

**A PERFECT STORM:  
THE TRAGIC STORY OF  
ORCHARD VILLA**

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**Dedicated to the Orchard Villa residents who have died, become  
infected, or who have been harmed, and to their families. Their  
stories deserve to be told.**

**June 10, 2020**

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## **A PERFECT STORM: THE TRAGIC STORY OF ORCHARD VILLA, PICKERING, ONTARIO**

A perfect storm is “a critical or disastrous situation created by a powerful concurrence of factors” (Merriam Webster, 2020). In the case of Orchard Villa anyone should have been able to see that storm approaching from miles away.

### ***Everyday Life in Long Term Care***

Imagine if you will, being thirsty and knowing there is water in a jug next to your bed but you are unable to pour it so that you can have a drink, and no one pours it for you. Imagine having a dinner tray set next to you. You’re starving and you can smell the food, but there is no one to feed it to you and you can’t feed yourself. Imagine your legs not working and asking for help to get your pants and socks on and having someone just walk away. Imagine being cold and asking for a blanket, and having a staff member throw it in your face. What if your life was spent waking up in the morning, ringing your call bell because you had to use the washroom, and waiting an hour until you soiled yourself? What if that was made worse because you are a dignified person who always took pride in your appearance and you felt completely humiliated? What if what you were fed when you finally got it, tasted like cardboard and was difficult to chew? And you had to eat at a table with someone else who was screaming? And then you spent your days either parked in a corridor in your wheelchair or staring out grimy windows that had not been washed in years? What if some of the time you had no towels or sheets for your bed? And you lived in a place that smells really bad and is filthy and sometimes there are feces on the floor that no one wants to clean up?

These are the descriptions of life at Orchard Villa supplied by families and backed up by years of inspection reports<sup>1</sup> and a military report.<sup>2</sup> Stories of some staff who were angels, caring and considerate, and some who were the exact opposite, providing care when they got around to it, after having chats, congregated at the nursing stations with their co-workers while residents lay in bed soiled, hungry, thirsty and needing to go to the bathroom. To some staff, residents were living human beings, worthy of care and consideration. To others they were objects, necessary evils for them to have jobs.

Orchard Villa is a symptom of a much larger problem – one that involves a very lucrative long term care industry, where 57% of facilities in the province are operated for profit. Some are also managed by other for-profit companies, so that two companies are earning profit in one facility. Orchard Villa is one of those facilities, owned by Southbridge Care Homes, but managed by Extendicare Assist. Ryan Bell is Southbridge’s CEO – a chartered accountant who articulated with PricewaterhouseCoopers, and who worked in the US Pharma sector,

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health Inspection Reports – Orchard Villa - <http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/homeprofile.aspx?Home=2693&tab=1>

<sup>2</sup> The full military report can be found here - <https://www.macleans.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/JTFC-Observations-in-LTCF-in-ON.pdf>

private equity, and “treasury activities at the multinational level”. Keith McIntosh is Southbridge’s Managing Director, responsible for its business strategy – acquisitions and stakeholder relations – who has input into Ministry of Health and LHIN discussion panels on “redevelopment and funding reform”. Beryl Collingwood is Southbridge’s Vice-President of Long Term Care, an active member of the industry’s provincial lobbying groups the Ontario Residential Care Association and the Ontario Long Term Care Association. She participates on “expert panels” with the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority and is on its Stakeholder Advisory Committee. She is a “registered nurse, with a “Master’s Degree in Professional Communication from Royal Roads University in British Columbia.” Southbridge’s website states: “We are proud to be working with the MOHLTC to help build a patient-centric long-term care system by delivering quality care when people need it and protecting the health system for future generations’ well-being.”

Reference: <https://www.southbridgecarehomes.com/about-us/#meetourteam> ).

And perhaps this is an example of all that is wrong with long term care. Its owners, operators, and principals who benefit financially and professionally from their involvement in this industry are represented on the bodies that have power and influence, while residents and their families have little to none.

It is a system that is turned on its head, with those who have financial vested interests controlling the discourse and political agenda through their connections to government, while those who are often suffering in these facilities have no such control or influence.<sup>3</sup>

One example is that a call for an independent public inquiry by Orchard Villa families, seniors’ groups, unions representing health care workers, and the Official Opposition were rebuffed by the Ford government which voted against it<sup>4</sup>. A public inquiry would have had a judge chairing it, but the Ford government preferred instead to opt for a “commission” of government appointees. So far even families’ calls for an investigation into the home itself

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<sup>3</sup> “Three for-profit companies that run Ontario long-term care homes have hired lobbyists with Conservative ties since the COVID 19 pandemic began, the provincial NDP revealed Wednesday. “Shortly after the first COVID outbreaks in Ontario that happened in nursing homes around March 24, private long-term care operators began to register to lobby the government, including prominent Conservative campaign operatives and former staff to the premier,” Opposition Leader Andrea Horwath said at question period. “This is nothing short of absolutely scandalous.” [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/for-profit-homes-conservative-insiders-coronavirus\\_ca\\_5ec5922cc5b63de4aabdd95f](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/for-profit-homes-conservative-insiders-coronavirus_ca_5ec5922cc5b63de4aabdd95f)

<sup>4</sup> “Count us among those who would agree that Premier Doug Ford and his government have provided solid leadership, for the most part, during this pandemic. Until this week, that is. This week, the government voted against an NDP motion that would have resulted in a full, independent public inquiry into Ontario’s long-term care system.” <https://www.therecord.com/opinion/editorials/2020/05/21/editorial-premier-doug-ford-stumbles-over-long-term-care-inquiry-call.html>

have gone unheeded.<sup>5</sup> As have calls by Pickering City Council after families provided information to them in delegations.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Highest Death Rate in the Province***

Orchard Villa, at time of writing, has the highest death rate in the province. It also has a history of non-compliance orders, written notices, voluntary plans of correction, Directors referrals (which are only made when homes do not come into compliance after an inspector has cited them several times), and Director's orders (which only occur after numerous citations and failure to comply). A host of press reports<sup>7</sup> concerning this home have detailed conditions there and the difficulty that resident's families had obtaining basic information. This was reinforced in delegations made by families in May, 2020 when they appeared at a Pickering Council meeting.

