

# THE CROFT CHRONICLE

January 2015

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DEAR SUZANNE, ROSS & FAMILY.

Greetings All,

It is hard to comprehend that my lovely wife Joan is not with me anymore. Together, we raised four wonderful children (John Jnr, Suzanne, Jeanette and Robert).

Joan was so proud of her children and grandchildren. For those of you who did not know of Joan's passing, this news will surely come as a shock. To those who did know, I would like to thank you for your condolences and expressions of sympathy. Thank you also to those who attended her Funeral Service.



We will always have many cherished and fond memories of Joan. She will be in our hearts forever. This letter is dedicated to her memory. Joan was always a bright bubbly person. She was a wonderful wife and mother, a great cook and a fantastic host. She had such a happy and cheerful nature. Her smile lit up the room and her laugh was infectious.

She truly was one of a kind!

Joan's father was Robert John Twiss. He had three children – Pamela was the eldest then John and Joan was the youngest. They were all born in the Punjab area of Northern India.

Joan was born in 1937 at Lyallpur which is West of Lahore. Since partition in India in 1947 took place, her birthplace is now within the boundaries of Pakistan. Joan's father was a Flour Miller and worked in various parts of India. During the Second World War he was in the British Army.

In 1947, Joan's father Robert Twiss decided that due to unrest in India, he would move his wife Esme and their two youngest children to Perth, Western Australia and enrolled the children into boarding school. Joan was 10 years old. Her eldest sister Pamela who was 10 years older had married and was living in England. Esme was booked into the Wentworth Hotel in Perth as a long time guest.

Robert had to return to India to complete his contract with the British India Flour Mills. A year later, Esme decided to move from Perth to Sydney where she had a male friend. When Joan's father heard that his wife had left, he organized for his two children to be sent back to Bombay on the first available ship.

In 1948, Joan and John were both enrolled into Cathedral school in Bombay where they completed their education. Whilst living in Bombay, home was in York House. This was a grand old building in Barrow Road in the suburb of Colaba and not far from Cathedral School. It was divided into flats and was only one street away from the famous Taj International Hotel and the gateway to India.

In late 1954, Joan's father Robert decided Australia was the better place for the children to live. Back to Perth they went and bought a house in the suburb of Tuart Hill. Whilst in Australia, Robert was contacted by his old Indian Company, Central India Flour Mills, advising him that a new mill had been built in Bhopal and offered him the position of manager. As it was all he knew and the fact that the contract was too good to pass up, he accepted, on his terms and returned to India.

His marriage to Esme, Joan's mother was over and after being back in India for a time, he met a lady called Cath. Cath was the matron at the local hospital and a few years later they married. They adopted a little girl from the local orphanage and brought her up giving her a good home and education. Her name is Paula Twiss and works for the Army's Defence Department in Bhopal as an auditor.

Joan's father died in 1973 aged 71 and Cath died in 1997 aged 79. They are both buried in the Christian Cemetery in Bhopal.

It is extraordinary how fate guides you. My mother moved from Victoria to Perth to live in 1952 and although I was living in Melbourne, I visited her annually. During my annual visit in January 1955, I met the love of my life at a dance at the Embassy Ballroom. I was instantly smitten. She was different and had a beautiful smile. My first impression was WOW!!!. I moved into high gear and plucked up the courage to ask for a dance. I was lucky that there was one spot left on her dance card. After the dance, I asked if I could escort her home to which she agreed. Once we arrived at her home, I thought I would be brave and ask for a good-night kiss. I was promptly told "I don't kiss anyone on the first date". Her home was in the opposite direction to mine and miles out of my way. I thought that it was the least she could have done but it only made me like her more.

I did manage to persuade her to spend the following day with me at the South Fremantle beach and yippee, I got that kiss and many more!! The rest, as they say in the classics, is History. She fell for my charm, my wit and my exceedingly good looks!! We eventually set up home in Melbourne and enjoyed a happy wonderful life together.

In August 2013, Joan was diagnosed and operated on for cancer. Initially, she showed signs of improvement but unfortunately during her long stay in hospital for radio and chemo therapy, she picked up a very nasty Super bug called Pseudomonas. It is an ever evolving bug that even antibiotics cannot kill. This bug hides in various parts of the body, slowly shutting down vital organs.

As I mentioned in last year's "Croft Chronicle" Joan was discharged from hospital on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2013. After three months at home she had to return to hospital for a small operation to help increase out-flow from her kidneys, unfortunately, the operation was not successful and she had to go back in for a second operation.

