



Love and Laughter with Joan

“Inside or out?”

April 15, 2014



How wonderful to have thrown so much laughter and light and warmth into so many people's lives. Chris Cordner

Great memories highlighting Joan's warmth, hospitality, intellect and great sense of fun. Amanda Russell

A lovely tribute to Joan and a gift to your family. Sari Baird

This is a wonderful and moving record of Joanie that I shall treasure. James Harvey



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Foreword

Tuesdays with Mum

Dear Mum,

This is a collection of stories written by people who love you. It contains our memories of you - of holidays at Mt Martha, card games, funny incidents and memorable moments. These stories have been written for your 90th birthday.



*Celebrating my wedding anniversary
in bed with Sarah*

My story is about friendship. You and I have always been great friends. When I left home at 17, we both set aside Tuesday nights as 'our night'. For the next 30 or so years, we subscribed to the MTC, the Malthouse, the Writers Festival and the ballet; and were regulars at the Rivoli Theatre.

When you took a fine art course at the U3A with Noel, you invited me to come to Sydney to see the Guggenheim exhibition. After that wonderful exhibition, we included art galleries into our 'Tuesday cultural excursions'. The Heide Museum of Modern Art was our favourite art gallery. We would often meet there for lunch, and wander around their latest exhibition. Fortunately you were a volunteer guide at Heidi, so you were able to explain some of the more curious pieces.



More recently, Tuesday afternoons have been our 'Bridge afternoons' at Victoria by the Park. You and I bravely partner up against Etta, a 96-year-old ex-State Champion, and Marion. After dinner, we watch a movie. Our Tuesday tradition continues.



Our bridge games with Etta can be terrifying



Our coffee shop in Glenhuntly Road



Cheeseburger, chips and apple pie in St Kilda

It has been a great pleasure and privilege for me to spend so much time with you since Dad died. I love the time we spend together at Victoria by the Park – so many interesting people live and work there. I also enjoy wheeling you down Glenhuntly Road for an iced coffee and piece of chocolate cake; or driving to our favourite spot near the St Kilda pier



and eating a McDonald's cheeseburger. We both love 'people watching' and telling stories while looking at the sea.

Our recent trips to Mt Martha have been special for us both. You have so many happy memories at Mt Martha. We sit on the deck whilst you reminisce about Briarcliff, those busy years with your active children and all their friends, and the happy times with all your grandchildren. You have many stories to tell, and you continue not to let truth get in the way of a good story!

I will always treasure our recent holidays at Mt Martha – particularly Xmas and the lovely celebration of your 66th wedding anniversary. I will also remember fondly the recent lunch during which you raised your glass of ginger beer to toast Papa's birthday – you were correct, he would have been 121!



Outside on deck with Maggie: "Cheers"



Sun setting at Mt Martha



Preparing dinner





“You have many stories to tell, and you continue not to let truth get in the way of a good story!”

At my favourite lookout



“Our” Mt Martha

We both thanked Papa for climbing up that tree in 1935 and deciding to buy the block of land that we all lovingly call ‘Mt Martha’.

With love,

Sarah Russell XX



Sharing Mt Martha

For all our good friends, the “Russells” (whether at Mt Martha or Finch Street) was always a most welcoming place; indeed it was the place to be!

Mum: you always welcomed us and you and Dad always provided everything we needed: beer, tennis balls, Joey with plenty of petrol, beer, the boat shed, a bed for the night (or in the case of Robbo and Harvey, for a few weeks), great home cooked dinners and beer!

Our times at Mt Martha were amongst the happiest of our lives: great, simple but very active fun. You and Dad were always a part of what we did but in a very non-interfering way.

You may have had trouble on occasions working out the venue for meals – inside or out? But you always provided for all of us. As you used to say: you were “great at cooking in bulk”.

You and Dad were pivotal in the success of our very many happy family Mt Martha holidays.



Courtside at Mt Martha





The Russells celebrating Xmas together in 2013



John, David, Rowan, Richard and Sarah sharing Mt Martha



Another family day at the boatsbed

“Our times at Mt Martha were amongst the happiest of our lives”



The Russells celebrating Xmas together in 2012.



Grandchildren

Warm hugs

The things that I remember most fondly about you Grandma are your lovely warm big hugs, how happy you are to see everyone enjoying Mt Martha and your amazingly sharp memory. I also remember you watching every single tennis match on that court, but I don't think I ever saw you pick up a racquet. You also have a great love of reading and going to the theatre.



*Picking up a tennis racquet
– better late than never*

How could I forget all those weekends you took me out of boarding school? It was always fun spending the weekend at 'Grandma and Grandpa's'. You loved telling stories. I remember you telling a story of Mr Myer (or maybe his son) and you both going swimming together.

Grandma loves her family, and is so proud of us all. You love all of your grandchildren and great grandchildren. I have never met someone who sees family as important as my Grandma does.

Love Paul, Felicity, Eleanor and Alfie





Felicity, Paul and Alfie

“I have never met someone who sees family as important as my Grandma does.”



Paul, Alfie, Felicity and Eleanor



Playing games

When I think of you, Grandma, I think of a few things.

Your love of card games and all sorts of other games as well. You taught me 500, Canasta and so many other games that I do not know the name of. Playing for hours was an absolute highlight of any holiday at Mt Martha.

Your love of watching the tennis at Mt Martha, having drinks and chatting to the extended family. You always seem happiest at Mt Martha.



“When I went to work in Alice Springs as a tour guide, you emailed me more than anyone.”

Adam, Géraldine and Valentina-Maria

How switched on you are about tiny details. Grandpa would say something and then you would always correct him on the most precise thing. Even when you would say you were forgetting everything, your detailed memory always surprised me.

When I went to work in Alice Springs as a tour guide, you emailed me more than anyone. You and Grandpa were not of the tech age, but you both adapted to everything incredibly well.



Your love of the arts and reading always surprised me. When I visited Mt Martha, I always remember you with a book. Reading was a passion of yours. Each Christmas and birthday you bought us books, which may not be unique – but the type of books you bought us were. These books really pushed the boundaries. They were not what I expected, but I always loved to read them.

Love, Adam

“Valentina loves your pusher, she probably knows by heart all the contents of the pouch...”



Cuddles with Valentina-Maria

Playing with children

Valentina loves to go and see her Great Grandma.

She loves kissing you and playing with her dolly with you. You and Valentina put dolly to bed, kiss her and tell her stories. Valentina loves your pusher, she probably knows by heart all the contents of the pouch, takes everything in and out indefinitely. Valentina goes for a walk herself with the pusher, which makes everyone smile.

Valentina is really fond of the time she spends with her Great Grandma.

Love, Géraldine and Valentina XXX



Cards

Most of my warmest memories of you involve playing cards. Both Grandma and my Nan were big card players and fostered a love of cards in me. From Go Fish to Oh Hell – you were always happy to sit down and play a hand. You were an avid supporter of not using one’s fingers to count. Unfortunately, as I was a big finger counter, it’s safe to say that the issue of finger-counting arose at each cards session.

Happy 90th Birthday Grandma.

