim that it is strictly accurate, but I am truthful to the spirit of the events that have shaped my life.

Revised September 2015



Factus non Verbus: “Deeds not words”

Stodart Street (1924-1942)

I was born in 1924, and lived the first 18 years at 4 Stodart Street, Camberwell. In history books, the period between 1924 and 1942 is dominated by war, the growing anxieties around events in Europe and rumours about concentration camps. However, my early childhood and teenage years were mostly unaffected by these 'grown up' issues.



Stodart Street



*My mother and father
(Papa and Garnie)*



*In the arms of my Papa -
Fitzwalter George Read*

I am the oldest daughter of devoted parents, Albert Leonard Read (Len) and Beatrice Victoria Cottingham Griffith (Bea).



When I was 3, my baby sister Margaret was born, and then 4 years later, John. My youngest brother was indeed a surprise to us all, not just my parents. By the time Richard was born, I was 21 years old and working as a nursing sister at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. I recall my parents telling us that they were expecting a child in July- I could not look at my mother over the next few days.



Clockwise - Garnie, Papa, Joan, John and Peg



During my early childhood, we had a marvellous maid, Myrtle Peters. She worked in our house until John was about three. We also had an ironing lady, a cleaner and a live-in gardener, Maurice, who lived in the old tool shed that we had converted for him. When John was a baby, we also had a nanny (who we called 'nurse'). When we went on holidays, a local lady, Mrs Varkevisser, came everyday in time for breakfast. She stayed until after she had washed the evening dishes. At night, she rode home on her bicycle. The circle of my life intersected when, 50 years later, Mrs Varkevisser's son, Casey, did odd-building/ gardening work for me and Roy at Mt Martha.

In those days, 'maids' were 'maids'. But Myrtle became a real friend of our family. She was wonderful to us.

When I was quite young, Myrtle took me to her home in Langwarrin for the day – her home was next door to Dame Elizabeth Murdoch. Myrtle was a marvellous person who I loved dearly, and she loved us. Myrtle's father, Mark Peters, appears later in my story as the builder of our family beach house at Mt Martha. Myrtle later married Ken Linton – and the circle of my life intersected once again when Myrtle's son, Richard, did some building work for me and Roy.



Sis - my 'spinster' aunt



My mother's sister, Sylvia (who we called Auntie Sis) played a big role in my childhood. Sis was my spinster aunt, who lived with my grandparents in Frankston.

On the maid's day off, Sis would catch the train from Frankston and come to Stoddart Street to cook our dinner. My mother did not do much regular cooking. She did fancy cooking for parties and special occasions.

So, on the maid's day off, our mother played golf and Sis cooked our dinner.

During my early years, I spent many holidays at Frankston with my grandfather, Llewellyn Griffith, and his second wife Nanny Puss.



*Llewellyn and
Nanny Puss*

During school holidays (before we had Mt Martha), I often used to catch the train with Sis to spend a few days with them. My grandfather taught me to horse ride when I was only 6 – he used to hire my horse, Mr Sawyer. At night, Nanny Puss taught me to play cards – I played auction bridge when I was 10.

These card playing skills have kept me in good stead all my life. Bridge, and my bridge circle of friends, have been a great joy in my life. At 91 years old, I am now teaching my daughter to play bridge.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let me go back to my first memory – going to kindergarten at St Mary's when I was about 5 years old. It feels like just yesterday. I can clearly remember Meryl Crocker who attended the same kindergarten.



Later I attended primary school at Chelmsford in Glen Iris Road.

I started at Tintern Girls Grammar when I was in Grade 4. I loved school, and had some wonderful friends. I was also a good student. My best subjects were Maths and History. I was also a keen sportswoman, and made the firsts in tennis, baseball and basketball (what is now called netball). In 1941, I was appointed school captain.

My first boyfriend was Charlie Francis and I had my first kiss in the summer house at Mt Martha when I was 14. Peg and I had many boyfriends. There were so many boys that I can't remember all their names. Names that come to mind are the 'Lee boys' (Harvey and Laurie), Tom Austin, and Peter Kemp. Most of our 'boyfriends' were boys from Mt Martha. These boys, and many other happy memories of Mt Martha, are a background to my whole life.