On April 21, 2020 the Durham Region Medical Officer of Health issued an order sending clinical teams from Lakeridge Health into the facility. The order was very specific and speaks to how bad conditions were there.

“Working with Lakeridge Health, which will lead monitoring, investigating and responding to the outbreak, the Order requires Southbridge Care Homes Inc (operating Orchard Villa), to enhance measures for the protection of residents and staff including:

- active screening of residents, staff and visitors
- active and ongoing surveillance of all residents
- active and ongoing oversight of the delivery of clinical care
- screening for new admissions
- managing essential visitors

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<sup>5</sup> <https://toronto.citynews.ca/video/2020/04/30/family-of-orchard-villa-residents-demand-investigation/>

<sup>6</sup> “The City of Pickering is calling for an investigation into the outbreaks and deaths at Orchard Villa long-term care and retirement home as a result of COVID-19. There have been at least 72 deaths and 225 positive cases of the novel coronavirus among residents at the 294-bed facility operated by Southbridge Care Homes. Another 96 staff members at the facility have also tested positive for the virus.” <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/city-of-pickering-calls-for-investigation-into-ontario-s-hardest-hit-long-term-care-home-1.4939376>

<sup>7</sup> “The families fear that Orchard Villa, which according to ministry inspection reports has a history of violations, provided them with little to no information about their loved ones' illness and they were simply left to die.” <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/families-who-lost-loved-ones-at-ontario-s-worst-hit-nursing-home-fear-they-were-left-to-die-1.4925878> “Their response was everything is fine, nothing is wrong, it's all okay,” he said, referring to both the LHIN and Orchard Villa. But within a few weeks, on April 12, Watt was informed his mother had tested positive for COVID-19 and she died three days later.” <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/levy-son-has-lingering-questions-about-elderly-moms-death-at-orchard-villa>

- changes to when an outbreak of COVID-19 is declared at a home, including when it is over
- specimen collection and testing for outbreak management
- implementation of all of the above measures including the adoption and implementation of Infection Prevention and Control.”<sup>8</sup>

Which raises the questions:

Were residents, staff, and visitors not being screened before? Was there no active and ongoing surveillance of all residents before? Was there no active and ongoing oversight of the delivery of clinical care before? Were new admissions still being allowed into a facility that had an out of control COVID outbreak, where residents and staff were getting sick to the point where the facility was severely short staffed? Why was the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) not stopping admissions so that the Medical Officer of Health had to issue an order that included “screening for new admissions”? Were essential visitors not being managed before? Was infection prevention and control not happening before?

Family members’ reports certainly suggest that they were not happening before, and it took a directive from the Medical Officer of Health, clinical teams from Lakeridge Health, and infection control specialists to make them happen. And all of this with two commercial enterprises owning and running this facility. Lakeridge Health letters to families confirmed just how much had to be done to bring this facility up to scratch - medical teams, significant increases in staffing, infection control teams, weeks of deep cleaning.

Even the military was called in.<sup>9</sup> One family member commented that the military cooks provided the first tasty, nutritious meals his loved one had had in weeks.

### ***Repeated Press Reports***

By the end of April the Toronto Star was reporting just how bad things were at Orchard Villa. Having reviewed inspection reports going back five years the Star reported that this home had “a lengthy history of failing to comply with provincial rules designed to protect long-term-care residents” and that it had “faced a litany of citations for non-compliance with regulations and previous ministry orders, including those around ensuring living areas are kept clean and sanitary; protecting residents from staff abuse; meeting residents’ continence and toileting needs; and preventing falls.” (Wallace, April 30, 2020).

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<sup>8</sup> Joint release of information by Southbridge, Lakeridge Health, and Durham Region Health Department, April 22, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> “The Canadian Forces will be at Pickering’s Orchard Villa starting Friday. Pickering Deputy Mayor Kevin Ashe’s office confirmed the news Friday.” <https://www.durhamradionews.com/archives/126215> “Activity intensified today at Pickering’s Orchard Villa Long-Term Care Residence with the arrival of two teams from the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) who will begin supporting Lakeridge Health as it continues its ongoing efforts to help Southbridge Care Homes to contain the outbreak of COVID-19 at the residence.” <http://www.centraleastlhin.on.ca/newsandevents/PressReleasesFolder/OrchardVillaUpdate2.aspx>

By this time, 52 residents had died - 12 more than the week before, with the death toll still rising. By May 25, 2020, the death toll stood at 77.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Examples of Life at Orchard Villa***

On July 30, 2015, a short time after Southbridge took over this facility a Critical Incident Inspection described a nightmarish situation. A resident is alleged to have had an unwitnessed fall on a specific date at a specific time. It is described this way:

“Resident #01 [with a history of falls who needed assistance to prevent them but whose call bell and other alarms went unanswered repeatedly] was found on the floor in a pool of blood, with blood noted to extremities, night gown, and the bedside drapes. The CIR resident incident report and progress notes all indicated resident sustained substantial injuries as a result of the fall” (Critical Incident Inspection Report, July 30, 2015: Pg. 4).

A registered practical nurse who attended to the resident noted the injuries, cleansed and dressed them, but also stated that the registered nurse “supervisor on duty did not assess the injuries prior to bandages being applied”. Progress notes did not indicate that the registered nurse had completed an assessment or documented specifics relating to the alleged fall, injuries, or engaged in monitoring this resident during the rest of the shift. The Director of Nursing confirmed there had been no documentation by the registered nurse (RN) supervisor.

The registered practical nurse (RPN) indicated that she had told the registered nurse supervisor via phone that this resident’s dressing had been changed twice since the alleged fall, and that the “bandages had been saturated with blood” demonstrating that this person had suffered considerable blood loss (Pg. 4).

Instead of ordering the resident’s immediate transport to hospital, the registered nurse supervisor told the RPN to “continue to monitor” the resident. The RPN objected, saying she felt the resident needed to be transported to hospital because of the injuries sustained and blood loss, but the RN supervisor continued to order the RPN to monitor the resident at the facility. The RPN registered her objection with the RN, but did not communicate her objection to any other RN’s or to the Director of Care (Pg. 4).