Lots of love, Kristin & Dan



Kristin learning to swim at Mt Martha



Kristin



Kristin and Valentina-Maria



Kristin and Dan



The hostess

The most vivid and fond memories I have of Grandma revolve around two significant homes you and Pa have had – Finch Street and Mt Martha.

The memories I have of Finch St and nights staying at Grandma and Pa's are so fond and clear. After spending hours running around in the garden, we would be called to dinner at the big formal dining table. Pa at the head and you with your apron still on ushering everyone to the table. I don't think pork and apple sauce has ever tasted so good! A delicious meal, a warm cosy dining room filled with chatter.

It was then bath and PJ time, and we were allowed to sit in the "TV room" in front of the oil heater to watch TV before bed (with dessert on our laps). Coming from a house of limited dessert and no TV, this was true heaven!! The biggest dilemma of the night was which of the many bedrooms and beds to sleep in...Sarah's, Rowan's or Richard's?



Andrew, Louie, Georgia and Heidi

“You were always the one catering, leading the cards charge, making sure everyone was busy and happy...”



Eliza, Georgia and Nick





Heidi sitting on the walker



Heidi enjoys being pushed around



Heidi's birthday card

Mt Martha memories are filled with action packed days, lots of family, and collapsing happy and exhausted into bed at night. Tennis, the beach, water skiing behind Joey, swimming, more tennis, lunch (inside our out?), more tennis, some cards perhaps, a trip into town, cricket on TV out the back with Pa and more tennis. You were always the one catering, leading the cards charge, making sure everyone was busy and happy, and then finally retiring to the deck in your sun hat, drink in hand to watch the Russell tennis match (cheering no matter if you hit or missed the ball!).

You have always been a wonderful host, interested in whatever your grandchildren are doing, full of energy and spark, and enjoying seeing all your family spending time together.

Thank you Grandma and Happy Birthday.

Love, Georgia, Andrew, Heidi and Louie xoxoxox

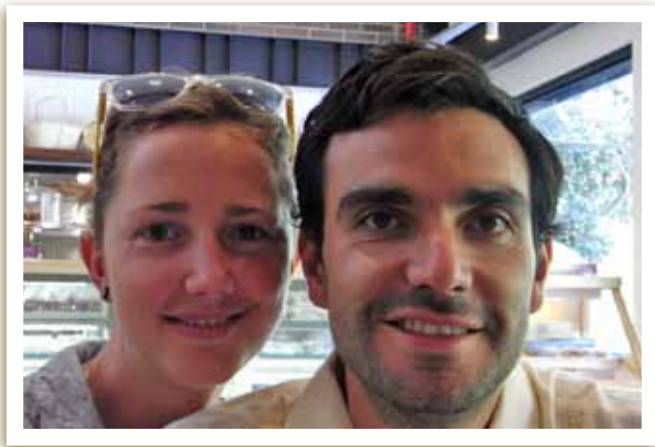


Flexi Boston buns



Eliza

Congratulations on your 90th, almost an antique! I'm so disappointed I won't be there to celebrate, but will be thinking of you and remembering our times together...



Eliza and Camilo in Colombia



“Your genuinely keen interest in us, books, life, new ideas, young people and Savoy biscuits.”



James, Camilo and Eliza



Eliza and Camilo

Pine cone painting and card playing at Mt Martha. Chewy roast lamb with mint jelly at Finch St. Fine dining at the Westin and a show at the Regent. Your genuinely keen interest in us, books, life, new ideas, young people and Savoy biscuits. Chasing the train down the platform with

you as a little Georgia was whisked away by a hasty train driver. Lunches and afternoon tea chats at Wattletree Rd (you were always very polite about my cakes). Flexi Boston bun on the veranda at Mt Martha. The fly-spray-flavoured perfume incident and your gracious sense of humor that accompanied it. Your perfectly peeled apples in front of the TV at Finch St. Your encouragement on the tennis court.

I hope you have a wonderful day shared with family and friends, Grandma. Look forward to a champagne with you when I'm back.

Love, Eliza and Camilo



Card shark

Needless to say, Grandma is a card shark: you are the Queen of Clubs, the Dame of Diamonds, the Tycoon of Trumps. I can't really think about you without picturing you holding a deck of 52, casually shuffling them from time to time. It's almost as if a pack of cards is some vital, external organ you require, and provided you have one, both you and the world can function normally.

Grandma, you introduced me to cards at Finch St, schooled me at Mt Martha and continue to flog me at Victoria by the Park. I'm still yet to beat you. Maybe it's just the "Russell Gene" (interestingly, it was recently confirmed that the collective noun for Russells is a "competition"), but you have never let me win. Not even while you were teaching me the rules did you allow me just one, confidence-building victory.

“It's almost as if a pack of cards is some vital, external organ you require,”



With Stephanie and Nick





At Phillip Island for Stephanie and Nick's wedding

I think it was my lack of success in canaster and gin rummy that made me turn to magic tricks over card games. I was better at being able to predict someone's card, or by mysteriously making all four Jacks line up, than trying to make a run or

a meld. I'm not convinced you know how I do these tricks, but your response is always: "Well, isn't that trixie". Initially I wasn't quite sure what trixie meant, but I've since learnt it can mean tricky, special, interesting, odd, bamboozling, disgusting or impressive!



Stephanie and Nick

Ultimately, now that I can produce an ace from up my sleeve, my card playing has improved remarkably. So I'm looking forward to my next game of Bridge with Grandma!

Love, Nick and Stephanie



Hakuna Matata!

Hakuna Matata! What a wonderful phrase. Hakuna Matata! Ain't no passing craze.

Aged seven, Yaya took me to experience the joys of Pumbaa, Timon and Simba running riot in the African jungles in *The Lion King* at the theatre of dreams: Chaddy. I recall Yaya sitting beside me as I rose like a proud lion cub to belt out this classic tune, singing loudly and horribly off key. The other kids around me must have been more afraid of my singing than the villain of the film, Scar, but Yaya, in her supportive and loving way, tolerated it and let me enjoy the ride. I'll forever remember this day.

“It’s one of those unforgettable and irreplaceable moments as a kid where anything in the world was possible, where the joys of seeing a wonderful film were only matched by the loving company of your favorite Grandma.”



Tim learning to ride a bike at Mt Martha



Tim before the screening of his film 'Horse Feathers' at Cinema Nova





Tim's 26th birthday party

It's one of those unforgettable and irreplaceable moments as a kid where anything in the world was possible, where the joys of seeing a wonderful film were only matched by the loving company of your favorite Grandma. And of course, at the end of the day, it means: No worries for the rest of your days. It's our problem-free philosophy, Hakuna Matata!



Tim is now writing and directing films

Love, Tim



Tim Tams

Yaya, wishing you a very happy 90th birthday! I want to say thank you for such special memories at Finch Street, Wattletree Road, Alice Street, Victoria by the Park and at my house, Hawthorn Grove. One of my first memories is when I was three. I was staying with you and Pa at Finch Street, I was holding your and Big Ted's hand, when there was a knock at the door. We ran to answer the door, and there was little baby Annabelle!