In May 2014, Joan was rushed back into hospital by ambulance where she spent time in Intensive Care before finally moving on to a ward. Joan spent a further month in hospital on antibiotics before being transferred to a rehabilitation unit. Joan never really picked up and after a bug battle, her body had finally had enough and we lost her on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2014. It was luck that most of the family were in the hospital and by her side when she said her last goodbye.

Our wonderful children did what they could for their mum in the last 12 months. Suzanne was constantly running back and forth to the various hospitals with clean clothes and food to try to keep her spirits up. Jeanette took time off work and moved down from Sydney to be close for her final six weeks with us. John

Jnr. visited continually and stayed with me when he could. Sadly, Robert our youngest arrived from America a day too late after booking flights on the advice of Doctors, but Joan could not hang on as long as they had estimated.

Joan and her sister Pamela died within six months of each other in 2014 and are both buried in Springvale Cemetery.

We had received advice from a classmate of Joan's informing us that a 60<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the Class of 1954 at her School in Bombay was being organized. Joan would have loved to have gone and meet up with so many of her classmates of 60 years ago that are now scattered around the globe. I decided to attend and represent Joan. My children decided I was too old to go alone (cheeky monkeys as I'm only 84). So my youngest daughter Jeanette offered to accompany her dad.

We left Melbourne on November 6<sup>th</sup> 2014 flying via Singapore. Bombay was ridiculously hot and we had the air conditioning going all day and all night so that we could sleep. We explored all the ins and outs of Bombay and as we were lucky to know people there and we were shown some fantastic hospitality.

The school reunion was spread over three days 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November. It was great to meet and talk to Joan's school classmates. I went armed with photographs of her and the family which I took great delight in showing to everyone I met.

Approximately 40 of her classmates attended. Just some of the names of some of her friends were Gracie Hayeen, Zarin Lam, Mary Balsara, Homa Shirazi, Minnie Kuranjia, Diana Steggles, Ravi Jaitley. The Reunion organizer was Suhas Phadke. It was also great to meet up again in Bombay with friends Erach and Minnie Todywalla and Gul Kuranjia.

We spent ten days in Bombay (population 22 million) after which we went by train overnight to Bhopal. Bhopal is 870 km. from Bombay in Central India and it took us 14 hours to get there. The train was the longest train I had ever seen. There were approximately 27 carriages and it was fully booked.

Gracie, one of Joan's class friends came with us. Gracie was also born in India and now lives in Simi Valley which is north of Los Angeles. We stayed with Paula (Joan's Half-Sister) who could not do enough for us. She made us so comfortable and showed us around both the City and the Countryside. We also caught up with friends, Joseph and Veera Braganza and their daughter Jennifer who we met on our visit to Bhopal in 1985. Paula is planning to visit Australia in March or April. After four days in Bhopal, we took the easy way back to Bombay flying Air India and it only took 1½ hours.

Apologies for such a long letter but many people have asked about Joan's background. This explains where she was born and why and how she came to live in Australia.

How lucky was I to have met and married such a beautiful, extraordinary girl. She originally came to Australia because of Partition in India and I only went to Perth because my mother had moved there. It was by chance that I went to the local dance on that particular night. It was fate and it was meant to be. I know we all have moments in time that change our lives but I consider myself one of the luckiest people alive to have gone to the dance that night.

A very big thank you to those of you who sent Christmas greetings. It is always great to hear from friends. I mean real friends – not like today's Facebook friends!!! In reply, I send you this newsletter and I hope it finds you in good health. I truly hope 2015 is good to you and your loved ones.

January came in with a bang this year. We had some very hot days between 35 and 40 degrees. We have had bush fires across the Country. We have had 2 years of really crazy weather. I have read that they are predicting scorching temperatures in the next few decades.

A little update on the family:-

We have 9 grandchildren. The eldest is Danielle; She was married on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 to a good Greek boy named, of course, Dimitrios. Danielle's younger sister Melissa has just celebrated her engagement to Dean on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2015. Dean is a lovely young man. He came with his parents and brothers in 2001 from South Africa to settle. Australia has certainly become a Multi-Cultural Country.

On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January, Chelsea (22) and Madeline (20), daughters of our youngest son, Robert, arrived from America. Madeline was here for four weeks and returned back home on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> February to continue her University studies. She is studying to be a criminal lawyer (could be useful if I get into any trouble). Chelsea was here for six weeks and returned to the United States on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February. Chelsea has just finished University and is now looking for a position as a Sports Journalist on T.V. Their brother James (18) is hoping to visit Australia next year with his Dad.