Further information states that a physician was “not notified of the fall and resulting injuries”(Pg. 5) because the RPN did not want to wake the physician during the night and the RN also failed to notify the physician. The RN felt the resident was stable and did not need to be transferred to hospital. When the Resident Care Area Manager came on shift the family of the resident was finally notified and the resident was transferred to hospital after seven hours (Pg. 5).

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<sup>10</sup> Please see death toll for Orchard Villa - <https://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/9996396-death-toll-from-coronavirus-at-pickering-s-orchard-villa-now-stands-at-77/>

The correct protocol is for a physician to be immediately notified after a fall, or if a physician is not available an RN can exercise clinical judgement in calling 911 for transfer to hospital (Pg. 5)

The legislation also requires that the Director under the Act be notified of a critical incident of this nature, but that also did not happen in this instance.

The Inspection Report says “Director of Nursing admitted that the care provided to the resident post-falls incident on a specific date was unacceptable and constituted improper care”(Pg. 16) but all that occurred is that the RN involved was provided re-instruction and discipline.

### ***Why No Police Involvement?***

In this case, there was an alleged fall (unwitnessed) that resulted in a pool of blood on the floor, with blood on the resident’s clothing and drapes. One can only imagine at what speed and with what force a resident would have to have “fallen” to have sustained such substantial injuries and blood loss.

Why would police not have been called to investigate how this alleged “fall” actually occurred as well as why no action was taken to transport this person to hospital after a very serious fall that resulted in injury and considerable blood loss?

The Criminal Code states:

Criminal negligence

- **219** (1) Every one is criminally negligent who
  - (a) in doing anything, or
  - (b) in omitting to do anything that it is his duty to do,shows wanton or reckless disregard for the lives or safety of other persons.
- Definition of *duty*
  - (2) For the purposes of this section, *duty* means a duty imposed by law.

In the instance of Resident #01, the inspection report indicates that the care plan to prevent falls was not followed. It can also be argued that in this instance both the RN supervisor and the RPN had a duty to address the serious and sustained injuries including significant blood loss that occurred as a result of an unwitnessed alleged “fall”, and to take the appropriate action. Failure to do so would seem to indicate an omission of duty and what could be argued as a reckless disregard for the safety of an already vulnerable person. This duty is imposed by the Long Term Care Act.

### ***Bad Smell in the Home***

In the same inspection report, citing inspections completed over several days in June, 2015, “a pervasive malodour was smelled throughout the hallway on a resident Home area, in the front foyers, in the hallway by the managerial offices, and in the hallway leading toward the main dining room” (Pg. 9). This odour was present over a lengthy period of time and a “housekeeping Aide working in the identified resident home area indicated that the lingering odour was not unusual for the home area” (Pg. 9).

Imagine staff and residents being forced to work and live in an environment where bad smells are taken for granted and happen all the time?

Reference: Inspection Report, July 30, 2015:

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/enca/File.aspx?RecID=14003&FacilityID=20100>

### ***Reports of Abuse***

At the end of September, 2015 staff were reporting other staff for abusing residents. Residents were alleged to be expressing fear of a staff member, and that at least one resident was “upset and crying”. Staff also alleged that a particular staff member had a history of getting back at both staff and residents if complaints were made.

One might expect that immediate action would be taken in light of serious charges of this nature by some staff against another. Instead, the staff person was “monitored” for two weeks. Thirteen days after the first complaint was received a third written complaint was filed by staff to the Director of Care after a resident reported that the staff in question does not speak to them while providing personal care and that the resident feels sick when the staff is going to be on shift. On the day the third letter of complaint was received the two Directors finally interviewed the staff who was to be disciplined but that did not occur “until further allegations were received”. This is a staff person that the inspection report says “had previous disciplinary action” for improper care and was currently suspended pending investigation related to another allegation of staff to resident physical abuse towards another resident. In reviewing the staff in question’s employee record, the inspector noted that the staff member had received two prior disciplinary actions for violating a resident’s right to dignity as well as the home’s policy on employee conduct and behavior.

The inspector found that the home had failed to ensure that the resident in question was protected from ongoing emotional abuse, and that it had failed to immediately investigate when two allegations of emotional abuse were initially reported, and that no action was taken until two additional allegations were received.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=13712&FacilityID=20100>

Imagine being a resident of this home, unable to leave, who is afraid of a staff person who is providing very intimate care, and no action is taken in response to complaints filed by other staff? Imagine the fear when nothing happens to protect them? Imagine a staff person being allowed to continue to care for a resident after abuse allegations have been made?

By April 19, 2016 when a resident quality inspection was conducted, things were no better.

The home was served with 15 written notices, 5 voluntary plans of correction, and 5 compliance orders for everything from resident's money going missing, medication errors, an unexpected death not reported to the Director, reported abuse, non-response to resident's council concerns, a resident being seriously injured during a mechanical transfer, a late report to the Director concerning this serious incident, the resident not being given medication for pain as appropriate while complaining of severe pain and finally being found unresponsive in bed and transported to hospital many hours later. In this case the home also indicated it recognized there having been 'improper/incompetent treatment of a resident that results in harm or risk to a resident'. Pages 8-11:

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=15133&FacilityID=20100>

Imagine being left lying in severe pain with no doctor called, pain management not occurring as required, utterly helpless?

Someone found lying on the street, injured and in severe pain would likely have been assisted by a stranger – a passer-by who would have called an ambulance. But at Orchard Villa, allegedly trained professionals did not assist this resident until s/he was found unresponsive, at which time s/he was finally transferred to hospital.

The falls and injuries continued.

In September of 2016 a second resident quality inspection was conducted. Again the facility was served with 15 written notices, 7 voluntary plans of correction and 3 compliance orders. Falls, injuries, medication mistakes...

Two months later, a follow up inspection - 3 written notices, 1 voluntary plan of correction, 1 compliance order – more medication errors and the home found to be in a poor state of repair.

Did it get any better in 2017? Apparently not.

On February 8, 2017 a follow up inspection found that there were still medication errors and a written order and compliance order were issued.