Xmas morning at Mt Martha



Celebrating birthdays

“...you tried to teach me Bridge but it just wasn't for me...”





Grandparents' day at Lauriston

I used to love coming for sleepovers at either Alice or Finch street, where you would spoil me rotten, read me fantastic stories, play all these new games including 500, Canasta (you tried to teach me Bridge but it just wasn't for me) and I would try to steal all the Tim Tams (if you ever wondered where they went!).

Thank you very much for supporting me through my life.



Liz and Annabelle

Love, Elizabeth



Laughter

Happy 90th Birthday Yaya! I feel so lucky to have grown up with such a caring, fun and loving grandmother. I have so many wonderful memories at Mount Martha, Finch Street and more recently Victoria By The Park filled with laughter and happiness.

Love, Annabelle xx



Annabelle, a nurse at The Royal Children's Hospital



Annabelle



Annabelle, Géraldine and Valentina-Maria



Many memorable moments

Yaya, Happy Birthday! I hope you have a wonderful day. I am sure that you will enjoy reading (and possibly re-reading) these memories that others have of you. For me just to mention one “memorable moment” with you is quite hard, as there are so many! But the moments at Mt Martha stand out. These range from playing board games on the dining room table, supervising me in the pool and of course you sitting on the deck watching the Russells playing tennis “against the rest of the world”. So again Yaya, happy birthday and I look forward to making more memories with you when I get back from overseas.

Love, George x



George and Géraldine at Mt Martha



The Bridges

Joanie

Until the age of 12 years, I lived in Horsham and was a “country kid”. We would often be invited by Joanie to come and spend school holidays with the Russell Family at 73 Finch Street, East Malvern, or at Mt Martha.

Joanie, you were always a great organiser. And you loved kids. As well as your own children and a few Bridge Kids, there would often be other young people invited to participate in these holiday activities.

Whilst staying with the Russells in Melbourne, two of my favourite activities were going ice-skating at St Moritz, St Kilda, and playing in the tennis tournament at Glen Iris. The best

part of the tennis was the mixed doubles because you arranged for me to be partnered with Chris Cordner.



Ross, Tom, Kate and Bidy at Barwon Heads

“You and my Mum were shining role models as to how women could be talented, caring, fun-loving and resourceful.”





Biddy

Russells, dancing to the Beatles at the Mt Martha Yacht Club. Joanie, you seemed tireless in your enthusiasm to give us all a great time, and you succeeded in doing so.

Thank you, Joanie, you have been a warm and generous Aunt and Godmother to me! You and my Mum were shining role models as to how women could be talented, caring, fun-loving and resourceful.



Penny, Deb and Biddy

There was never any question that you and your husbands were equals. You and Peggy are both legendary to me. I am sure that all the Bridge/Russell/Read offspring and our children and grandchildren will carry on the fine values that you have taught to us.

We love you and thank you, Joanie.

Biddy and Ross and family.



The entertainer



Margie and Jim with the birthday girl

Our dear Joanie, our amazing Aunt, our second Mum and dear friend.

Thank you for being so much part of our lives. You and Roy were always there for us and so generous with your hospitality and love.

So many fond memories – especially long hot summers at Alice Street. Joanie, the most wonderful entertainer and provider, the multitude of Boston Buns and endless salad rolls. And always the offer of an instant tea!

Have a wonderful 90th Birthday Joanie.

Our fondest love, Margie, Jim and Family



Generous spirit

Joanie, you are one of the most important people in my life. You are more than just an Aunt, you were always there for me, for us Bridge children. You must have been an amazing support



Xmas at Barwon Heads with Sarah, David, Joanie, Simon, Margie, Roy and Deb

to our Mum, a truly wonderful sister to Mum. We were always taken into your home, as one of the clan, and we spent a lot of time in your care throughout our lives.

My most vivid early memory is of when Penny was born in Horsham, and I was sent off to Melbourne to stay for an extended period with you. At that stage you had only boys, and you loved to treat me as your surrogate daughter during that stay. You bought me a little pink handbag to take to Malvern Grammar Prep School, where I attended as the only girl in the school, going with Rowan.

Joanie, you were a second mum on so many occasions. I am sure a school holiday did not pass without spending some of the time either at Mt Martha or Finch Street. Not only did you provide us with meals, a bed, fun activities, lots of chocolate cake, ice cream that came out of a bucket sized container, but you also had a constant stream of boys for us to take to school dances etc.



We played in the Glen Iris tennis tournament, and went to the Mt Martha yacht club dances, and all with cousins and their friends on tap. You were always ready for a joke, and made us laugh lots. You never worried about silly pomp and nonsense.



Deb and Alex



Deb and Pat at Barwon Heads

You were always so practical. You have been a wonderful role model to me. You were truly proud of your role as a mother, and valued the importance of this role. Your sense of family has been passed on to us. You always had time for your family, both immediate and extended.

You also shared your love of reading with me. We have often shared books, and had similar taste in our reading. You are always interested in what we are

up to, and follow keenly the lives of my children. You are such a generous spirit.

I hope that I can be half the Aunty to my nieces and nephews as you have been to me. You are a wonderful person, an amazing mother to your own children and second mother to us Bridge children. We love you!

Deb and Pat and family xx



Hugging books

Dear Joanie, Happy 90th Birthday.

Whenever I think of you, I feel warm and nurtured. You were so wonderful to me as a little girl – always there to help and relieve Mum, and most importantly, you are and were fun. We played cards, kick the tin, drank champagne and always laughed. You taught me the love of reading and that it is OK to just sit and hug a book.

Thank you for being so interested in our children and our lives.

Lots of love, Penny and Lawrie and family



Penny and Lawrie



Lawrie and Rowan



Afternoon tea at Penny's with Ted



Juggling the mob

Thank you Joan for being such a wonderful Aunt and friend to our family.

My memories are strongest of Mt Martha days. Our second home over summer. Whilst juggling your own mob – and their friends – you made space for us Bridge kids, in the most inclusive manner possible. You always made us feel welcomed – and part of the mob – and for this I am extremely grateful.



Jim Daish with Patten

For me, this was getting my head around city boys – and how they did things. I always felt the Russell boys were just a bit more sophisticated – and of course winning was everything – be it tennis, cricket, table tennis, slips catches on the beach or anything else which could be construed as fair competition.

You always made sure we were fairly matched – with a bit of stretch where possible. I was thrilled when you nominated me to be included in a men's four on the tennis court. I would be very pleased to be teamed with Roy – with his sharp wit and ready laugh – or for that matter Sarah – who was better than most of the men.

Thank you Joan for the wonderful experiences this gave me as a child and young man, but also for the support this gave to Mum – at a time when she needed it.

All my love, Patten



Words of wisdom

Dear Joanie, there are so many things that I'm thankful to you for, but probably the one that makes me smile the most is how you encouraged me to explore the outdoors. Do you remember when I was about 9 years old and stuck in the big green armchair at Mt Martha as I diligently tried to knit a ball of wool a day to complete a scarf? At one point you said: "Enough is enough", and hid my knitting needles and kicked me outside! I don't think I've ever completed a knitted item since, and probably now don't spend long enough sitting in armchairs. But I have certainly made up for these short falls with my enjoyment of the outdoors!