My first boyfriend and my first sailing boat



Briarcliff, Mt Martha (1935 – 1985)

My family often visited my mother's father at Frankston. But one day in September 1935, when I was 11, we travelled further afield, and went for a drive down the Peninsula. We saw a block of land for sale at Mt Martha, quite near the beach. When dad climbed up a tree, he could see the sea. So he decided to buy it. By Christmas of the same year, the house was built by Myrtle's dad, and we all moved in.

The house was designed by Marcus Barlow, who incidentally also designed Grandpa Russell's home in Deepdene, another intersection in my circle of life. The house has a very beautiful veranda that once overlooked the sea (the view is now blocked by trees). We named the house 'Briarcliff'.



About 2 years later, Dad decided to ask a young local man, Reg Free, to build our tennis court.

Reg was about 16 years old, and ours was the first of over 200 'Reg Free tennis courts' that are now scattered all over Mt Martha.



Reg in his faithful hat



Papa in court

The tennis court, and the players on the court, became a large part of our holidays. While we played on the tennis court, the law courts were often open. So dad worked, and he and mum stayed in Camberwell. During these holidays, Sis would stay with us.



We spent all our school holidays at Mt Martha. This was also a period of my life when the war was real. When I was a teenager, we often saw soldiers marching along Beach Road, and also entertained soldiers at the beach house.

I have so many wonderful memories of Mt Martha: tennis, beach, parties. We shared Mt Martha with many friends: O'Donahues, O'Briens, Francis and Lees. We have stayed in touch, on and off, throughout our lives.



Lying on Mt Martha beach with (Clockwise) Joan de Crespigny, Laurie Lee, Ray Martin, Peg, me and unnamed admirer.



Invergowie (1942)

After school, I spent a year at Invergowie to study domestic science – alternatively known as the school in which you learnt how to catch a husband. I met some other young women who were also interested in catching a husband, some of whom – Joan (Hastie) de Crespigny, Pat (Norris) Jolly, Helen (Lyle) MacKay, Carleen (Pentland) Watson – became lifelong friends.

At Invergowie, I learnt how to be a cook, housekeeper and a cleaner. The only memorable useful tip that I can now recall is how to make soap jelly. However, I still have a copy of the Invergowie cookbook, and used it often over the years.

Many of us left Invergowie to go nursing at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.



At Stodart Street with friends and family



Royal Melbourne Hospital (1943 - 1947)

I started nursing in 1943, during the 2nd World War.

There weren't many men in Melbourne at that time.

However, we had plenty at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

We used to have parties in the nurses' quarters and some of my fellow nurses would sneak out the fire escape to meet resident doctors. I can honestly say that I never snuck out.



Sister Read

I lived in the Charles Connibere Residence from 1943 - 1947. I made wonderful friends while nursing and some became lifelong friends. Pat (Norris) Jolly, Moyle (Stubbs) Cordner, Alison (LeLeen) Hughes, Betty

(Phillip) Brett, Helen (Lyle) MacKay, Carleen (Pentland) Watson. We shared many fun occasions and had lots of laughs.



Nurses still laughing after all this time -Carleen Watson, Mary Picken and Pat Jolly



I went out with lots of resident doctors. The most memorable was Donald Cordner who later married my friend Moyle Stubbs. I was also great friends with many non-medicos including Ray Martin, whose university graduation I attended.



Ray Martin, Joan and Peter Ebeling at Ray's graduation

At my friend Joan Hastie's wedding to Jim de Crespigny, I met Roy Russell (who had been the stand in best man because Jim's best friend did not get back from the war in time).

I also met Alan Bridge. Both Alan and Roy asked me out. I chose Roy, and my sister, Peg, chose Alan.



Alan and Peg



I had heard about Roy long before I met him. Harvey Lee told me this funny story about a boy in his class at Geelong Grammar with a speech impediment which prevented him from saying 'R'. This boy, Woy, read the sermon about the man from Jewico who wobbled him of his wiches. Even more funny, Woy and I later chose to name our children Wichard, Wowan and Sawah.

Roy proposed to me on Frankston pier, and we were married on 3rd March 1948 at St John's Camberwell, with the reception at Stoddart Street. I was 23 years old.

My sister, Peg, was my bridesmaid, and Roy's brother, George, was his best man.

My parents and Gran Russell attended our wedding, along with about 60 of our friends and family. Grandpa Russell stayed away.