Chelsea and Madeline packed a lot into their holiday – spending time with my eldest son John & wife Lyn at their house near the beach. Also at Suzanne & Ross's house boat at Lake Eildon water skiing etc. They spent a day at the Australian Open Tennis Championship and five days in Sydney for the Australia Day celebrations with my youngest daughter Jeanette and her boys.

Ben (23) Jeanette's eldest is recovering from his bad skiing accident and is settled and working in Sydney. Chris (21) his younger brother is at University studying Physics and Mechanical Engineering at Sydney University.

The eldest of Suzanne's two children is Paige who has recently celebrated her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday and has moved out of home into her own place. Paige works in her Dad's carpet shop, although it is no longer his shop as Ross has just sold the business and retired. Kahala, the youngest of the grandchildren is 13 and is just starting her second year of high school.

As for myself, I am doing ok. Health-wise for a bloke of 84, I am fighting fit. I have some pain in my left leg that is going to need some surgery to fix that up, but once that is done, I am still hoping for one more 'Around the World' trip.

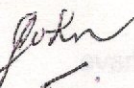
This year, we have had a few overseas visitors so if anyone is heading "Down Under" make sure you visit and say G'day. Alex and Sheryl Kwai from Burnaby in Vancouver (Canada) spent a few days with us. The last time we saw them was in 1997 when Joan and I visited Canada.

Looking forward, I have a few things planned. The big one is my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021. So please make sure you make a note and plan your visit to the Land Down Under.

I hope the rest of this year is happy and prosperous for you all and your loved ones. My life from now on will be very different without Joan by my side but I am truly thankful that Joan was with me for so many happy years and I know I will be with her again one day.

From my family to yours –

Lots of love

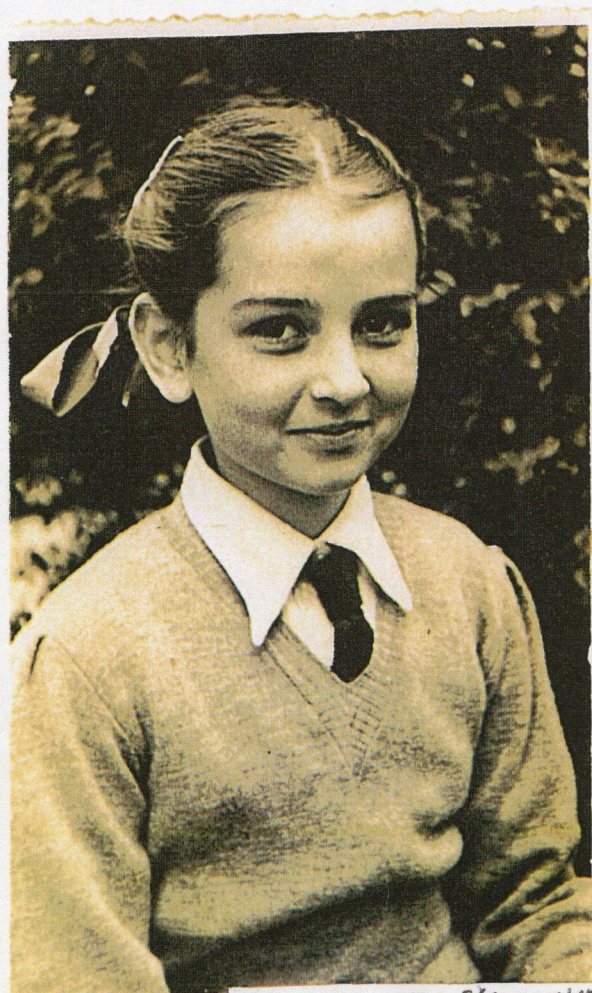
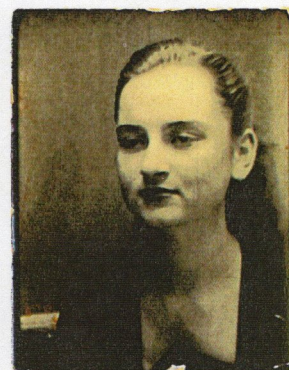
  