When I was a little older, and my brothers and sisters had all left for the big smoke, Mount Martha became my home away from home. You reserved a bed for me next to Sar's, and cared for me like a daughter. You were endlessly encouraging of the numerous Mount Martha activities I did, even though I was never that good at any of them! In particular, I remember you watching patiently as Sar and I tried to complete a table tennis rally up to 100, and your defence of my tennis strokes when Roy compared them to Russell standards.

Apart from sporting activities, you instigated, and sometimes turned a blind eye to, all sorts of social activities, which enabled the odd summer romance to blossom.

Finally, and in hindsight, perhaps more important than the confiscation of knitting needles, I thank you for some words of wisdom you gave me many years ago. Your words of wisdom instilled in me a sense of self-belief that I repeat to myself sometimes and remain grateful for.



“Your words of wisdom instilled in me a sense of self-belief that I repeat to myself sometimes and remain grateful for.”

Thea and Eve share with you and Sar some of the Mount Martha Magic.

Wishing you the happiest of Birthdays.

Much love, Emma

There is so much in your life to celebrate Joanie! You are a wonderful role model, and your sense of fun and generosity has been passed down through the family. I feel so lucky that you are my Aunt, and that Grace,



Fitzgeralds with Mary Whiteside



Greatly loved

Happy 90th Birthday! Simon would so wish to be here to share this occasion. He had so many happy memories of the Mt Martha days and your generosity, love and sense of fun. Jessie, Francesca and I got to share in some of his later summer visits to see you, Roy and his cousins. These were always great days of being warmly greeted and organised for swimming, water skiing and tennis. Really wonderful family times!

You have given so much to so many people and you are greatly loved.

Love, Mary



Francesca, Mary, Jessie and Simon



The Reads

90 years young

Having known you for the last 68 years, we have got to know each other very well as sister and brother. However it is not quite as simple as it first appears. You have always had a great sense of humour and you know how to have fun. We all enjoy a story told by you, with appropriate or inappropriate gloss, depending on how you choose to tell it.



My younger brothers

Some of your stories became legends. Bearing this in mind, I have one important question for my 90 year old sister: As one little bird said to a big bird in the children's book: "Are you my mother?"

This may seem to be an unusual question, as we all know you are not my mother. But you tell the story with great authority, which may give some outsiders something to think about.

On a winter's day in 1945, when you were still living at



“Loness”, our home in Camberwell, you answered a knock at our front door, with me in your arms when I was a very small baby. You were greeted by Roy Russell, who you have told us got such a shock, thinking I was your baby, that he didn’t come back for months, until he was satisfied who my real mother was. This was very fortunate for you and for me, as you and Roy got married, and I became, in effect, your de facto son.

All this background must be seen against the way children were dealt with when born out of wedlock. If a young unmarried girl became pregnant, after the first few months she would be sent away to the country to have the child. The mother would maintain that she was pregnant and had a child, which was in fact the daughter’s child.

“You took me under your wings, and made a great difference to my life.”



Lunch with Richard and Mariette at Mt Martha



This is an amusing story, but of course I am sure you are not my mother. Our mother was 44 when I was born, and Dad was 53, and many people in those days would have thought that this was too old to have a child.

Mum and Dad were very good parents to me and to you, Peg and Jose. In my early days, I was growing up as an only child. Because of this age gap, Mum and Dad did not meet young parents from my Kinda or school, and this had adverse social consequences for me. They were also too old to play games with me, and you were there to fill the gap.

You took me under your wing, and made a great difference to my life. Your son, John, was born in 1949 and was 4 years younger than me. I was the “big” 4-year-old uncle! John became my de facto younger brother. We became best friends, and shared a bachelor house together in Kooyong. I was John’s best man at his wedding.

I have happy memories of your flat in Adney Avenue Kew and your pride and joy, the little blue Austin A40. Roy was then a Commercial Airline pilot with ANA, and was away a lot. You took John and me to parks, swimming pools etc. You also took us to Mt Martha where we played 100s of games of tennis, and spent hours on the beach. These early days were happy days. Years went by and David, Rowan, Richard and Sarah arrived. You were very busy with small children but the children and Roy came first. You have devoted your whole life to your family and now you have been rewarded. Each of your children, and grandchildren, has been very successful in their chosen careers.



You were very caring to Mum and Dad in their final years, and you have helped me a great deal. In particular you enthusiastically adopted Mariette as your sister in law. It was a wonderful and generous gesture coming to our wedding in Holland in 1977.

You were very close to Robert and Tom as small children and helped Mariette in many ways with the children. This was greatly appreciated, as Mariette's mother was so far away.

Have a very happy 90th Birthday,

With love from Richard (Your baby brother)



Visiting Mariette and Richard in Mt Eliza



First port of call

Shortly after meeting Richard in 1976, you warmly welcomed me into your large family, which was not unlike my own, as I, like Sarah, have no sister but only 4 brothers, not dissimilar in age to your sons. Dinner at the Russell household tended to be fun but incredibly noisy as the boys with their sonorous voices were keen to outdo each other in telling the most outrageous jokes which tended to go way over my head (which you may have thought was a good thing anyway).

When Richard and I decided to get married in Holland in January 1977, and Garnie wanted to be there for the occasion, you realised that she would need some help as she was 75 years old and therefore “frail and elderly”. You organised to fly out with her well ahead of the wedding in order to allow her to acclimatise. You persuaded Roy to bring Richard and



Mariette Read



Sarah a week later. You arrived exhausted in Holland on New Year's Eve, but Garnie was unstoppable and dragged you sightseeing in wintery Amsterdam straightaway. Age is obviously not the determining factor in suffering from jetlag. It meant a lot to me that you were always keen to be part of our expanding family and you were my first port of call whenever I needed help or advice, which was often! You immediately dropped everything when I suffered a setback early into my first pregnancy and I rang you in tears. You took me to my specialist in East Melbourne straightaway and you held my hand until the all clear was given.

As our kids' de facto Grandmother, you always came to their birthday celebrations when they were little. You seemed to enjoy their parties as much as they did. You even contributed to the entertainment when, like Goldilocks, you sat on one of the little chairs which promptly broke and you came to rest on the lawn with a thud and all the kids burst out laughing. A clown came to your rescue to help you up again. You took it in good grace.

Throughout the years, you have given me your unquestioning support. You inundated me with hospitality and friendship, you brightened my dark days with your wicked sense of humour and boundless energy. I am very grateful to you and proud to be your sister in law.

Happy 90th Birthday, dearest Joan!

Mariette



Larger than Life

Joan has always been such an important part of our life – we think of you more like a Grandmother than an Aunt.

I remember you being at most of our birthdays and getting involved with us as young kids. You were always happy to be down at our level and, one time when I was 6 or 7, you sat on our kids' stool, holding court, when it gave way. We all laughed very hard, as did you!