Roy and Joan



George and Peg

Our wedding day



Garnie, Papa and Mrs Russell



Garnie



The ‘honeymoon’ period (1948 - 1952)

Funnily enough Roy and I have different memories of our honeymoon period. As I recall, it was difficult for us to find any accommodation after the war, so we relied on our social networks. My friends from Mt Martha, Nick and Margot O’Donahue, helped us to find somewhere to live – their house in Prospect Hill Road (Camberwell) and a flat in Queens Road (Albert Park). Margot was very kind to me – she used to take me to the Caulfield and Melbourne Cup and always brought back a nice gift from her overseas trips. During one of Margot’s overseas trips, their young son, Nicholas, who was only about 9, became very unwell. I nursed him until his parents came home. He later died.

During the first year of my marriage, Roy was away a lot, flying with ANA. This may explain why he has no recollection of living at Prospect Hill Road. However, he was home long enough for us to have our first son, John (June, 1949).

With Roy away so much, I changed a lot of nappies on my own. Even if Roy had been there, I would still have changed the nappies. After all, this was women’s work. To this day, I do not think Roy has ever changed a nappy in his life – this is the era when men were men and women changed nappies. However, our first great grandchild, Eleanor, arrived in November 2009, and Roy had a chance to change a nappy. He didn’t.



My friend Joan de Crespigny's father, Mr Hastie, had a flat in Adeney Avenue Kew which we rented for a few years before buying our own house in Finch Street. John and David (born January, 1951) were toddlers in Adeney Avenue.



Our eldest son John as a toddler playing 'Indians'.



Finch St (1952 - 1999)

After Adeney Avenue, we moved to a house in Finch Street, East Malvern where I had my next 3 children – Rowan (October, 1955), Richard (June, 1960) and Sarah (June, 1961). I loved being a wife and mother, and had many friends.

Soon after moving to Finch Street, we met our neighbours Robina and Winston Keil. They had a tennis court. I was involved with a group of women who played tennis every Wednesday morning at Orong Road courts – after Robina joined our group, we started playing on the Keil's court. The regular tennis morning continued at the Keils for the next 15 or so years.



Tennis ladies (Clockwise) - Gillie Russell, Hilary Read, Joan Patterson, ...



The first 25 years of my married life centred around my children, school, and school sport. The boys all went to Melbourne Grammar and Sarah attended Melbourne Girls Grammar.

I was very proud when my son, Rowan, and my grandson, Nick, were school captain of Melbourne Grammar. I was also equally proud when Richard was house Captain of Miller, and Sarah was house captain of Batman. Both Sarah and my grand daughter, Kristin, received the Mary Michaelis Memorial Prize for academic achievement, sport and service to Melbourne Girls Grammar.

Every school holidays, we went to Mt Martha – first to Briarcliff, and then later to our own house. With every passing year, the beach shrank as my children grew.



Time moved our boatshed closer to the sea

In 1973, I went back to the Royal Melbourne Hospital firstly as nurse bank then as the evening administrator.

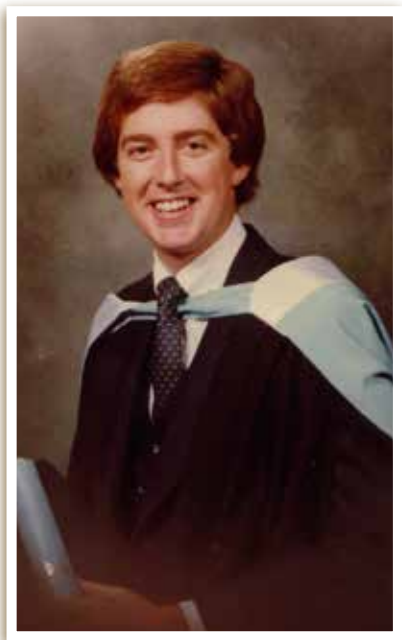
During these evenings, Sarah served her brothers and father a meal from the crock pot. Back then, crock pots were also women's business. By this time, my elder two sons, John and David were junior doctors, also at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. One funny story involved an incident when I needed a doctor – and John was told that “mummy needed him”. I later left nursing and became a volunteer at the Citizens' Advice Bureau.