John



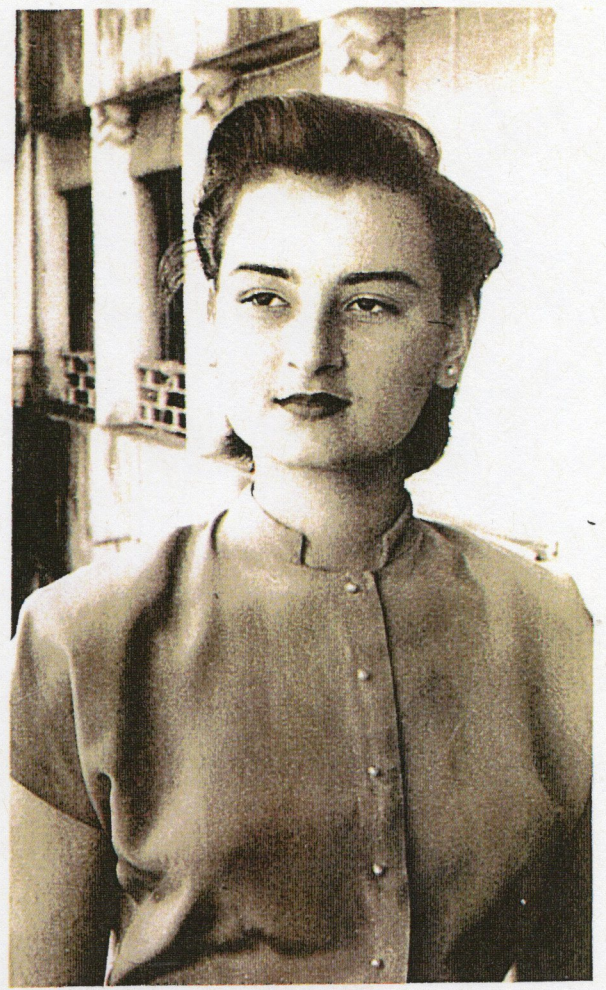
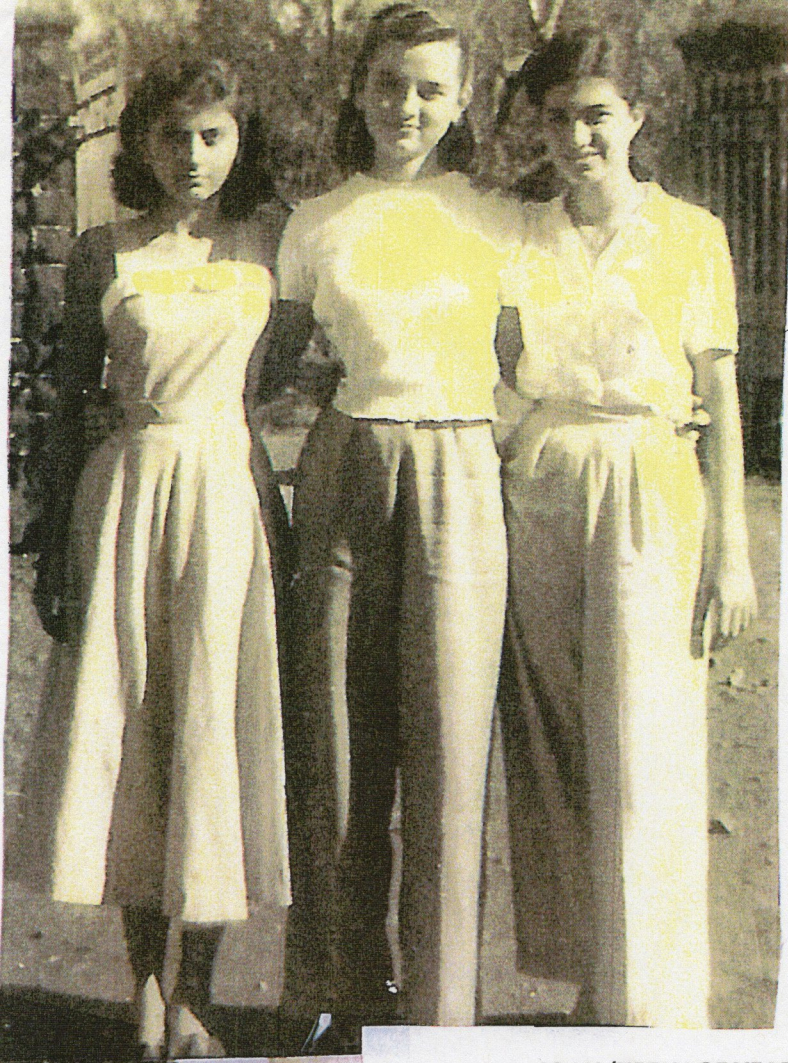
Joan's Grave