You were very good supporting Mum and Dad while they worked during school holidays; we were often at Finch St. In fact you sat down and watched the new release of *BMX Bandits* on VHS with us!

***“Joanie,
you always
make us feel
welcome and
an integral
part of your
family”***



Amanda, Chloe, Robert and Annabelle

We all loved going to Mt Martha – swimming, beach, Joey, learning to play tennis. Most of all, Mt Martha was a focal point for the whole family. You and Roy also deserve some credit for helping me find my wife, Amanda. Thanks to your





Ted visiting Victoria by the Park

friendship with the De Crespigny's, you put in a good word... so for that I am very grateful!

Joanie, you always make us feel welcome and an integral part of your family. Your larger than life energy, formidable memory/mind and hospitality are things that I really cherish.

Happy Birthday Joanie!

Love Robert, Amanda and Family



Amanda Read with Chloe and Annabelle



Family stories



Mia, Tom and Emma

My memories of Joan are of great times at Mt Martha. When there, you would always welcome us and then Roy would farewell us with his glasses in his pocket and tapping on Dad's car roof. My earliest memories are of the excitement at the potential of going on a boat ride in the bay and playing on the beach or in the swimming pool. When we wanted a drink or something special, there you were spoiling all of us with some cordial or something to nibble on. I have fond memories of you always being happy to see us Read boys and Julianne, and how excited you were when you first met our Mia in more recent times. You have also been wonderful at telling a family story and recall all the details of our family whilst telling of past times with such passion.





Mia, Tom

Joan you are now 90, a wonderful celebration to be had I'm sure. I'd like to say Happy Birthday and thanks for being a legendary aunt.

Thanks also for always looking after Dad and for sharing so much with all the Read children.

Happy Birthday.

Lots of love, Tom, Emma and Mia



Richard and Mariette with their children and grandchildren



Back door

Joanie, I remember you always walking up the back steps at Bickleigh Street to attend one of our many afternoon teas and birthday celebrations. You would never use the front door. We were always delighted about this because, to us, it meant you really felt part of our immediate family.



At Julianne and Luke's wedding



with Julianne

You have always been, and continue to be, so very kind and generous to us. We are thrilled to be a part of your 90th birthday celebration!

Love, Julianne and Luke



Hosing down



Sarah and Gaynor at Roy's celebration

I had grown up with stories that my father told us of the two Read girls and his holidays at Mount Martha, which he adored. He was a great exaggerator, like you Joanie. I remember you telling me one day, after one of your particularly outrageous stories: “Why spoil a good story with the truth?” Since then, I have taken your advice on that, much to Richard’s frustration! When Richard and I first came to Australia in 1971, we stepped off the plane in a heatwave. I had never experienced anything like it. You could see that I was not suitably dressed, so you suggested that I stood in a flower bed at the airport, under the sprinklers, whilst you went to get the car. When you returned, I was completely soaked, but far more comfortable! That was the start of you hosing me down in the garden whenever I got too hot, much to the amusement of your family.



So, dear Joanie, as I look back over all those years and the wonderful memories of fun filled, hot summer days at Mount Martha, I feel so happy that your family has taken me in as one of their own



Gaynor and Richard visiting Mt Martha's newest coffee shop

and that we have all managed to keep in touch through the ups and downs of our very busy lives. Thank you and Roy so much for all the kindness and generosity that you have shown me since we first met in 1971.

Wishing you a very happy 90th birthday dear Joanie.

“That was the start of you hosing me down in the garden whenever I got too hot.”



Gaynor is never far from a hose



The Russells

90 glorious years



Gillie at my 90th birthday party

It is a beautiful morning, starting the day for your 90th birthday. I remember the very happy days we spent with you and the family at Mt Martha and several very special Christmas days. You were always fun and welcoming to us all. My boys remember the fun days on the beach swimming off the pontoon and playing kick the tin and other games with you in charge, making sure we all had a happy time.

90 glorious years and many experiences and special occasions with your family and friends. Congratulations and enjoy every minute.

Love Gilly Russell and family

Love and Laughter with Joan

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Many laughs

Neil of course has memories going back far longer than my nearly 50 years, starting with asking for sixpence to pay for a pie at your wedding. There were some memories that he didn't 'fess' up to but they were embellished by Roy and hilariously so by you. For instance, items of underwear found in odd spots. Not his, and certainly not mine! Neil's breaking into Finch Street by picking the smallest, but most expensive, window, the lead light beside the front door.



Sue, Annabelle and Georgia

One of my earliest memories was leaving Robbie as a tiny baby whilst I had a blessed few hours off. On my return, I found my naked baby on the dining room table at Finch Street,

being examined by a couple of student doctors, stethoscopes and those rubber discs on sticks were to the fore!

So many laughs enjoyed in that happy home. Hilarious stories shared and sometimes imagination alone had to get me over the line if I wasn't lucky enough to actually have been witness. I remember a tale being told about a bus trip around the Land of the Long White Cloud. As the descriptions unfolded of all the other happy travellers, who proved not be so, I remember tears rolling down my face as you described getting them



all into gear with you leading a sing-a-long followed by a Conga line!

Joanie, you without doubt were our favourite Pink Lady. In those days you switched roles from the warmest funniest in-law to a



Robbo and Neil



Rowan and Sue

“...you switched roles from the warmest funniest in-law to a most compassionate caring one”

most compassionate caring one. How wonderful you were to our little family, packing up the Pink Lady uniform and popping on the driver's gear to take us back to Banool for a surprise trip. So many things I'm eternally grateful to you for. Happy birthday, and thank you for all the memories.

Love Sue and Neil Lawrance



The Griffiths

Tennis fan



Playing Bridge with Anna and Chris is less terrifying than playing with Etta!

Joan, you have a special place in each of our hearts, owing to the part you have played in our lives over many years. You are so much loved by so many people.

You, Roy and your family made me feel so very much loved and “part of the family” when Chris and I began our lives together in 1973.

As we had a weekender at Mt Eliza, we saw a lot of you and Roy over the next sixteen years, before we left Melbourne to return to Queensland in 1989.

“You and your family made me feel so very much loved and “part of the family”...”



Anna

Love and Laughter with Joan



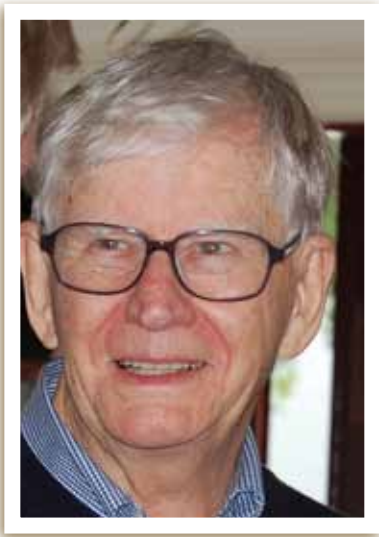
Spending part of most weekends with the Russell family was always fun. I remember sitting on the deck with you, sipping champagne as Chris and Roy battled it out on the tennis court – with the oldies challenging the youngies.

I can't say that I remember any of the victories or defeats, as you and I were far too busy chatting about more important things, making sure to call, "Well played!" or "Well left!", with the occasional appropriate applause. I smile now as I think of it.