All my children attended university – John and David studied medicine at University of Melbourne, and David later completed an MD. John became a urologist and established his own practice in Albury with



David's floppy graduation hat



Rowan's graduation

the assistance of his wife, Lorraine. David became a gastroenterologist and an associate professor of medicine at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Rowan studied arts/law at Monash University and did his articles at Mallesons and later became a partner.



Richard obtained a Bachelor of Science degree with honours, but rather than pursue a career in genetics, he joined Roy in the manufacturing business RM Russell. Sarah started several degrees before I enrolled her in nursing at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. After years as a nurse in the intensive care unit, she returned to university to complete an arts degree with honours in geography and history and a PhD in Medicine. Her eclectic education made her a Jill of all trades. In 1999, Sarah began her own freelance social research business, 'Research



Garnie and Richard

Matters'. 10 years later she purchased her own tinnie and named it 'Nothing Matters'. I encouraged her to name her sailing boat 'Everything Matters'.



My children have all made a great contribution to society.



Four boys contributing to society and the wine industry



David contributing mirth to society



Wattletree Rd (1999 - 2010)

In preparation for our 'old age', we moved about a kilometre down the road to a one-storey unit. This was the time of our lives when Roy played bowls and loved it, and I tried Croquet but quickly decided I preferred a more cerebral activity: bridge.



Trying out croquet

I also enrolled in the University of the Third Age. A highlight of this was a course on Art Appreciation. This led to me being appreciated as a volunteer guide at Heidi Art Gallery.



Sarah gate-crashed Art Appreciation with Noel



My bridge circle grew and grew, and I spent many happy hours with friends playing cards and talking about our lives, and our children's lives. I also enjoyed many lively family games of bridge at Mt Martha.



*Garnie at the bridge
(dining) table*



*Chris and Anna
Griffith, Roy
and I at the Mt
Martha bridge
table.*



Memorable parties

The most memorable parties have been family gatherings, mostly at Mt Martha. We always found something to celebrate – Christmas, birthdays, graduations.



Elizabeth's birthday



Xmas at Sarah's home 2012





Silly hats at Mt Martha, Christmas 1984



Christmas at Richard and Wendy's



In 2009, we had a family party because Rowan and Susie, who lived in England, were visiting Melbourne.



Family gathering - 2009

There have also been some fun parties with friends.



Dancing with Jim de Crespigny





Acting up with Keith Dunstan



In my drinking days



I have also had some memorable birthday parties. Peg and Alan hosted my 50th at Kirinaran. We had a lovely picnic on the lawns followed by all sorts of races – sack, egg and spoon races. We all dressed athletically.



My outfit for the '50 Games'



*Pat Jolly, Beamish Brett,
Tom Harvey and me*



Sack racers: Joan Patterson, Tulloch and mystery sacker



Sarah hosted my 60th birthday at her home in Northcote. During my speech I acknowledged that I never thought I would celebrate a birthday “North of the Yarra”!



Robert Read as an underage barman.



I hosted my 70th birthday party at the Lyceum Club with some of my great old girlfriends. Sarah came too. It was a lovely luncheon.



70th Birthday at the Lyceum Club

My 85th birthday was spent quietly at Mt Martha – Roy was in the Frankston hospital with a fractured leg, so the day was spent visiting him. My granddaughter, Annabelle, baked me a chocolate cake.

Sarah hosted my 90th birthday ‘North of the Yarra’. It was a wonderful party with family and friends. My grandchildren, Georgia and James, and my daughter-in-law, Susie, made lovely speeches and then Rowan made the toast.





85th birthday with Richard, Annabelle and George



Our 60th wedding anniversary was a family affair





Wishing me a happy 90th birthday



Celebrating my 90th birthday at Victoria by the Park



I had a trio of birthday parties for my 91st birthday - lunch at Victoria by the Park (the chef made me an enormous birthday cake) followed by flexi-lunches at Mt Martha with the Bridge family and my grand and great grandchildren.



Celebrating my 91st birthday with the Bridge family



and my grandchildren



and my children



Overseas trips

Prior to getting married, I had dreamt of travelling the world. Instead I married a man who had travelled the world firstly as an ANA pilot and then later during the war. After the war, Roy wanted to stay put – so during our early years of marriage, there were no overseas trips. But, once the children were older, we began to travel. I went overseas nine times. I was disappointed that we didn't get to Brussels for my grandson Adam's wedding to Géraldine and that I never saw Rowan's home in Italy.