On February 17, 2017, another follow up inspection. This time 3 written notices, 1 voluntary correction plan, and 1 compliance order issued and the home remained in a poor state of repair.

Finally, on March 10, 2017 a Director's Order was issued based upon a Director's Referral after an inspector had issued a fourth consecutive compliance order. It appears that after this, the home finally complied for a few months, until a May, 11, 2017 resident quality inspection resulted in 23 written notices, 7 voluntary plans of correction and 3 compliance orders being issued for things like residents not being assisted to eat, staff being rough in providing care,

resident to resident sexual abuse without appropriate behavioral measures taken, not enough towels or linens etc.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=17740&FacilityID=20100>

Critical incident inspections and complaint investigations continued to occur and on November 8, 2017 inspectors issued 13 written orders, 7 voluntary plans of correction, 5 compliance orders and 3 Director referrals. Short staffing, call bells not answered, a resident incontinent and crying as a result, numerous falls, poor wound care to the point of foul smelling drainage occurring, resident in severe pain and not getting pain management, staff to resident and resident to resident abuse.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=18841&FacilityID=20100>

The inspectors were obviously concerned because on March 26, 2018 they were back to conduct a resident quality inspection. This time they issued 6 written notices, 3 voluntary corrective plans and a compliance order for things like medication incidents, staff to resident abuse, skin and wound issues, resident falls and injuries, and a resident found on the floor.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=19481&FacilityID=20100>

By December 3, 2018 a complaints inspection resulted in 1 written notice and 1 voluntary correction plan when it was found that a resident had died, and that no RN was on duty as required on at least four occasions.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=20670&FacilityID=20100>

By March 21 of 2019, another critical incident inspection took place. This time 2 written notices were issued and 1 voluntary correction plan after a resident was found on the floor of their room and sent to hospital for an injury. A resident was apparently found sitting on the bathroom floor unattended.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=21782&FacilityID=20100>

On April 11, 2019 a complaints investigation resulted in 3 more written notices, and 3 more voluntary correction plans after a specific medical intervention was ordered, medication as not given and a resident ended up transferred to hospital. The home also apparently did not have enough linens again.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=21960&FacilityID=20100>

On July 25, 2019 another complaints investigation occurred. This time 3 written notices, 3 voluntary corrective plans, and 1 compliance order were issued related to yet another fall, injury, and failure to manage the resident's pain afterwards for hours, the physician was not notified, and the resident ended up transferred to hospital.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=22869&FacilityID=20100>

On December 6, 2019 another critical incident inspection, this time with 4 written notices, 2 voluntary correction plans, and 1 compliance order issued related to more alleged falls, and alleged abuse of a resident by staff. In a follow up inspection on the same date, 1 written notice and 1 compliance order was issued for failure to set out a care plan.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=24062&FacilityID=20100>

and

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=24064&FacilityID=20100>

Also on December 6, 2019, in the last inspection conducted in the home before the pandemic, another complaints inspection - 3 written notices and 2 more voluntary plans of correction were issued. In this case the resident was not given appropriate incontinence care and was euphemistically described as being found in a specified state. It is not hard to imagine what that might mean. PSW's indicated that they knew the resident required incontinence care, but that they did not have time to provide it.

<http://publicreporting.ltchomes.net/en-ca/File.aspx?RecID=24063&FacilityID=20100>

So to recap, falls, injuries, lack of pain management, failure to call the physician when required, repeated medication errors, inappropriate wound care, numerous hospitalizations and on and on. And yet, in spite of a Director's Order, numerous written orders, voluntary correction plans, compliance orders and Director's referrals, this home still has a licence.

The question becomes why? If it was short staffed and unable to provide reasonable levels of care, why were intakes not stopped? Were police called to investigate reported staff on resident abuse? Was action taken when registered nurses failed to provide appropriate pain control and symptom management? Did abandonment of patients occur? If it did, why were no reports made to the College of Nurses?

We will never know, because like so many other long term care facilities in Ontario, accurate information about all that occurred in Orchard Villa is simply not available. But inspection reports do provide a glimpse of what life must have been like for residents – at least until the Ford government eliminated comprehensive yearly inspections almost completely by 2019 – leaving residents with even fewer protections and the homes with even less oversight. What life was like at Orchard Villa should not be allowed to happen to any resident of this province, much less to our most vulnerable citizens.

### ***The Pandemic Hits***

On April 23, 2020, it is reported that April Beckett, the acting executive director of the facility, wrote to families detailing the sharp rise in COVID 19 cases and deaths at this 233 bed facility acknowledging the grave concerns family members had been raising. Her letter promised twice weekly updates. At the time 131 residents and 66 staff had tested positive, and 40 people had died. The home admitted that it had been struggling with a severe staffing shortage even before the outbreak (Katawazi, April 23, 2020).

### ***The Families Act***

By April 29, 2020, families had had enough and took matters into their own hands and released their own open letter to the Premier of Ontario which appeared to be in complete contradiction to the letter released by the acting executive director.

It called for a full investigation of the facility and alleged that management had kept families in the dark since the announcement of the outbreak on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The letter stated “we at no time agreed to place our loved ones in another’s care with the understanding that we would receive no communication about their health, safety and wellbeing...At the present time, and during the preceding two weeks, information regarding our family members has been withheld from us and this is no longer acceptable to us.”(Wilson, April 29, 2020).

Family members were demanding immediate and complete information about the safety and wellbeing of their loved ones including assurances that their family members were receiving adequate hydration and 3 meals a day.

It seems a small thing to ask.

### ***Inadequate Responses from Facility Management***

On April 30, 2020, the Executive Director of the facility was, inexplicably, saying that the home’s full attention was on the needs of its residents. This raises the question - where had its attention been prior to the outbreak, and why was it now telling reporters it “could not commit resources to address specific details of its inspection history” (Wallace, April 30, 2020).

The facility administration said that it had made significant progress since Southbridge’s takeover of the home in 2015 and “co-operates transparently with the ministry in all inspections and work(s) to quickly resolve any areas noted for improvement or required action.” (Wallace, April 30, 2020).