But Joan, you are much more than fun. You are a wonderful mother, wife and friend and actually saved my life once, being the expert nurse you had trained to be.

Love, Anna Griffith

Golden hair



Chris Griffith

My story begins in 1943, when at thirteen I began four years of secondary education, travelling all the way from Queensland to Victoria at the end of each January, returning home each December.

I was a rather bewildered thirteen-year-old when I was met at Spencer Street Station by Aunt Bea, Garnie, the matriarch of the Read/Griffith family. Garnie was wonderful, looking after me for all the school term holidays each



year, at Camberwell and Alice Street, Mt Martha. You, all of six years older than me, acted as a loving, older sister to me, the young schoolboy.

You were a most attractive young woman, with wonderful auburn/golden hair, who thought nothing of taking me along to the cricket or a footy game at the MCG, despite the attentions of several beaux who would have much preferred time with you, without a young chaperone in tow.

I loved those times I spent with you and the rest of your welcoming family and then, much later on, the times Anna and I shared with both you and Roy.

Love, Chris Griffith

Fruitful life

Congratulations on the occasion of your 90th birthday! Birthday greetings with best wishes for health and happiness in the years ahead.

You have enjoyed 90 years with the joys of a wonderful family and friends – so trust you have many more. I am honoured to be at the great celebration of your fruitful life.

Kind thoughts.

With my best love, Beth Griffith



Beth and Anna



Godchildren

The best godmother ever

I believe my mother, then Joan Hastie, met you at Invergowrie when you were both filling in time after finishing school and before tertiary education (a gap year?). Judge and Mrs Read, your parents, were wonderful to Mum and, along with all their family, were lifelong friends.



Jim and Joan DeCrespigny's wedding



Holding Viv DeCrespigny as a baby

We grew up being told that Aunt Joan and Uncle Roy, my father's great friend from Geelong Grammar, met at my parents' wedding on 13 October 1945. The four always remained close friends.

We seemed to spend lots of time with the Russells.

You always

remembered my birthday and our families usually met about that time in September. We all loved going to Mt Martha and always enjoyed spending time in the Read's house



John and Lachlan (standing); Viv holding David; Robert



in Alice Street and, in later years, in the Russell's house, which to us was in the back garden. Mt Martha had a great garden and so much space where we loved playing. It was also a highlight going to the beach and enjoying the bathing box, the platform anchored away from the shore, and later even sailing amongst other things. Mt Martha had great sand for building castles, although how the grownups managed so many small children up and down the cliff is hard to imagine! Both families were very competitive and tennis was a favourite activity for all.

The Russells have been like family and it has been amazing how our paths have crossed over the years. One of the great celebrations was Amanda Gray's marriage to Robert Read – such a happy wedding when the two families celebrated together. Amanda is a grand daughter of Jim and Joan Champion de Crespigny and Rob is a grandson of Judge and Mrs Read.

I know Mum and Dad would wish you a very happy 90th birthday. Dad would have loved to celebrate with you all! Mum would think she is in the best place. She missed you over the last few years but living was all time consuming!

My love and best wishes to my very kind and thoughtful godmother.

Love Vivien Beer (né Champion de Crespigny)



Viv Beer



School friends

Riversdale Road tram



Ray Martin



Ray's graduation

I have known Joanie most of my life. We met on the Riversdale Road tram going to school – I was at Scotch College and you were at Tintern. We have been great friends ever since. You came to my university graduation. I have many happy memories of both you and Roy. You came to visit Rena and me when I was working in New York and Canberra. We continue to enjoy visiting Mt Martha – Sarah cooks us a roast dinner inside or we have a casual lunch outside on the deck. Many happy returns, dear Joan.

Love, Ray and Rena Martin

Love and Laughter with Joan

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Nursing Friends

Blessed generation

My warmest good wishes for your birthday. I'm so sorry I can't be with you for your celebration but I shall drink a toast to you on the day.

I have so many happy times in my memories of you and all your family. We were indeed a blessed generation.

My love to you and all your family, but especially to you.

Moyle Cordner (né Stubbs)



Lunch at Point Lonsdale with Moyle



Mt Martha friends

Common sense

I first knew Joan at Mt Martha when I was 6 and my brother Peter was 4. You and Peggy would take us to the beach. When our youngest brother was critically ill, you (and Ellen Peppard) nursed him at Fairholme. After he died, Judge and Mrs Read invited us to stay with them at Mt Martha (as also did Vin and Helen Woods).

I formed a close bond with Roy, being interested in his early flying career. Clare also has very fond memories of you Joan when we first moved to Mt Martha. Whilst I was a Pharmacist at Dromana, you kindly introduced Clare to Jenny Nutt, who in turn invited her



Reminiscing with Clare and Johnny O'Donabue

to join the tennis group, thus enabling Clare to make many friends. We had the two little boys and Clare was lonely as her family and friends were all in Melbourne. Your advice, warmth and general common sense is something Clare has always appreciated.

We both wish you a memorable and happy 90th birthday.

Love John and Clare O'Donabue



Great DNA

I was recently playing tennis on the Russell court against Sarah. Joan, on the deck, sunhat firmly affixed, barracking for me. Only 'right and proper' as I have had the pleasure of knowing Joan for 56



Outside lunch at Mt Martha with Chris and Enid

years, longer than Sarah. Sarah's response: "But I have your DNA, Mum." "Great DNA", I thought. To me, you have not really altered since I first met you at Mt Martha, when I was in my early teens. Direct, forthright, warm, a sharp and, at times, caustic wit. Privilege to know you, Joan, and to share this significant day.

Love, Enid Williams



Chris and Enid

Walks and talks

It has been a joy to get to know you, Joan, during the last 6 years. Always very engaging and interested in other people. You have a great sense of humour, and we have enjoyed our walks and talks.

Happy 90th!

Chris Rennie

Love and Laughter with Joan



Queen Protea



Thalia and Georgie

Birthday blessings dear Joan. Happy 90th Birthday.

The Queen Protea speaks of your openness to life and the beauty and vibrancy of you, with a myriad parts that have made your rich and long life much loved by your family and friends.

We have so enjoyed the meals we have shared with you and dear Sarah over these past years at Mt Martha - we look forward to more meetings with you.

We wish you a wonderful celebration today- with many happy memories to follow.

With love from Georgia and Thalia (G n T) xx



Victoria by the Park friends

From L to P plates

Mrs Russell – you have encouraged me to improve my wheelchair driving skills. We have been out and about on many walks in the sun and fresh air. In the early days, almost two years ago, I was definitely on my L plates. You would advise me to slow down, take the kerbs carefully, not to cross the bluestone paving and to check that the brakes were on when we stop.



Maggie doing wheelies on Mt Martha tennis court

The paths round Elsternwick are in good repair, the dog-walkers love to talk with you and Hopetoun Gardens is a wonderful place to sit and enjoy a ginger beer and nibbles.