My first overseas trip was in 1972 – to visit Ray Martin in New York. John and David were old enough to fend for themselves. We left Rowan, Richard and Sarah with Margie Bridge.



*Rowan, Margie, Richard and Sarah
celebrating our return from New York*





Anthony Martin, Roy and me in my minks



New York! New York!



In 1975, mum and I had a wonderful bus holiday in New Zealand. We flew to Christchurch then bussed around the country. Highlights were Milford Sound and a riotous night at a ski lodge in Ahow.

Garnie spent her time on the bus knitting socks for the driver.



Garnie and I in New Zealand George



Richard, Roy and I 'a la Paris'

In 1976, my brother was married in Rotterdam – so Roy, Richard, Sarah and I took Garnie to the wedding. After Holland, we spent a few days in France, and then with Gaynor and Richard Gatty Saunt in England.



I have also travelled overseas to visit my children. Roy and I stayed with John and Lorraine in North Carolina in 1978, and David and Amanda in Toronto in 1983.



Roy, Georgia and I in Canada



In Toronto, I also made contact with Lucy Paré (Garnie's first cousin).

Meeting up with Lucy Paré in Toronto



In 1982, we went back to England and also spent some time in Wales. Gaynor took us on a search of the county of Caernarvonshire seeking a church which contained tombs of Garnie's ancestors. We found them in a little church in Llandbiblog near the town of Caernarvon. We also visited Cochwillan Hall, near Bangor, built by another of my ancestors - William ap Gryffydd.



*Visiting old relatives in
Llandbiblog, Wales*



Roy and I at Tanglewood Estate



On this trip we also visited Singapore and Scandinavia. We travelled on the most beautiful train trip through the Norwegian Fjords.

Sarah and I also had a wild holiday at Club Med Noumea in 1983. Among all the young singles looking for love, I managed to find a bridge four looking for a slam.



Roy and I in Alaska



My next trip was to a cruise ship to Alaska in 1984. For some reason, Alaska had always been a place that interested me. We spent 3 days in Honolulu, then flew to Vancouver. We spent 9 days on the ship travelling from Vancouver to Anchorage, and then we flew to London. We were met by Dick and Gladys, and Gaynor and Richard. We travelled to Scotland and Wales – a wonderful four weeks!



On the good ship Norwegian Star

Whilst in Wales, there was a heatwave. The highest temperature ever for North Wales was recorded.

The sea was warmer than Hawaii!

In 2000, we took a cruise ship, the Norwegian Star, to Noumea, Lifou and Villa.

We travelled with Carleen and her friend, Pat McGeogh and as usual managed to 'russell' up a bridge four.



Bridge, boating and binge drinking



It has not only been my overseas trips that have been memorable – I have also enjoyed visits over the years from my overseas relatives. In particular, Dick Read and his daughter Gaynor.



Garnie and Papa with Dick and Gladys Read at Stodart Street in the sixties



Richard and Gaynor Gatty Saunt with Elizabeth, Annabelle and George at Mt Martha in the naughties



Trips around Australia

In 1974, Roy and I flew to Sydney, then caught Indian Pacific – it was the greatest fun. I really loved Broken Hill, and Perth is a wonderful city. In 1976, we flew to Cairns, drove to Port Douglas. In 1987, we visited Kakadu and Alice Springs, in 1990, we sailed to Thursday Island and then in 1993, we flew to Darwin, then bus to Kununurra and Broome. I've also visited Noosa (1994), Norfolk Island (1997) and Kangaroo Island (1998).



Me and my faithful hat blending in with the beautiful view



My beloved Alice St, Mt Martha (1960 - 2015)

When Richard was a baby, Roy and I purchased the block beside Briarcliff and built a 'CHI' pre fab house. Richard Linton later built a playroom for the children. I could lock the children in the playroom, throw a handful of smarties in the air, knowing that they were entertained for hours in search of the smarties.

My children loved Mt Martha, and also spent many happy holidays on the tennis court and at the beach. We often had a house full of the kids' friends - Chris Cordner, John Roberts, James Harvey...My children also spent many happy school holidays with my sister Peg's children.

