

Eulogy for Jess

For the few who now don't know me, I am Mark, Frank and Jess's eldest son, living in Wellington New Zealand, married to Trish with two children Harry (22) and Lucy (now 16 and 2/3rds).

Less than a month ago, I delivered a eulogy for Frank. It ran a little longer than the allotted five minutes. But, I had to read tributes from Trish, Harry and Lucy.

This time, Trish is here to deliver her own words. Maybe it will help me keep within my allotted time of 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

I will talk briefly about Jess, then Trish will provide some thoughts and read some brief messages from Harry, Lucy, Bruce and Carol and Percy's family living overseas.

Jess was born in Cape Town to Manoel D'Aguiar and Anne Julia Cooper on the 30th August 1932. She was the youngest of 12 children. First were two daughters (Nan and Rosa) followed by nine boys and then Jess. Jess used to tell us how her parents beckoned the boys

Sonny Billy Cecil Joe Percy Leslie George Peter Reggie

Jess was intelligent and smart. And she loved word games and puzzles. Yes, even until her last days, we could show her the nine letter word of the day, and she would get it very quickly.

But only when talking to her over this last trip and seeing the St Mary's school magazine for 1946–1947 did I realise that she had skipped two years at school. When she

started Standard Nine in 1947, she would have only been 14. In her final year at school (1948), she turned 16 and she was also head girl.

As you all will know Jess and Frank were married for 61 years.

They met at one of the rugby socials, where Frank had had a bit much to drink. Jess was there on a blind date with another fellow. Frank approached Jess in his stupor, sat down next to her and said "I won't bite you." Needless to say Jess was not impressed.

However, Frank was a stayer and for eight months he persisted trying to get Jess out on a date. Eventually, Jess conceded and as they say Bob's your uncle.

They were married in 1955, lived in Vredahoek and Mark was born in 1958. A job opportunity for Frank meant a brief spell in Windhoek from 1958 to 1963. In Windhoek their second son Simon was born in 1960.

A transfer to Johannesburg happened in 1963. It was here that Jess started working for Jack Plane as his personal assistant. Like many of her brothers, he was a self made business man and over the years, played a significant part in our lives.

Jess used her secretarial and administration skills over the years to help many organisations.

Jackie was born in 1964 and for the the next 16 years, first Bedfordview and then Glendower was home.

1979 saw a transfer to Somerset West for Frank's work. However that was a brief 4 year stay which included their

25th Wedding Anniversary and Frank and Jess's 50th Birthdays.

For the next 21 years, they returned to Johannesburg, again living in Glendower.

I left South Africa in December 1983, ended up in Wellington, New Zealand, met Trish and married in 1990. Although Frank and Jess were not at our wedding, we did travel back immediately after that and spent our 'honeymoon' with them.

In 1993, Frank and Jess made what was to be the first of eight trips to New Zealand. The lure of the grandchildren, first Harry in 1994 and then Lucy in 1999, was too great. It is satisfying to see the bond that developed between grandparents and grandchildren during and after those trips.

2004 saw Frank and Jess down size and return to their roots in the Cape. They settled in Parklands and had 10 happy years here, getting involved in the community and being close to family.

In April 2015, they undertook the second downsizing and moved into River Glade Retirement Village. Unfortunately, health issues occurred, but thankfully they ended up in the care of River Glade Health Care where they were very well cared for.

During one of the early trips out to New Zealand, we introduced Jess to email. On their return, I organised the purchase and installation of a PC and some one-on-one tuition to show her how to use it i.e. sending and receiving email. It was a big thing at the time, but she persevered,

came to terms with the technology and it opened up a whole new way of communication.

When Jess and Frank downsized to live in the River Glade Health Care center, it was not viable to take her PC with her. David, her nephew, set her up with an iPad and again she persevered and learnt the technology to be able to play her scrabble games, message and email people around the world

Jess's family played an essential part of her life and part of ours. Being based in Johannesburg, we were always the stopping off point for D'Aguiars visiting or passing through Johannesburg. We have many fond memories of George's family visiting from Bulawayo, Les and Jean's boys visiting from Cape Town or Peter staying from Durban.

The biggest loss for me is the sense of the break with the past. When I prepared the eulogy for Frank's memorial service, I had Jess to bounce ideas off and fact check information. Jess was the one person who 'knew' the family history. Looking at old photographs, she could always provide information and some background about the events and people. If we wanted to know what a member of the family was up to, Jess invariably would have some news.

Who is going to do that now?

Tribute for Jess from Trish

30.08.32 – 20.01.17

Dear Jess

Where to start? You were so many things to me in the 26 years that we shared.

Our first meeting in 1990 was as daughter-in-law and mother-in-law but our relationship quickly progressed to being one of friendship. You welcomed me into your family and were the most uncritical mother-in-law and grandmother I know. Those mother-in-law jokes just didn't apply to you. I realise now how difficult it must have been for you to accept that Mark had chosen a NZ wife and would be living his life so far away. However, you didn't moan about it – instead you got on with establishing a good connection, making numerous trips to NZ and constantly keeping in touch with phone calls, emails, skype and facetime. You were a great adopter of technology, which helped enormously, and pleased Mark no end.