Under your watchful eye, I have graduated from Ls to Red Ps and now to Green Ps. There have been incidents: bogged in a sand drift on Alice St (when you jokingly asked me: “Would



you prefer that I walked?”); lost on the way back from the Milk Bar on Kooyong Rd; losing a footplate near Gardenvale Park; a flat tyre; getting quite wet in a cloud-burst on the way back to Victoria by the Park. But you always give me a warm smile and a chuckle. You say: “Don’t worry, you will improve!”

Love, Maggie Kidd

Beautiful lady

I am blessed to have a job that I enjoy and I have the special residents to thank for this, you, Joan, being one of the very special.

When I started at Victoria by the Park, you and Roy were already settled in your new home and you made me feel very welcome.



Jenny at my 90th birthday party

First thing every morning when I arrive at Victoria by the Park, I get a “good morning “ and a lovely smile from you, a great way to start my working day. We both have a great appreciation of chocolate, chocolate frogs being our favourite.

You are the matriarch of a very special family, something that you can be very proud. A loved mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Your family give you great pleasure with their visits.

It is a privilege to be part of your life. Happy 90th dearest Joan.

Love, Jenny MacAulay



Sense of humour

I first met Joan and Roy in March 2011 when my mother, Pat, moved into Victoria by the Park.

Many animated and interesting conversations over a wide range of subjects occurred. Prato was a favourite as my daughter is studying law and also the early days of Ansett and travel.



Jane Morison

After Roy died, I continued my lovely chats with you and subsequently became friends with Sarah. You have always been very keen to know about my travels and parties and we have managed to have a little chat almost every day.

I particularly enjoyed reading your book about your life and have always admired you for your sense of humour.

Congratulations Joan, my second favourite resident at Victoria by the Park, on your 90th birthday. Thank you for inviting me to your party. It is a privilege to be here and celebrate with you.

Love, Jane Morison



Distinguished friend



Dinner partners: Etta, Marion, Lorraine and Trudi

It is a great joy today that we congratulate our distinguished friend and neighbour at our dining table. It has been my good fortune to observe your many skills and share your wonderful family. We love Sarah joining us at our dining table, and sharing many a laugh (and chocolate). We thank Joan for sharing Sarah with us.

I thank you, Joan, for always being yourself. You have managed to educate all your family in a quiet and loving manner.

All the best dear Joan.

Love, Trudi Frank



Rummy Tiles

Trudi and Mrs Adler



*Playing rummy tiles
with Mrs Adler*

Joan and I have become great friends since meeting a few years ago at Victoria By The Park. We were both born in 1924 and often reminisce about the past, especially our mutual involvement in Camberwell where you lived for many years. I started and ran 'The Chocolate Box' in Camberwell, so our lives were a little intertwined by the close geography. We now chat in the afternoons and enjoy playing Rummy Tiles which keeps us figuratively speaking on our toes...obviously not literally.

Love, Rose Adler (with Gary)



A unique time in our lives



Celebrating my 90th birthday with staff and residents at Victoria by the Park

Congratulations on reaching this fabulous milestone. We feel that we have created a special bond with you and your lovely family. My parents, Sam and Roza, and Roy and you together formed a very close and special friendship. We miss them all and will always treasure that unique time in our lives.

You and Sam were a great source of comfort and friendship during the sadness of loss in your lives. We wish you a very happy birthday and may you continue to enjoy the love and support of your lovely family.

***All our love and best wishes, Helen Russek
(Sam Epstein's daughter)***



Children's friends

Generous hospitality

Joanie, you are the much-loved general who orchestrated the wonderfully happy dynamics of Mt Martha.



James and Catherine Harvey

“For so many of us, you and Roy provided some of the happiest days and most treasured memories of our lives.”



Deb Lockie and James Harvey

On an average summer's day, there were several family friends staying, some of us with generous extensions. The Hancocks were coming for the day, the Glens were joining for tennis and the Bridges were arriving for afternoon tea. You remained cheerfully energised and unfazed, making us all feel so welcome. And if all the bedrooms and the playroom were full, we could, and did, sleep in the boat!

We loved centre court at Mt Martha which transformed to the G, the afternoons at the beach followed by barbeques and nights of games and tricks.

For so many of us, you and Roy provided some of the happiest days and most treasured memories of our lives. We are eternally grateful and are all enriched by your loving hospitality.

May you have a wonderful 90th birthday.

Love, James Harvey

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Love and Laughter with Joan



Splendid milestone

I am sad not to be with you all to help celebrate such a splendid milestone.

You were one of the first important people that I met when I arrived on these shores from the UK. You made me feel very welcome and were very supportive in your warmth and interest. I have always enjoyed your company and our chats about our families. We share the same passion for children, books and music and of course tales of James and his exploits!

Lots of love,

Catherine Harvey XX

Guide

I have so many very happy memories of holidays spent with your family – virtually every school holidays from the May holidays in 1959 for nearly 10 years! I just loved being there, mostly at Mt Martha but sometimes at Finch Street. You were at the centre of everything. Every moment was fun; and there were always kids coming and going.



Penny McMahon and Chris Cordner

I know lots of people have similar memories. We were all very lucky to have you guiding it all so lovingly.

Love, Chris Cordner



Hostess with the mostess

Joan (aka “Mrs Russell”), Happy Birthday! You came into my life at 18 and Matthew’s (my then boyfriend and now husband) pretty much around the same time. I admire so much about you Joan, especially your unconditional love for your family, shown through action as well as words.

I can see you are a central figure in your family’s lives but it seemed to me you preferred the role of “2-I-C” – playing the ‘straight man’ to the comedians in your family, allowing them to shine. I tried to be close by you if any anecdote was going down, as your amusing asides to those within earshot were always gold!

“It’s a privilege for both Matthew and me to have been part of your life.”



Lunch outside with Matt

Both Matt and I admire how you have lived out your values - strength, enduring love, compassion, acceptance and patience. I have always been struck by how understated you and Mr Russell were and how generous you have been with what you have, to so many. This generosity extended to your warm welcomes to us, and much later, to our children, into your home at Mt Martha.





Sari

It was you who instructed me to pick up a racquet, stand at the net and ‘Just block Sari, block!’

I remember when Matt was looking for part-time work when he was a student at Monash University. Helpful as always, you arranged for Matt to come around

to Finch Street to transfer some agapanthus. After putting him through his paces in the garden, you reportedly declared that Matthew’s ute and other ‘credentials’ (involving short shorts and T-shirts) meant he would be ideally suited for the ladies of East Malvern and you’d be delighted to put him on the register at the Citizens’ Advice Bureau (CAB).

You really have been the ‘hostess-with-the-mostest’! Whenever I hear the phrases: “Is it too early for a little drink?” or “Shall we get some rolls for lunch?”, my memories transport me to the kitchen and the deck at Mt Martha.



Sari and Matthew

We really couldn’t have had more different backgrounds Joan, but you found all the ways to bridge any gap, to bridge the generations and our professional lives, as you have with so many other people. Thank you for 33 years of friendship and for being a great example of strength, love, compassion and acceptance. It’s a privilege for both Matthew and me to have been part of your life.

Very best wishes for a wonderful day for your 90th!