After Papa died, Briarcliff went to my brother John, and the bottom block to my brother Richard. John later sold Briarcliff to Jack and Vivienne Fajgenbaum, and we purchased the bottom block (which Sarah has named

'Writers' Block').

As I got older, trekking up the cliff from the beach began to get harder and harder for me. So we decided to get a pool. Although I have only used the pool a few times, many of my grandchildren learnt to swim in our pool.



Annabelle learning to swim



A memorable and more quirky memory of Mt Martha is the cricket match between “The Russells” and our neighbours “The Glens”. Not surprisingly the match was played with a healthy competitive spirit.



The Russell vs Glen cricket match at Mt Martha



Mick Maplestone and Rowan watching the cricket



Richard and Sarah continue to use Mt Martha as their holiday house, David spent some time holidaying at Phillip Island and then Barwon Heads, Rowan has a holiday house in Cortona (Italy) and John has a holiday house in the city.



Rowan cooking in Cortona



Richard, Rowan, Mariette and Tom celebrating Christmas around the pool

On special occasions, we now gather on the verandah overlooking Mt Martha's tennis court.

Before the verandah was built, we used to sit around the pool.



The Russell Family Court



In 1969, we purchased Joey. It became a family heirloom. All my children learnt to water ski behind Joey. One of Gaynor's children, Sarah, went on to become a Moomba Champion.

Joey in the early days



40 years later, Joey was still being enjoyed, mostly by Richard and my youngest grandson, George. In 2014, I asked Sarah to take Joey to the tip.



Sarah, Richard and George took me out on Joey for an enjoyable day's fishing.



Roy and I spent many wonderful holidays at Mt Martha with our children and grandchildren, and their friends.

Roy spent his last Xmas at Mt Martha. Richard and Sarah were excellent nurses. The squeaky fish was our “bell” for when he needed help during the night.

Each morning, Roy and I would exercise on the tennis court. Naturally, it became a competition. I won.



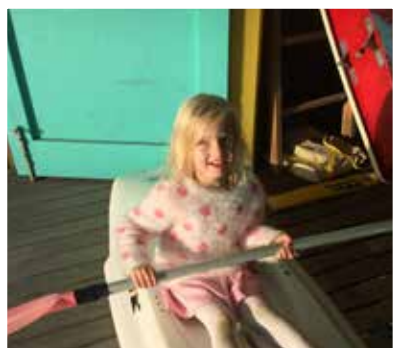
Bronte in 3rd place



After storms washed away the North Mt Martha beach, we re-built our boat shed. Although I no longer trekked down the cliff to the beach, I loved knowing my family continued to enjoy lunch in the boat shed.



Heidi (left) and Eleanor (below) learning to use the paddle board



Georgia and Louie



Eliza with my winning 91st birthday cake



After Roy died, I did not want to visit Mt Martha without him because it made me too sad. When Sarah took me to celebrate Roy's 92nd birthday (in absentia) on the deck at Mt Martha, I realised Mt Martha was in my blood.

Since I was 8 years old, I had celebrated Xmas at Mt Martha. I asked to spend 2013 Xmas-New Year at Mt Martha, and felt sad that my last minute 'flexi-plans' caused a family kerfuffle. Xmas holidays are a special time of year, particularly for those of us who live in an aged care facility.

Sarah and Maggie began taking me to Mt Martha for 5-day holidays each month. I so looked forward to these visits, and sometimes became a bit teary during the car trip back to Victoria by the Park. I wondered whether each visit might be my last.



Reminiscing with Ray

During my visits to Mt Martha, I reminisced with both old and new friends about all the wonderful times I have spent at Mt Martha, first as a young girl, then as a mother, grandmother and now great grandmother.





*Top and tailing the beans
(would prefer a G&T)*



*Australia Day 2015 on the deck with Rob
and Amanda Read's family*



Fish and chips with Maggie



*Xmas 2014 with Stephanie, Nick,
Eliza and the beetroot thing-a-me-gig*

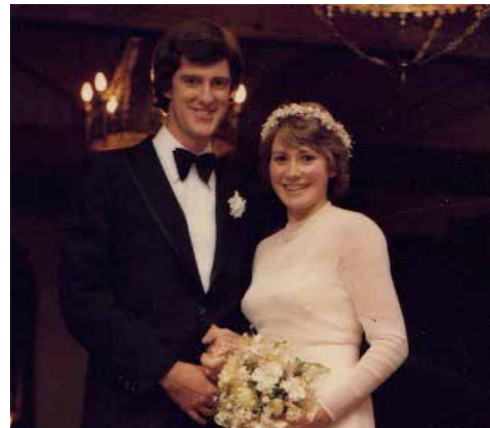


5 weddings and a divorce

Some of the happiest moments of my life have been the marriages of my sons. Their marriages began a new era of their lives, and mine too. John and Lorraine, David and Amanda, Rowan and Susie, Richard and Wendy. Although David and Amanda divorced, Amanda remained a part of our family. In 2008, David married Heather.