Except as detailed earlier, in 2015 it failed to report to the Director a very serious fall and failure to transport to hospital a badly injured resident who had lost a considerable amount of blood. Following that, as detailed in inspection reports, the home was cited with numerous written orders, voluntary plans of correction, and compliance notices by the inspection branch. When the home failed to comply, it was, on March 10, 2017 served with a Director’s Order to comply.

Readers are left to assess the accuracy of the facility administration’s claims in light of events documented in inspection reports from 2015 to 2019 – the last time a comprehensive inspection of this home occurred.

It is noteworthy that The Toronto Star reported that from July 2015 to December, 2019 “Orchard Villa underwent 34 ministry inspections, two dozen of which led to a combined 127 notices of failure to comply with the Long-Term Care Homes Act and its regulations. Among them were two incidents in which doctors were not notified immediately after patients were injured and found bleeding. In one case, the senior died hours later.” (Wallace, April 30, 2020).

### ***Remedial Actions Highlight the Level of Substandard Care***

In order to fully understand just how bad things were at Orchard Villa, an examination of the level of remedial actions that were found to be necessary and implemented is in order:

- 50 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel in 5 teams of the Joint Task Force Central were deployed to Orchard Villa under Operation LASER composed of 2 nurses, 12 medical technicians from the 4 Health Services Group, and personnel to perform other duties in support of operations (Durham Post, May 3, 2020);
- This is what was needed to bring staffing up to the level “required to care for the residents of the home” with 20 – 25 CAF task force members on-site each day in two shifts, 7 days a week;
- As well the Lakeridge Health clinical team was ordered on-site by the Durham Region Medical Officer of Health to “deliver direct care to residents” as residents are being moved to clear areas of the home and residents will finally be able to connect with loved ones using information technology;
- “more highly trained clinicians and staff are on-site” as well to provide residents with care and personal supports, including Lakeridge Health registered nurses, registered practical nurses, personal support workers and dietary professionals;
- A Lakeridge Health Infectious Disease physician is also on-site with an infection prevention and control team conducting a “detailed review” in order to enhance safety in this home as new protocols and processes are introduced;
- These new protocols include enhanced mandatory education and re-training of the staff who work there;
- Contractors are on-site to deep clean the entire home and it will take a few weeks to complete this process;
- Designated family members are finally being contacted and provided with information (Durham Post, May 3, 2020).

It is difficult to imagine the situation residents must have found themselves in that it has taken this level of staffing, cleaning and support to finally bring this home up to the necessary standard.

But the sad story of Orchard Villa was not over at time of writing.

On May 9, 2020 the CBC reported that a data breach at Orchard Villa had been reported to the Privacy Commissioner. Merrilee Fullerton, the same Minister of Long Term Care who had not publicly expressed concern about the high death rate at Orchard Villa did express concern about the data breach calling it “disturbing news” (CBC News, May 9, 2020). What should have been more disturbing to her is what her own government’s inspection reports were saying prior to the pandemic about conditions over a period of years leading to this home having the highest death rate in the province.

## ***PEOPLE MATTER***

### ***The Injured and Dead: These Are People Not Numbers***

The public reads about the rising death toll in long term care homes in Ontario, and locally, in Durham Region, we read about Orchard Villa in Pickering having the highest death toll in the province. But how many of us realize that the people who were lost were beloved family members, friends, and our neighbors? They were citizens of Ontario and should have had the same rights afforded them as any other citizen of Ontario, but that is not what happened.

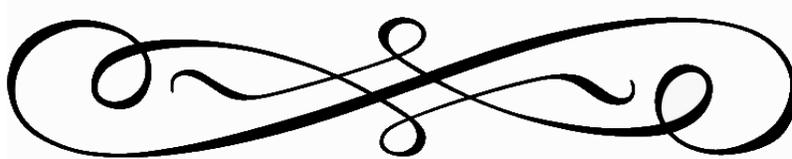
Their stories deserve to be told so that all of us can recognize just how much like us they were, how they loved and took care of their families, worked hard, contributed to this country and to their communities, and how they were abandoned, left to die, unprotected in institutions we pretend to call “homes” by the very system that was supposed to provide care for them.

These are the stories of the very real human beings who lived and died in Orchard Villa. It is a tribute to them and hopefully a comfort to their loved ones to have their stories told.

I want to especially thank the families for their time and patience in recounting these stories to me. It was not easy, and they took the time and made the effort to make sure the stories accurately reflected their recollection of events and their feelings about what had happened to their loved ones.

Sadly, their illnesses and deaths are part of the darkest chapter in the history of Durham Region, the City of Pickering, the province of Ontario, and Canada. For those who have survived and may have to go back to Orchard Villa the onus is on all of us to ensure that they are cared for and never again subjected to the treatment many of them had received there.

We need, as a society, to do so much better. We need to provide alternatives to institutions like Orchard Villa so that individuals and families never again have to make the wrenching decision to place a loved one in an institution like this.



## **Mary A. Walsh (Mother of Marie Tripp)**

### **A dignified lady, role model, and matriarch of her family**

*“Bye. See you later. Love you. Safe home”*

Mary Agnes Walsh (nee Devlin) was born on March 26, 1931 in Yorkville, and died at 89 on April 20, 2020 of coronavirus - three days after Marie Tripp, her daughter, tried desperately to get her assistance after seeing her vomiting on a camera she had installed in her room, and two days after her mom was seen through her window by her daughter frantically using the call bell to try to get a drink of water. It took her granddaughters banging on the window and front door of the home to get staff's attention before her mom was given something to drink.



Mary was predeceased by her daughter Eileen, and her husband Timothy (Ted) Walsh. She was a wonderful mother to Marie, who loved her dearly, and a greatly missed grandmother to Trish, Brenda, Ashleigh, and a proud great grandmother to Breanna, Madison, Isabelle and Aaliya. She very much loved her three generations of girls. Mary was the backbone of her family, and the glue that kept them all together.

She was married for about 30 years to Timothy (Ted) Walsh from Tralee, Ireland who died in 1987. Together Mary and her husband managed a house on Havelock Street and later moved to Regent Park on River Street. Marie was born in 1957, and Eileen, her sister, passed away in 1995. In the mid to late 1980's Mary worked as an educational aide at the Catholic School Board.