Love, Sari and Matthew Baird



Warm host

Peter and I met Joan when we stayed at the Russell home in Mount Martha earlier this year. You are a warm host with a sharp tongue and cheeky sense of humour. At last we have met someone who can put Sarah in her place with a few quiet words.

During our stay, we learned about much of Mount Martha through the eyes of someone who has spent a lifetime of family summers

in this tranquil, bayside retreat. We were heartened to discover that even Russell children had to finish their chores before they could escape to the beach or run amok along the winding, dirt tracks through the surrounding scrubland. No doubt, you always ran a tight ship.

Each afternoon we would join you on the verandah to play a few hands of Bridge or tackle the daily crossword. Watching you sitting there in the late afternoon sun, dogs of all shapes and sizes sprawled at your feet, I thought how nice it must be to know every nook and cranny of a place, first as a girl, then as a wife and now as a grand and great grandmother. If I'm to do that, I'll need to live until I'm at least 136!



A lifetime of memories: from horse to wheelchair

Luella Paine and Peter Lamburd



Laughs beside the fire

Hullo dear Joan!

Do you remember Punch and Judy? Well, I'm Judi, one of your newer friends. We played Rummy Tiles and Ambush with Sarah and Maggie on a May weekend at Mt Martha.



Resting in between laps of the tennis court with Judi



Put another log on the fire

“... what a warm and generous friend and hostess you have been to so many people over nearly a century.”

You and Sarah told Maggie and me stories about your happy times with your family and your many, many friends at Mt Martha and Finch Street. While you were talking, our dogs, Bronte and Missey and Pepe and Charlie, ran around like a bunch of little kids. We all had a lot of laughs beside the fire. Sarah cooked some wonderful meals and you liked the lemon tart I bought from Cavallini's bakery in Clifton Hill.

The sun shone and you walked around the tennis court and then it rained and we played Bridge and you won. We all had



a very good time and I said to myself: “I hope I’m as funny and sharp as a tack as Joan is when I’m 90”.

The Russell family is so lucky to have you as their mother and grandmother and great grandmother. And what a warm and generous friend and hostess you have been to so many people over nearly a century. 90 years - that’s a great innings! Congratulations, Joan. I’m very glad Sarah introduced us! Maybe next time we play, I’ll beat you at Ambush!

A warm bug from Judi Kiraly



Dinner at Mt Martha with Peter, Lou, Georgie, Enid and Thalia



90th birthday party

Speeches

Sarah

Welcome everyone to a very special milestone – Mum, Yaya, Grandma, Joan and Joanie’s 90th birthday. I asked Mum recently how she got to live this long – and she replied: “Because Roy looked after me so well.” Mum was also very lucky to have loving parents, Garnie and Papa, and siblings Peg, Jose and Richard. They all looked after each other. This gave Mum the strength to look after us all – her children, grand children, nieces and nephews, cousins, and all her, and her children’s, friends. Mum has dedicated her life to her family and friends, and it is wonderful that so many of us can be here today to celebrate her birthday.

This is the first 90th birthday party I have ever organised, so I was not aware that I should factor in last minute apologies due to fractured neck of femurs and other orthopedic injuries. Mum’s cousin, Bill Thomson, and friend, Pat Hancock, are not here today because they are both recovering after having plates and pins inserted. When Janet Thompson phoned me, I recalled my mother’s 60th birthday party (which was also held at my house with Robert Read as a very young bar man). At this party, Mum said, with her characteristic acerbic wit, that she never expected to celebrate her 60th “North of the Yarra”. As he was leaving the party, Bill Thompson stumbled on the small step between my lounge and dining room. He warned me that one day someone might slip and sue me. I am pleased to say that no one has, but I am very glad Bill broke his femur at home, not here today at this party!



When Mum and I started to plan today's celebration, Mum's idea was to have a simple afternoon tea with her grandchildren and great grandchildren. In her characteristically flexi approach to entertaining, Mum started to add people to the guest list though I drew the line at having a busload of residents from VBTP! Mum has made many friends at VBTP and we will celebrate with them with the left over nibbles and tipples on her actual birthday, 15th April.

So, in the spirit of having a celebration with just her grand and great grand children, Georgia and James will speak about their Grandmother.



Birthday party speeches



Georgia

I have had a read of all the stories in the book – and there are some themes:



- Your great interest in grandchildren and great grandchildren; warm hugs and great sense of humour.
- Finch Street: sleep overs (roast pork and lamb); cards (500, Canasta, Bridge and Go Fish); card shark- Nick describes cards as one of your external organs; James is glad he can beat Nick at something!
- Mt Martha: tennis – watching, encouraging, never picked up a racquet; lunch spreads – “inside or out”; teaching board games, sense of humour; fly spray story.
- Great grandchildren: playing dolls with Valentina; having afternoon tea with Heidi at Victoria by the Park; not always sure which great grandchild belongs to whom – thought Louie belonged to Steph and Nick.
- Love of Arts: love of reading, theatre, film and sharing these with your grandchildren.
- Reading: books that pushed the boundaries
- Theatre: shows as birthday presents; Tim’s fond memories of the *Lion King*.
- Movies: grandchildren’s adventures to the city for movies.
- Sharp: correcting Pa.

Thank you for being our grandmother.



James



I couldn't say Grandma, so I called you Yaya. It stuck. I don't speak Greek, nor did I at 2 years old. Strictly coincidence.

Yaya, You took me on "outings". We had so much fun, but I must confess, I blame you, and you alone, for my profound love of all things fried – especially Fish and Chips.

Yaya, I treasure the early days: me in the "box room", you teaching me board games and, more importantly, cards. You will be proud to know that I love - and, like you, am quite good at - cards. Thank you. The Bridge lessons will take me to a level where - at least - I will beat Nick! With you to thank!

Yaya, thank you for being such a fantastic Yaya for me. Someone who has believed in me, despite good evidence to the contrary which would result in doubt for most. Your devotion to family is something to which I will aspire.

Yaya, my grandma. Thank you for the formative years, your support and love.



Susie

On the way from Monash University to the tennis club one day with my new best friend, Rowan, a stop was required at Finch Street to collect the right gear. We were greeted at the door by Joan, whom I had never met before.



Larger than life, warm, and welcoming, she grabbed me, led me to the kitchen, and poured us both enormous gin and tonics. It was 3 in the afternoon. Rowie had left us to go to get changed. By the time he returned, we were settled on the couch in the sunroom and Joan had worked out who my parents were, what school I had gone to, and that I was probably a hopeless tennis player.

We were well into our second gin and tonic by the time Rowie reappeared. I was quite inclined to stay with Joan, rather than go to watch him play tennis. We “clicked”, and have been great friends ever since.

Thank you Joan for being such a supportive and non critical mother-in-law, for showing so much love and patience with the children, for teaching me how to play Bridge, for all the discussions about books and the theatre, for the days of laughter and fun at Mt Martha and for your wonderful exaggerated stories which are legendary.

Happy 90th birthday Joan.



Rowan

I ask you all to now raise your glass to a wonderful woman:
Joan, my Mum





