

Women of Wynnum (Facebook page)

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Dorothy (Dolly) Myrtle Dalzell
12th April 1915 – 23rd May 2017
Lived in Wynnum for over 100 years

Dorothy Dalzell or “Dolly” as she was affectionately called, had experienced and lived through more change than anyone most of us would know.

Born in April 1915, Dorothy Myrtle Wilson, who turned 102 years of age in April this year, married Kenneth James Dalzell on 26th January 1935. Sadly, Kenneth passed away in August of 1998. They have seven children, 16 Grandchildren, 33 Great Grandchildren and 13 Great Great Grandchildren.

Dolly had enjoyed playing Bingo for over 30 years and attributed her good memory in her later years to the bingo keeping her mind active and could still recall change as far back as when she was a little girl.

“I can remember as a child when we moved here, I was only 12 months old.”

Dolly’s memory of growing up in Wynnum and Manly was sharp as a tack. Her recollections of favourite pastimes flowed as if they only happened yesterday. As you intently watch and listen it’s evident there was no need for her to search too deeply, or ponder for too long on days gone by, for the right words to flow from her mouth that portrayed her life experiences.

“I had three brothers who played football and cricket. I remember they use to put me between the goal posts as the goalkeeper.

“We used to walk down to the beach have a swim and then come back and we always had something amusing to do. There was no TV or anything like that.

“We used to walk to the picture theatre in Wynnum from Manly every week with our friends. We walked everywhere we didn’t own a car. There was no Wynnum State High School back then and we use to walk through the bush there. That’s what it was all about.”

An avid dressmaker, Dolly could recall how she used to sew incessantly for her family and friends.

“I would be up till all hours sewing, mostly for the family and other people. I used to make little dresses for a girl who is now 95 years of age and she still rings me every week. She lives in Mt Gravatt now and remembers everything and the dresses I use to make for her.”

Another favourite pastime of Dolly’s was gardening. One of Dolly and Kenneth’s properties was a small crop farm on Blackwood Road in Manly West where strawberries were the number one crop and many long days were spent picking and packing strawberries.

She recalled how she would help the local florist that lived behind her mum.

“I used to help her with bouquets and wreaths and was always gathering flowers for her and I would go there and help her a lot. I really loved gardening and planting as a young adult.”

As Dolly continued to narrate her life story, one could sit and listen in awe for hours as her story unfolded, detailing a lifetime of rapid change that, for most of us, we will never get to experience.

For anyone who has been here as long as Dolly, being “Bold for Change” was not so much a choice but a necessity growing up, more a way of life. You might even say an expectation, especially for females at that time.

Having attended Manly State School for a short while, Dolly recalled why her education was short-lived.

"I remember we used to walk to school. I only went for a while. My dad had an accident and my mum had an operation so I left school at 13 years old and stayed home to look after my family, I was the eldest girl, you had to help your family. There was no support back then, people had to help one another, there was not the greater support that we have now in the community.

"All community groups have now communicated together and have extended from what they were back then. There is still a strong sense of community and it still seems the same to me.

"Change comes natural to me you just keep going. I have done so well in my life that I don't think of time. The clock goes around, around and around and I have to go with it whether I can keep up or not. I don't seem to feel that old that I can't do anything but then I realise I can't because of my age, but I have got a good memory and there's so many favourite memories I wouldn't even know which one to pick.

She also recalled with great pride and fondness that she had been a member of the Morton Bay Ramblers Club for 33 years. Spending time with and making great friends along the way.

"I have met a lot of friends with all the outings and they still ring me and see me today, though sadly most of them have passed away.

"I have always been involved in something as well as Bingo until a couple of years ago. I've seen everything and I have always helped relatives and friends over the years.

"Like I said, I just go around with the clock."

As a member of the 100+ Club Dolly's story appeared in the January-February edition of the Centenarian. Dolly said she had the privilege of having her photograph taken with Anastasia Palaszczuk. The framed photograph hangs proudly on her living room wall for all her family and friends to see and is a constant reminder of the part she played in breaking the World Record.

Dolly was one of the 45 Centenarians who attended the Christmas luncheon hosted by Annastacia Palaszczuk at Parliament House on 4 November 2016. The gathering was able to break the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest gathering of Centenarians in the one place at the one time. The previous World Record was set in a nursing home in New Jersey (USA) in 2013 during a gathering of 31 Centenarians.

Having lived during a time when there was no electricity and when water had to be carted from up the road is a testament to Dolly's robust generation that we have the privilege of hearing her story.

It was an era of bathing boxes, a time when there were three cinemas. When bread, milk, ice, fruit and vegetables and seafood were all delivered to your door. The train terminated at Manly and the main employment of the day for the area was Borthwick's Abattoirs, Lytton Tannery and Hargreaves Cannery on Manly Road.

A time when the 1930s "photographer extraordinaire" aptly known as "Dirty George", affectionately coined by the kids in the area, could be seen on Sundays lugging his tripod and camera around taking photographs of the townsfolk. He allegedly lived in a shanty behind the Manly State School, rode a motorcycle assembled from parts from the rubbish dump and would tour Wynnum earning money by taking photos.

It was a time when troops were stationed fifty metres across the road during the 2nd World War and searchlights criss-crossed the Bay during the night. When having an air raid shelter in the back yard and air raid sirens blaring out unpredictably throughout the day and night were never a choice but a situation

thrust upon you as an innocent civilian. This is an experience that most of us have had the good fortune never to live through and we hope, with all our might, that generations to follow never will.

Like the well known Wynnum-Manly School of Arts housing a century of memories, originally built as a library the same year Dolly was born in 1915, the Grande Dame known to all as Dolly housed generations of loving memories in a time when "being bold for change" was the order and expectation of the day and her story of trials, tribulations and triumphs must live on for generations to come.

Dolly will be sadly missed. She leaves behind a legacy of love.