Mary was a patient, loving, and caring person who never passed judgement on anyone. She loved her family and would do anything for them. They enjoyed tea time and Sunday dinners together, and she loved to sit on her balcony at their home in East York reading the newspaper and waving to neighbors. Tea would be served in the backyard. Mary was one of those unsung heroes who meant the world to her family, to the kids she worked with, and to her friends and neighbors. When they would leave after a visit Mary would always say “bye, see you later, love you, safe home”.

She was only in Orchard Villa for a year, but during the time she was there, there were two investigations concerning her care, a nurse was suspended and the Director of Care's

assistant was asked to resign. She suffered unexplained bruises and pneumonia and was not given pain killers for three days after her skin cancer surgery. At one point a staff member tried to hand Marie medication to give to her mom. Mary was forced to wear dirty underclothes. After being admitted she started losing weight, and the family tried to help her with instant breakfasts and chocolate milk to stabilize her. They succeeded.

Marie described a lack of communication and follow through throughout her mom's time at Orchard Villa.

On June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Marie filed a complaint concerning Mary's treatment in the home. She said that her mom had been admitted in April and had not been taken to the hairdresser since, and that the foot rest of her wheelchair was broken. She voiced concerns about her mom's X-ray results not being communicated to her even though she had her mom's power of attorney. She asked for a call from the doctor who later apologized for not following up sooner with her about her mom's X ray results. She said that she believed her mom was not being turned or repositioned every two hours and that she was at high risk for skin breakdown. She emphasized the need to put her mom to bed after her meals and to be turned every 2 hours because of the skin breakdown risk.

Marie's concerns were an eerie reflection of inspection reports about the home where skin and wound care was not done and at least one resident had to be sent to hospital as a result.

Marie's mom was also sent to hospital, and when returned she was placed on antibiotics. Marie asked for a physio assessment. When a nurse asked Marie to give her mom her medication Marie requested that the nurse be removed from her mom's care. That nurse was

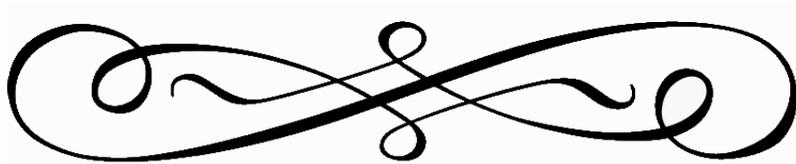


later placed on administrative leave followed by progressive discipline. PSW's and other registered staff were retrained. Her mom was internally transferred from the Pine to Linden wings.

No one should have had to go through a situation like this, much less Mary Agnes Walsh – a good woman who did nothing in her life but help people, but who could not rely on the help of others when she needed it most.

Marie does not want her mother's death to be in vain. She wants to end the profit motive in long term care in favor of non-profit alternative residential care that better respects the dignity and needs of people like her mom. She wants taxpayer funds invested in the people who need it, not the large multi-national companies that own these facilities. She wants PSW's to have more than a one year certificate, and believes they should get at least two years of intensive training before being allowed to work with older adults with often complex needs.

Mary Agnes Walsh deserved so much more. She deserved our care, our concern, and the voice of a community, raised up in her defense. She got none of that, except from her family. But there is still time for the Pickering and Durham Region communities to speak up for Mary, and so many others like her, and demand change.



**George W. Morrison (Gorgeous George)  
(Father of June S. Morrison)**

**A strong, proud tough man, and a gentleman**

***“If you don’t stand up for your rights, then you  
don’t deserve to have them”.***

George William Morrison was his daughter June’s handsome father and her hero, and whenever she had a fall as a child, it was only her dad she wanted to attend to her scraped and torn knees. As a father-daughter team, they had a very strong bond which is why she has filed a statement of claim against Orchard Villa for negligence and breach of contract in the treatment of her beloved dad.



June was looking forward to sharing some happy personal news with her dad in the months ahead, and to have him there at a new beginning being planned with someone special in her life. In January 2020, after seeing Christmas photos, George gave June his blessings and wished her happiness in love. He told her it would be her lucky year, but it did not turn out in a way that either could have imagined. June’s dreams were dashed in a big way.

George became infected with Covid-19 soon after Easter weekend, and died at age 95, on Sunday, May 3, 2020. June emotionally promised her dad on his death bed again and again, that she would seek justice and right the wrongs for him. Her advocacy is her gift to her beloved dad, and to other seniors living in long term care institutions.

George was indeed a very special man. Born on September 21, 1924 in Scotland, his early life was spent largely in a farming community, and he travelled between the family’s farm named Mosshead in Tullynessle parish (which is now known as Alford, a small village in Aberdeenshire in north-east Scotland near the River Don) and Blackstone Cottage, in Ellon, his maternal grandmother’s farm home. His paternal grandparents and Morrison families for generations (and still today) occupy the Cullyblean Farm house (also in Tullynessle). It being within walking distance, was one of his regular and favourite places to visit and bond with his many uncles, especially John and Harry who worked on the farm. George’s father (also named George William) was away for six to seven months a year exporting Aberdeen cattle by ship to Argentina, South America hence George and his only and elder sibling, Margaret, and their mother had a change of home base every spring to fall while their father was away for the 14 years leading up to when WW2 broke out. Through his maternal granny, he developed a respect and love for boxing, as he was thrilled to know that one of his uncles (Private and Drummer Peter Gibb, of Ellon) was a heavy-weight boxer who served and died

in WW1 as a prisoner of war in Germany. A treasured boxing photo taken during war time is a family keepsake.

Being a farm boy at heart, he loved animals and was kind to them all. During his childhood George had a favorite cow named Baldy who followed him like a dog through the fields as he made his way to Tullynessle School, with Baldy waiting at the fenced park edge for his return later in the day. He loved his tortoise, Sammy, and his two ferrets who helped him earn pocket money as a child snaring rabbits for his mother to clean and sell. As a married man, he treasured his Corgi dog name Gypsy, and was sad to leave her behind in Scotland when he immigrated in 1958.