*John and Lorraine's
wedding*



David and Amanda's wedding



*Rowan
and Sue's
nuptials*



Richard and Wendy's big day





David's blended family

Sarah test drove a German (Klaus), an Englishman (Nick), a 'Chinaman' (Peter) and an Italian (Giuliana) but decided Labradors were a woman's best friend – Tessa, Kirner and Bronte.



Sarah and Kirner



The family grew to include 11 grandchildren: Paul, Adam and Kristin; Georgia, Eliza and Nicholas; James and Timothy; Elizabeth, Annabelle and George. David and Heather's blended family brought me 3 step grandchildren Huw, Morgan and Evan.



Grand children en masse



Susie with a G&T

My daughters in-law – Lorraine, Amanda, Susie and Wendy – became my friends. I encouraged both Wendy and Susie to learn bridge and they became formidable bridge opponents. I also have many delicious memories of gin and tonics with Susie.



Great grandchildren

With time, my grandchildren grew up, fell in love and some began families of their own. Paul and Felicity were the first to marry and their daughter Eleanor was my first great grandchild. When their son, Alfie, was born, I helped to knit him a special blanket.



Paul, Felicity, Elly and Alfie



Alfie's blanket

Adam and Géraldine married in Belgium; their first daughter Valentina-Maria was born in Melbourne. I hope I'll be around long enough to cuddle my newest great granddaughter, Joséphine-Marie, who arrived in September 2015.



Adam, Geraldine and Valentina-Maria



I met Kristin and Dan's daughter, Grace, on skype but have not yet not cuddled her.



Valentina-Maria at VBTP



Kristin, Dan and Grace



Andrew, Heidi, Georgia and Louie

Georgia and Andrew have two children, Heidi and Louie. Nick and Stephanie are expecting their first child in November. Nick told me proudly that he was the father!



Victoria by the Park (2010 - 2015)

Roy and I moved into Apartment 44 at Victoria by the Park in March 2010. If you had 20/20 vision, which I unfortunately no longer had, you could see Port Phillip Bay from our bedroom window. Roy spent most of his time either on his computer or watching TV. He took over our lounge room with piles of his paperwork, so I spent most of my time downstairs in the communal lounge room. I soon established 'my seat' – a terrific vantage point for keeping a close eye on all the comings and goings.

Roy came downstairs for meals in the dining room. He loved to tease the other women at our dining table. Even though most of them were deaf, they all laughed along with him.

Roy died in January 2012 and I missed him greatly. We had a lovely celebration at Richard's home in which all my children spoke. I made a toast to a wonderful husband and father.



Roy would have been proud of Sarah as the MC





A perfect 'Mt Martha day' for Roy's celebration

After nearly 64 years of marriage, I missed Roy most acutely at breakfast time. For several months after Roy died, Sarah came to my room to have breakfast with me. Sarah then established a routine in which I had special dispensation to have breakfast in the dining room. The kitchen staff were all very kind to me, especially Tony.



Gaynor at the celebration



As far as nursing homes go, I had no complaints. The staff treated me kindly, particularly Charlotte, Gail, Alex, Argus, Vicki (the quiz master) to name a few of my favourites. However, it was very boring just sitting in my chair. I often asked staff: "What should I be doing?" This question came from a life-time of busy-ness.

I looked forward to visits from my family. I loved my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren visiting. When Heidi and Louie took over the lounge room at Victoria by the Park, it resembled Romper Room. This brought me so much joy, and made many other residents happy too.



Charlotte chatting



Gail and Karen photo-bombed



Vesna in Hopetoun Gardens



Romper room



I enjoyed the regular afternoon visits from my companions. Maggie and I hit it off from the moment we met. I also loved visits from Vesna, Ari, Karen and Raquel. These kind women kept me company – took me for walks in the wheelchair, coffee and cake at Loco, or just sat and chatted. They all became my friends.