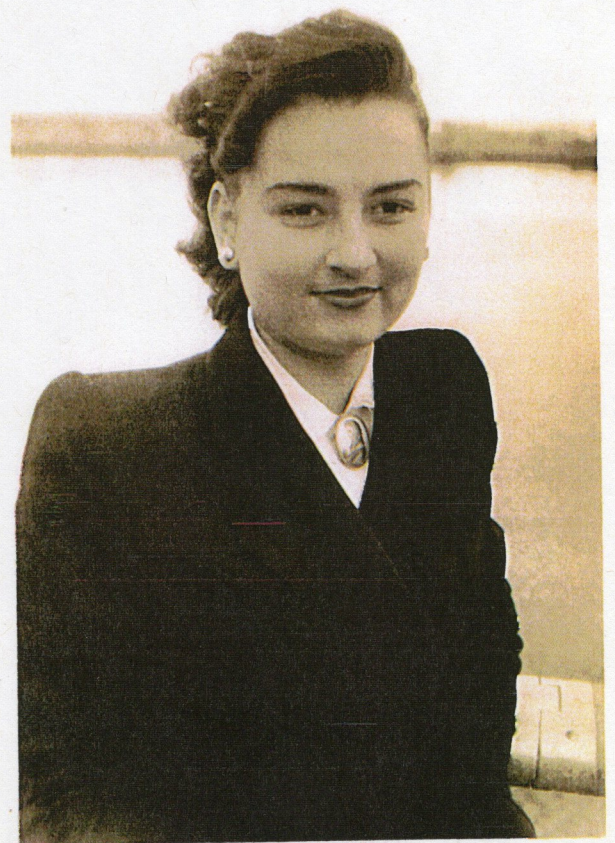
JOAN AND JOHN TWISS WITH PARENTS - ROBERT & ESME TWISS



JOAN (EARLY YEARS) GROWING UP IN INDIA



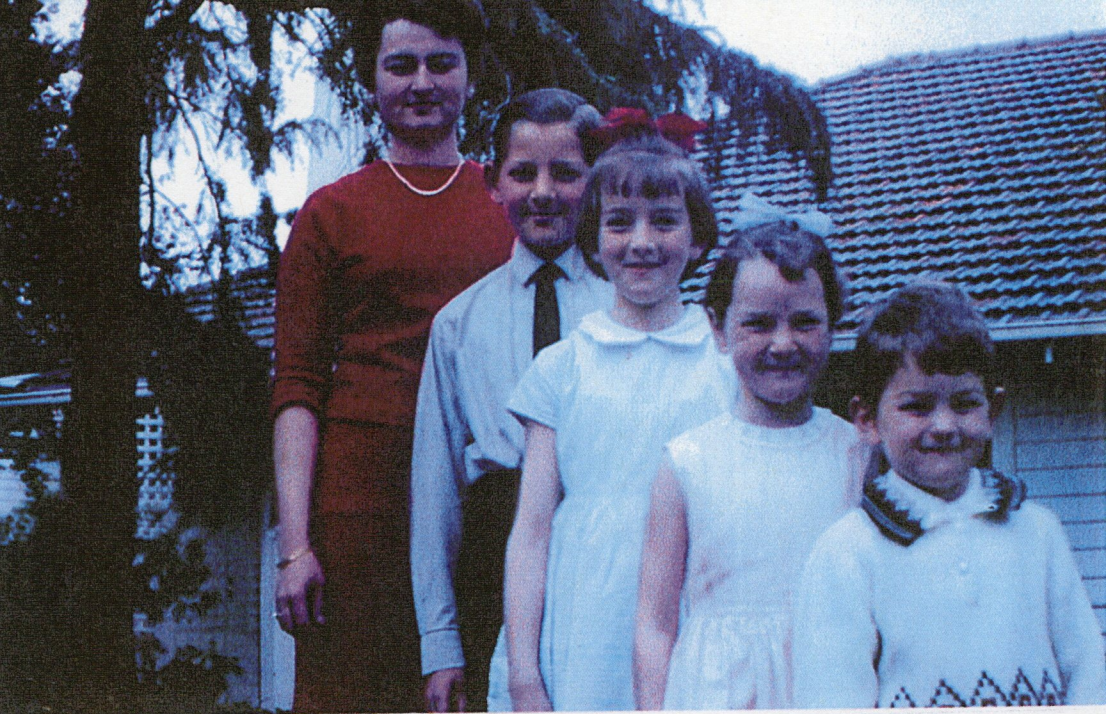
JOAN (TEENAGE YEARS) – IN INDIA





JOAN - IN AUSTRALIA









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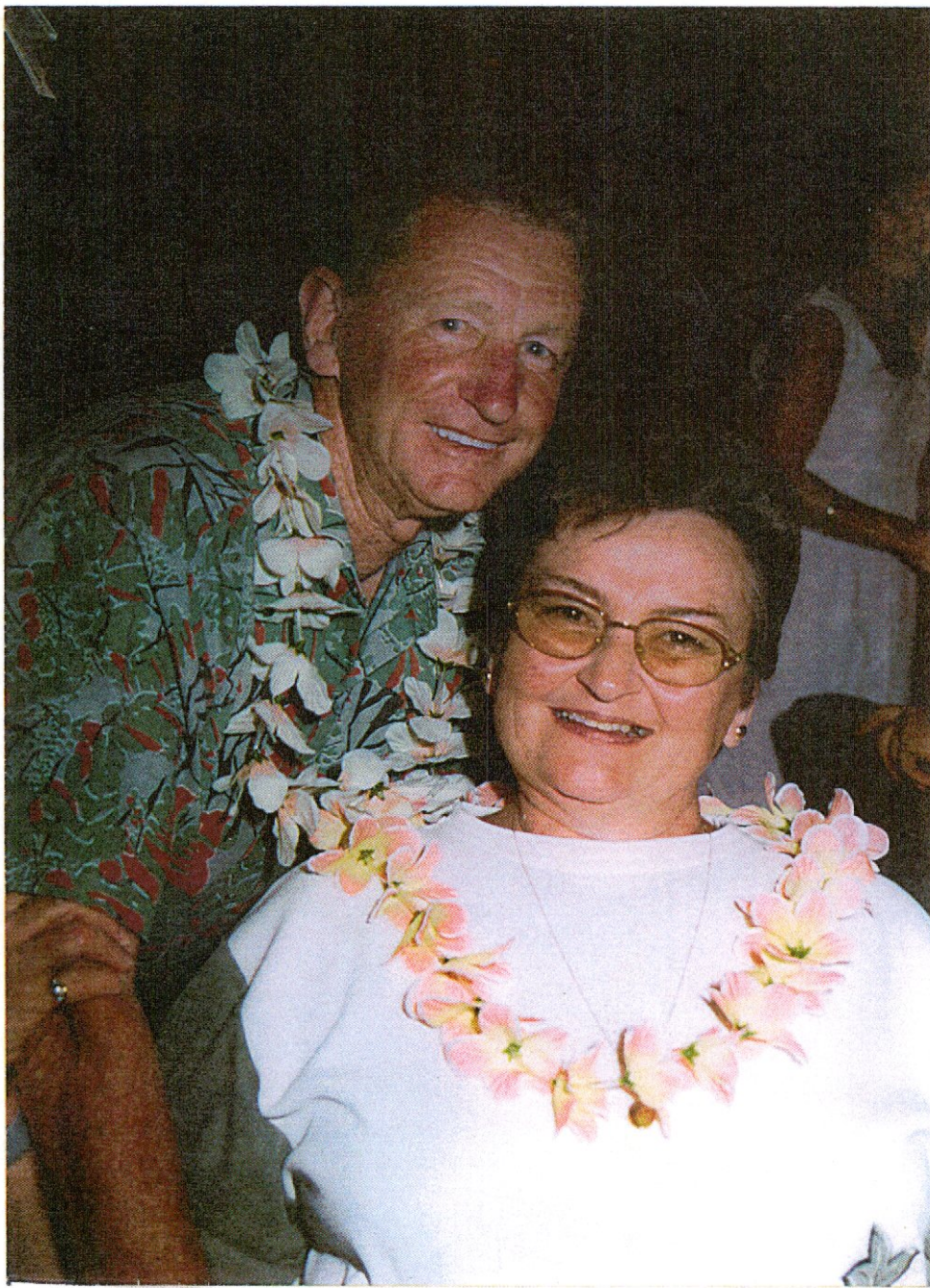
ON A CHRISTMAS  
PACIFIC CRUISE –  
JOHN & JOAN  
WITH JEANETTE



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JOHN & JOAN  
ON A 2<sup>ND</sup> PACIFIC  
CRUISE TO  
NEW ZEALAND





JOHN & JOAN – HAWAII CRUISE NIGHT



JOHN & JOAN – ON SHORE VILA (NOUMEA)