Like every one of his generation, George finished school at 13 and soon after he volunteered for the Air Reserves and spoke of his training and flights in an Anson, while working for his father on the home farm. When WW2 broke out the farming/agricultural authorities determined that he was needed on the farm to help keep the nation fed, and he served, working hard through difficult times. His best childhood friend, Ted Gilbert, lived in the neighbouring farm, and the two boys rode their bikes to country dances, and shared many an adventure together, while having each other's backs.



At the age of 23, George set sail for Canada with a few friends each enticed by the invite to work on the railway. But instead of responding to the Role Call upon landing, he decided to further his education and ended up going to George Brown College in Toronto to hone his welding skills, and took a job with Massey-Ferguson.

George had worked for Barclay Ross Company which is where his long-time friend Private James Glennie, a WW2 Prisoner of War, captured in France, also worked. George met his future wife, Marjory Thomson, at a farmer's country dance before he ventured out to Canada in 1948, and James and George with their sweethearts frequently attended dancing events together. Marjory and George stayed in touch during his three and a half years in Canada and were married on April 4, 1953 at the Kintore Parish Church, after his return to Scotland. They took up residence in Broomhill Cottage on their friend David Brownie's farm land in Lyne of Skene. George loved his wife and family dearly and made them his first priority making many sacrifices to show his love, pride in, and protection of them. Marjory and George had three children, June being the second eldest, and two boys.

In March of 1958, not long after his own mother's death, broken-hearted, George decided to return to Canada while his wife wound up their home and other affairs in Aberdeenshire. In late June 1958, Marjory and the three wee toddlers, four and a half, almost three and a year old flew with Trans Continental Airways (TCA), stopping in Greenland to refuel before landing and gaining Immigrant Status in Dorval, Quebec. They later flew onward to join George in Toronto, Ontario.

George was a well-respected tradesman and Massey-Ferguson was happy to re-hire him upon his return to Canada. He advanced in his career, and joined General Electric where he was a

respected welder, foreman and shop steward. He also moonlighted with Aeroquip in Downsview where he showcased his finer, detailed welding skills making airplane engine parts. George was an entrepreneur, an innovator, and true go-getter, and had ambitions in how he would provide for his family. Throughout his long career he did everything from rent out cars and houses, to selling and renting trailers, cottages, and operating RV parks.



George and his daughter June bonded very early in her life. Being a welder, George wore a tight cotton head cap under his welding shield head gear. He took pride in his hair, and worked hard ensuring good circulation to promote hair growth. After dinner George would engage June in a regular routine and ritual as his mini-massage therapist, and she would sit on the back of the couch, legs draped over his shoulders, as he sat on the couch for almost an hour for a scalp treatment and massage session. June took joy in applying curlers as well to create a mop of curls - something he would rectify once she had gone to bed.

June was definitely her daddy's girl, and would wait anxiously for him to come home from work for dinner every day. From an early age she would race in front of her mother to reach him first to be welcomed with a click-click of his tongue, a wink, and then a quick lift into his arms, him rubbing his 5 o'clock shadow on her face to get her to squeal.

George taught his daughter and family at a young age, the importance of one's pride in name and reputation, the value of integrity and honesty, the importance of a strong, confident handshake and eye contact because of what it conveyed. He also stressed polished shoes, and to be on time. June and her dad practiced handshakes, and he delighted coaching her on his belief system, and teaching her how to maintain her car in later years after she started to drive.

On Saturdays, in the early 60's George offered his children the chance to accompany him to the bank. June always took him up on it while her brothers chose to play with their toys, or watch cartoons. Hers and her dad's secret was that after the bank visit at Dundas and Keele, they would go to an Italian restaurant to each enjoy a huge slice of dreamy coconut cream pie and a pot of hot tea.

After the birth of another son the family moved to Weston from their former home on Castleton Avenue in Toronto. Over time on Saturday or Sunday mornings June would offer to assist her Dad by handing him his tools as he did his own oil changes and other mechanical chores. With the pretence of a "test drive", they would sneak off to Dairy Queen on Weston Road together for a secret ice cream treat before dinner. Whenever George was asked how many were in his family, he always gave the same humorous response: "I have one daughter, and three sons... and they each have a sister."

George worked hard six days a week to provide for his family - two shifts Monday through Friday, and usually one shift on Saturdays. His only full day off was Sunday, and he spent that day with his family going on day trips that included outdoor picnics, and/or visits to catch up with other friends who were like family to them. The Country Style donut shop in Etobicoke was a frequent stop at the end of their day trip. A coffee and donut tided them over until they reached home. Niagara Falls was an annual summer excursion, and Georgetown and Picton were two other favourites with a visit to Lake on the Mountain.

George was used to taking trailer vacations back in Scotland, and longed for his family to experience weekend getaways during the summer to water accessible parks, and week-long adventures to other parts of Ontario, and beyond. Having a family of six, buying a trailer seemed the best way to accommodate them economically as a family. He did his research and bought a 15 foot Holiday-named trailer modifying the inside of it, installing a bunk bed, and designing a splash guard to prevent those sitting at the dining table from getting burnt by flying oil droplets from a stove top pan. George was a happy camper in every way and he loved sharing his ideas and innovations, frequenting the Holiday Rocket Trailers corporation in Kitchener to offer up his ideas, and to convey his complete satisfaction with the trailer he had acquired. The owners of the corporation offered him a seasonal salesman job at the spring Sportsman Show in Toronto, several years in a row. One of the Young brother partners took a special liking to George and treated him as a member of his own family, like a son. He offered George, on a handshake, a \$25,000 interest-free loan and the Toronto exclusive dealership rights for Holiday Rocket trailers. George began looking for the ideal property in Scarborough, Ontario – somewhere close to the highway, nestled on a main road of significance to locate his business. Kennedy Road and Ellesmere Road proved to be the ideal location, and in October 1966 the family moved from a lovely red brick bungalow in Weston to what was then an apple orchard white wood bungalow farm house property, across from the Stonehouse Restaurant.