Raquel and Aviv's vanilla slice

I became quite good at Rummy Tiles and Ambush. For a long time, Sarah and I played bridge with Marion and Etta. Etta was once a State Champion, and she loved to boss Sarah and me. Unfortunately, Etta hung up her cards after having a fall. Sarah and I now play bridge on her iPad, though more commonly we do The Age crossword with Lorraine and Kay.

I made lifelong friends at Victoria by the Park – though many of these new friends did not live for long. My good friend, Trudi, died in 2014. So too did Ruth, Sam, Greg, Heather, Val and Alma. It was like 10 green bottles...



Trudi Frank and Rose Adler (Mrs Chocolate Box)





15th April 1924 - 24th September 2015

Life of love leaves indelible mark

JOAN RUSSELL

Champion mum
15-4-1924 - 24-9-2015

■ Sarah Russell

Joan Russell saved her daughter's life – when she was in the extremes of depression, Joan gave her daughter care, hope and the possibility of a future. At a time when mental illness was shrouded in shame and secrecy, Joan treated manic depression as any other illness.

When her teenage daughter was admitted to a psychiatric unit in 1981, Joan sent her a "Get Well Soon" card. Months later, unbeknown to anyone, she completed an application for her daughter to study nursing, even signing on her behalf. Committing forgery is not the behaviour one would expect from a judge's daughter but it demonstrated her determination to support her daughter's recovery in any way possible.

She brought this same compassion and pragmatism to her volunteer role at the Citizens' Advice Bureau when working with women experiencing domestic violence. This was in the 1970s when domestic violence was considered best left behind closed doors. Joan was not fazed by anything, and regularly helped the mothers and their children find alternative accommodation so they could leave abusive relationships.

In dedicating herself to her family, friends and the community, she left an indelible mark.

Along with her own five children, Joan

helped raise countless others. When her sister, Peg, returned to medical school in 1969, Joan happily became a second mother to her seven children. She rejoiced in their lives with the same passion as in her own children's lives. When her extended family, friends or neighbours needed help, Joan was there to provide practical support and, in some cases, nursing care. She nursed her neighbour's nine-year-old son when he became unwell with leukaemia so he could stay home with his family until his death.

Joan had studied domestic science at Invergowrie, a course that included classes on how to cook and clean and be a housekeeper, and then nursing at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Invergowrie, Joan liked to joke, was the school where you learnt how to catch a husband. In 1948, at the age of 24, she married Roy Russell. Although she loved nursing, married women faced restrictions on remaining in the workforce.

She happily dedicated the next 25 years to being a housewife and mother. She called this period of her life "a labour of love". She considered being able to stay home and raise a family a privilege. In 1973, Joan returned to the Royal Melbourne Hospital as an evening nursing administrator after her youngest child started high school.

In her retirement, Joan joined the Lyceum Club even though she did not have the



prerequisite university degrees. When a member asked Joan how she got in, she replied: "I caught the train." She also studied Art Appreciation at the University of the Third Age and became a volunteer guide at Heidi Museum of Modern Art.

In 2010, Joan and Roy moved to an aged-care facility where she quickly made new friends. After Roy's death in 2012, Joan established "her seat" in the communal lounge room from where she observed everything with a nurse's eye. She appreciated staff who treated her respectfully though not all did. She gently rebuked: "Please don't talk to me as if I am a child" or "My name is Joan, not sweetie".

Joan looked forward to her monthly trips to Mt Martha, away from the routines of the aged-care facility. When she was 11, her parents had bought a block of land and built a beach house at Mt Martha. For the next 80 years, Joan was happiest when her beach house was overflowing with people.

Towards the end of her life, Joan came alive sitting on the deck, or in front of the fire, surrounded by people and dogs, chatting and reminiscing. Joan died peacefully, with a smile on her face. On the morning of her death, she said to her daughter: "Darling, you really do need a hair cut".

Joan is survived by her two brothers, five children, eleven grandchildren, seven great grandchildren and a large extended family. She will be remembered for her warmth, hospitality, kindness, intellect and great sense of fun.

Sarah Russell is Joan's daughter