I suspect that you had nearly given up on having grandchildren, but when they arrived you were delighted. You commented that there was only so much that you could buy for other people's grandchildren – finally you could choose things for your own. Clothing, books and toys were chosen with love and greatly appreciated.

Best of all though, your legacy to them was giving them your time and attention. On your visits to NZ, you spent many hours playing and talking about Thomas the Tank Engine, Noddy, The Wiggles and playing rummikub and scrabble. You are probably the only grandmother in the world who became a Pokemon expert, memorizing mind-numbing details and drawing them all, so that you could communicate with the children on what interested them.

Even when you returned home to South Africa you continued to be actively interested in their lives. For many years you emailed Harry every day and he replied – most of the time. He learnt to use this to his advantage. He would take forever to get ready for bed at night and when we started to get cross and tell him to hurry up he would then plead 'but I still have to do my email to Jess' knowing full well that we would capitulate and give him a few extra minutes. The two of you developed your own abbreviated language. Your emails would often start with 'Today I SAH (stayed at home), while FWTG (Frank went to the gym).

Over the years, I'm sure that there must have been times when you wanted to give us advice about parenting but you refrained, and instead told us what a great job we were doing. Thank you for that. Knowing your strong faith, maybe you prayed about the things that you thought should change!

You liked to keep up to date with what the grandchildren were doing and were proud of their achievements. I had a smile when Lucy had her scholarship published on the school website recently and this comment appeared at the end of the post, 'Wow, that's our granddaughter – we are sooo proud of you. Jess & Frank in South Africa'. It would not have been cool for me to comment but you got away with it. We know that some of the credit for their achievements goes to you for being such a positive influence in their formative years. You shared especially your love of words with them.

The qualities you demonstrated with your grandchildren were not restricted to them. Since I have been here, a recurring theme in talking to people who knew you is that you always put others first, making them the centre of attention rather than yourself. You were interested in, and cared greatly for everyone in your large, extended family, your brother Peter and all the nieces and nephews, both here and overseas, and you loved to keep tabs on what was happening in their lives. Not only that, you also remembered what was going on in other people's families, often asking about the many relatives I have.

This empathy and interest in others extended to the many friends in your community, some of whom I've had the privilege of meeting. Probus, church, rosary group, bridge, bingo, bowls, painting to name some of them.

There were times in your life that were difficult. Losing your beautiful daughter, Jackie, was one of them. The last couple of years were tough for you Jess, but you pulled through cancer treatment to be here for Frank and you cared for him right to the end. Even in your last days in hospital you put others first, asking how they were doing rather than sharing the discomfort you were going through. When I arrived at the hospital the first thing you said was 'how was your flight?' Mark and I were so fortunate to have time to say goodbye to you.

Jess, my life was enriched by knowing you. Thank you for everything.

Harry tribute to Jess

A few words from grandson Harry-

Jess has always had room in her heart to indulge her grandchildren, no matter whether we were in the same house or on different continents.

When she first came to visit, she never said no to indulging me, no matter whether it meant spending hours covering the rumpus room in wooden train tracks, tediously drawing all 151 Pokémon for me to cut out and colour in, or letting me (mis)guide her on our walks to school.

When she was in South Africa, she continued to accommodate. For most of my childhood, we sent daily emails back and forth. Each day she would come up with more and more convoluted acronyms for me. 'BGGs', or 'beloved gorgeous grandson' was just the starting point. I've occasionally looked back on some of them, and I wonder how on earth she managed to understand half of what I said.

The understanding in her heart was only rivalled by the understanding in her mind. She adored puzzles, wordplay and card games, and welcomed new technology with open arms. Right up until the end, she competed in the daily anagram over iMessage with us. I'm both proud and ashamed to say that, more often than not, she would win.

Her aptitude for words has influenced us in different ways. I am studying law. My sister's Chinese has won her a scholarship to study in China. Her son has made a living writing in computer languages.

Her hands are now cold, but I can still feel her warmth eleven thousand kilometres away.

Bruce and Carol tribute to Jess

Dearest Jess

Although Bruce and I have heavy hearts knowing you are no longer with us, we know you are in a better place back with Frank again. You were best friends and soulmates and belong together.

We have so many happy memories of you both – the most recent being in July last year.

We know how much you loved your family and friends. We recall how you so enjoyed those bridge and bingo sessions and relished every opportunity to catch up with friends. Your rosary group was a great comfort for you – with kind friends taking you along with them each week.

Your computer was such an important tool in keeping you connected to all the family. You loved staying in touch, catching up on all the latest news and making sure the family stayed connected.

We enjoyed regular Skype sessions with you where Frank would often put his head around the corner and gleefully ask “what has happened to NZ cricket?” (just to wind Bruce up), or woefully bemoan another loss by his beloved Springboks! Then off he would go, leaving you and Carol to continue your chat.

You were both so very proud of your grandchildren Harry & Lucy – often asking us “how’s our New Zealand family”? You were also keenly interested in the antics of Bruce’s four grandchildren and loved receiving photos of them all.

We will miss those times and always treasure them.

RIP dearest Aunty Jess – it has been a privilege to be a part of your life.

All our love, Bruce & Carol xx