

## WINIFRED MARIAN MILLARD 1914-2013



WINIFRED MARIAN MILLARD was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1914, during World War 1

She was the fourth child of Sidney and Maude Millard. And she was a twin. The third child, her twin brother Len, was not just her brother but her soul mate for 87 years until he passed away in 2000. Len's daughter, Maureen and her husband Paul are here today.

She had an older brother Arthur or Artie (whose son John and his wife Sue are here today) and an older sister Ellie (whose younger son Bernard and his wife Noeleen are here today, having travelled from Queensland).

Mum adored both Artie and Ellie as indeed she adored her mother and father.

Winifred was born in Carlton where she lived until 1951 when, now Winifred Kimpton, she and her husband George moved to 26 Queens Parade Fawkner. Her only other home was the Hilltop Aged Care facility in Preston. Hilltop was her home from the day before her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday in 2005 until her death last Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2013, aged 98. She passed away in the Freemasons Hospital East Melbourne.

These bare facts, important though they are, do not adequately describe the life that Winifred had and the life we are here today to celebrate.

There is another certainly more dramatic way of describing at least the circumstances of her birth.

Winifred, Win or Winnie soon to be known more often as "Girlie" was indeed fortunate to survive the first few days of her life.

Her life was not threatened because she was a sickly child – far from it. The problem was that Maude, her mother, had given birth to twins.

Think about it... It's 1914! It's a home birth! The mother did not have the benefit of modern medical science. And she had no idea she was having twins!

When they were born, heroic wife and mother that Maude was ... she was in despair!

Already with two young children, she felt the family was too poor to provide for two extra mouths to feed rather than the one she had expected.

She expressed her deep concerns to several family members.

One of these was her brother-in-law, the younger brother of her husband, Sid. The younger brother was known as "Babe".

Ever a practical joker, Babe thought Maude needed cheering up and perhaps a lesson in life's realities.

He turned up at Maude's Nicholson Street rented house and sat at her bedside.

The twins were asleep in the room.

Babe was not empty handed - he had a bucket full of water with him and looked deeply concerned.

"Maudie" he said to his diminutive sister-in-law. (Our grandmother was a very small woman, about 4 feet 9 inches in height).

"Yes Babe" she replied.

"Having the two little ones seems to be a worry" said Babe, brandishing the lapping bucket of water under her nose, still looking very serious.

"Yes, it is a worry" said Maude

"Well then. Let's go." said Babe -pointed at the sleeping infants, pointed at the bucket and breaking into a gleeful grin he added...

"Which one should we drown?"

Of course ... it was Babe's joke, but it was a brilliant wake-up call.

For years after our grandmother (Ma) told the story with great delight – often in front of Mum.

She always credited Babe with getting her over her misery and getting on with life.

The bucket was emptied down the sink ... and Mum (and Len) both survived.

And what a life she had!

By the age of 30 she had lived through two World Wars and the Great Depression.

And her young life was significantly altered by all of those three events.

Going overseas in 1916 her father was away for 3 years. He served in the Army in France. He was on one occasion buried alive in the battle-field mud and ...like so many soldiers who returned home, deeply traumatized by the whole experience.

He returned to Australia in 1919 to his wife and young family of four children. In the subsequent period until his death in 1938 he was rarely completely well.

In the year prior to her father's death, Mum's older sister, Ellie, passed away.

For Winifred/Girlie the loss of not just her sister but also her father in such a short space of time was incredibly traumatic, but she bore her grief stoically.

By this time she was working as a seamstress sitting at a sewing machine in an Elgin Street Carlton shirt factory.

She had little formal education beyond primary school – Why? Because with the onset of the Great Depression, as a very bright 14 year old at Melbourne Girls High School (later MacRobertson Girls High), she was forced to leave school to find a job to help with the family finances.

It must be said that she rarely, probably never, complained when faced with adversity and she was ever an optimist. Her optimism was justified because ...

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 – perhaps in 1938 she met the love of her life – George Henry Kimpton.

They met at dances (we think initially at a dance hall called Freeman's).

George was a great dancer and a handsome bloke – probably a good thing as he was from working class Kensington (a bit down market for a fashion-plate of a girl from upper-working class Carlton!).

The romance blossomed but, of course, World War II intervened.

George enlisted for the army leaving behind his flour-milling job at Kimpton's Flour Mills. (He was a mill-hand not an owner – a distant relation only!)

Winifred/Girlie was displeased about George joining the Army. She did not want to risk a repeat of the events that affected her father, mother and the family.

Our parents married in August 1941.

Mum was a determined woman. She actively sought out ways of getting George back to civilian life. Dad was released from the army well before the end of the war. It was not strictly because of Mum's activism but because flour-milling was declared an essential service and Dad was a first class miller. But it was Mum who set about ensuring that he made the move. It was but one example of her determination shining though.

They started a family when the war was almost over.

The first born child (a boy, Neil) was born in 1945. Two daughters, Lois and Beverley followed.

***(Regarding these two births I am not able to reveal precise dates...  
In the first instance on strict legal advice and in the second on strict medical advice)***

Mum was rarely confined to what was called "Home Duties". Not long after Bev started primary school, or even earlier she was employed as an outworker seamstress, working from home sewing pillow-cases and mattress covers for a Coburg firm "Anode Latex". If you have ever slept on a Seafoam mattress or rested your head on a Seafoam pillow chances are Winifred Kimpton was involved in the manufacture.

In later years, with the children growing up she worked at the Children's Hospital as a canteen worker. It was a job she loved. She met many people and became "pals" with a host of fellow workers and Auxiliary volunteers. She socialized with these women for many years after she retired.

In 1977 our father retired after 44 years at the Mill. Together they travelled extensively with a long overseas trip to Europe and the USA. They had also travelled widely in Australia. (Sadly her beloved mother passed away in 1978 aged 91 whilst Mum and Dad were overseas.) Our father's retirement was short. He passed away in 1979.

Many thought having lost her mother and husband in quick succession would leave Mum helpless and grief stricken. She did grieve deeply but she was never helpless.

She continued to meet with her many "pals", quite a few of them fellow parishioners here at St. Linus. She went alone to the USA and spent time with a girlhood friend, Hazel, who had married an American Serviceman during World War II and moved to the USA.

She also totally embraced being a grandmother. Her children provided nine grand-children in all, coming between 1976 and 1989.

Nikki will tell of their collective memories of their Grandma.

It is extra-ordinary to think that after Dad died, Mum lived for 26 years on her own at 26 Queens Parade before moving to Hilltop Aged Care in 2005.

Many stories will emerge about Mum in the days, weeks and months following what you might hear today from myself and from Nikki. For now I want to just relate a few that Bev, Lois and I have recalled in the last few days.

To begin... Mum was determined that her children should have every opportunity in life. Uppermost in her mind was that we should all complete our education. Perhaps the impetus came from her own formal education being cut short

She also instilled in us, by example, a strong sense of decency and fair play.

Business people who tried to put it over her felt her wrath and determination. The man from Homecrafts who sold her a fridge on lay by and who hid the exorbitant interest rate in small print in the contract must have forever regretted his deceitfulness.

She was relentless. She gave him no peace. And the interest was never paid... and ...we kept the fridge!!

She loved those things that go with family.

She revelled in the annual holiday with the children and Dad at the beach at Rye. We always went in mid January when a second cousin of the Millard family lent us their tent and camp site.

She was extremely fond of her cousin Kath and all of the Burns family who lived in Canberra after moving from Melbourne. She loved visiting them, and she was always delighted whenever they visited Melbourne.

She loved the pre-Xmas party at her family home at 35 Nicholson St. Carlton. (Our cousins Maureen and John will recall them).

Mum giggled uncontrollably at her twin-brother Len's capacity to catch the children unawares (every year) as they ate Ma's cream cakes. He always managed to catch the kids with his hand as they ate the cake. Time and again over the years cream exploded over our faces and onto the table. He was a genius at it and Mum loved it so much there was no thought for protecting the children !!

Mum was very fond of her neighbours at Queens Parade. We are delighted that Alan Hilton, Lorraine Strickland and Maureen Cook could be here today. You should all know just how fond she was of you.

For the sports minded –

Every year she looked forward to going to the races with Dad on Moonee Valley Cup Day ...

Whenever Dad went to the races without her Mum looked forward to his return. A good day meant he would hand over five quid or twenty dollars or whatever he had won but,.. of course on most occasions there were disappointments.

And then there was always the Carlton Football Club.

Like her mother she was a passionate Blues supporter. Mostly she listened to games on the radio, later she watched the telly. And often she went to games with us when we were in our teens.

We can truly celebrate Mum's long and active life whilst still acknowledging that her final years were blighted by dementia. Whilst she was not unhappy during these final years, the cruel reality of her dementia meant that she missed out on the enjoyment she would have derived from the many triumphs of all of her grandchildren.

I will finish with some words of appreciation and acknowledgements.

To everyone here, and especially those who have travelled a long way, and those who have sent messages of condolence, we say a deep thank you.

To the staff and management at Hilltop in Preston. Thank you for all your care and attention for Mum in the years she was with you.

And thank you to the staff at Freemason's in East Melbourne who cared for Mum in the last weeks of her life.

To Mum's magnificent doctor, Merrilyn Gates, who is not able to be here today – we have already conveyed our deepest appreciation.

To Eileen De Moore, our organist today – Thank you Eileen. Eileen is a long-standing friend of our family. (And, especially important, she is another passionate Blues supporter!)

Finally, to Jo-Anne, our Vicar, we say thank you for all you have done in the last few days to support and help us through this sad time.

Thank you all