George continued to work at General Electric (GE) for a full year after establishing Highland Trailers, with his wife Marjory taking care of business from bookkeeping to sales, and management of the rental aspects too. Each family member was assigned a role and duties and worked as a team. After resigning from General Electric, George and his wife became part of the growing trailer business competing to see who could sell the most in a week. They were very competitive. In 1976, after 10 years of being successful in business, George accepted a lucrative price tag for his 4 acre property, and closed the business, taking early retirement at the age of fifty two.

He bought Marjory her dream ranch-style red brick bungalow nestled on two acres with a white picket fence, in Markham, Ontario. In April 1978, George and Marjory celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary surrounded by immediate family, and their closest friends. Unable to find a 25 diamond ring, George gave his beloved wife a 27 diamond cluster ring. In early 1980, Marjory told her daughter June that she believed the ring to be cursed because

of the 27 stones thinking she would only live to celebrate her 27<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. She was right. She died at the age of 54 from incurable cancer in the months following on July 10, 1980. Her mother had bequeathed the cluster ring to June, but all she ended up receiving was the white gold ring setting minus the diamonds. Her father explained months later that one of his sons had suggested he make two rings for himself, which he wore proudly in memory of his beloved wife. June was heartbroken and disappointed but rationalized that there was indeed a curse on that ring, and so she came to terms with it out of love for her mom and dad.



June accompanied her father to frequent Monday to Friday meals out, and Scottish dancing on weekends to fill the void as her dad greatly missed his wife. Ten years after Marjory's death, George married his second wife in November 1990 after meeting her at a dance. They eventually moved to Pickering, Ontario in November 1997.

Throughout his life George enjoyed and loved so many things; lengthy vacations to Scotland and RV trips to Florida, with many cruises to the Caribbean, music/song and any kind of dancing, but especially Scottish Country or ballroom dancing, and yes, televised boxing events. Car rides and day excursions, going on picnics and being head chef with his Coleman stove gave him pleasure, and in their earlier life when new to Canada, cottage getaways with plenty of water fun and enjoyment, and smelt fishing in earlier years with three of his children at the mouth of the Humber River, or lake fishing – something that influenced June and led to her love of fishing even today.

George took pride in dressing smartly, was nicknamed Gorgeous George, and enjoyed dining out with friends and family. He loved the Pickering Ribfest for its BBQ ribs and funnel cakes, an event his daughter June was a co-chair of from 2008 through 2011. George especially loved the recognition he received as June's dad, with the ribbers and other vendors offering him free food products. He was proud of her community work, and her career accomplishments, as he was proud of each of his three sons.

George and his daughter loved their car trips, and Scottish Highland Game events were among the many summer treats away from their homes in Pickering, to Georgetown, Fergus, or Uxbridge.

George was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and dementia in early 2016, with some evidence of Parkinson's. He was in denial of the diagnoses and put on a brave face, continuing to enjoy car trips to The Big Apple, Cobourg and Port Hope, or a visit to Brighton to his long-time friend Lou. On the way back June and her father would stop into the Casino for a meal and fun times at the slots. They also enjoyed visits to the Legion in Pickering and Port Perry for music and festive events, and at least once a year would pay a visit to the nearby petting farm (Wild Things) for George to enjoy the farm yard animals.

In the fall of 2017, following George's 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday, when his legs would no longer support him, his second wife and son, the latter who had power of attorney (POA), admitted him on a Tuesday to Orchard Villa long-term care facility nearby. Home help had become a challenge. June learned a few days later on Friday that her dad no longer lived in his condo after calling

to ask after him. She immediately called the long-term care facility and was shocked to learn that her father was not eating or drinking anything since his admission on the Tuesday. After arriving at 5 pm she found her dad in tears, sobbing and believing he had been abandoned. He wondered why she had not come to see him - why no one had come to see him. He had refused to eat or drink, and was very distraught at being placed in a ward room of four men, instead of a single bed room, which had been his stated wish and agreement in 2016 should



he have to go into a long-term care facility. June sobbed with her father and begged him to eat and drink with her eating a meal with him and comforting him and promising to be back the next morning for breakfast. For the next six or seven weeks, June cleared her calendar and made her dad her number one priority. She had breakfast and lunch with him on Saturdays and Sundays and stayed with him into the afternoon until his nap. Monday to Friday she arrived for the 5pm dinner hour to eat with and feed her father, and stayed with him into the evening, talking with him, comforting him, playing music videos on her smartphone, and singing alongside him, and showing him photos of himself in younger years and happier times with his beloved Marjory, before saying good night, exhausted herself after a full day at work downtown. Over time, after George had eased into his

new living arrangements, June was able to re-work her schedule, and reduce the visits to something more reasonable and considerate of her own health situation given her full time work schedule.

Friday nights was their Father/Daughter date night, with music in the front lounge and Wednesday another chance to enjoy music and song together. The two celebrated their birthdays with their newly found friends, an extended family of residents and their visiting family members. Commencing in August 2018, once a month June would treat everyone to either Lyndt or other speciality chocolates, cupcakes, or cookies ... a sweet of some sort to put smiles on everyone's faces, and warm their hearts. After music hour was complete, it was commonplace for them to retreat to George's room for either Three's Company, his favourite TV show, or the two of them would listen and sing along to music, with Danny Boy, Nobody's Child, The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen, or These Are My Mountains as a few of their favourites, along with Don't Take My Sunshine Away.

The last time June saw her dad in person was on Friday, March 13, 2020, and when she entered his room to find him repeating "She Will Be Coming Around the Mountain When She Comes", June put on a Scottish DVD and they sang along to the many songs until 8:30 pm.

On Easter Sunday, April 12th June learned via an online news article, of the coronavirus outbreak at Orchard Villa, and of two deaths. She called for her father that evening after 8 pm, and spoke with him learning that the man in the next bed was coughing profusely. George begged his daughter to come and get him - come and get him right now. That request

was repeated several times, and June agreed that they would go on a car trip, and took him on a fantasy one to calm him down, after which he fell asleep.

On Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, June saw her father via a Skype-type video session thanks to Darius Patel, who was visiting his dying father in the bed next to June's dad. Darius afforded June 3 minutes to talk to her dad. He simply stared at Darius and unfamiliar with the concept of an audio-visual call, didn't respond to June's speaking, and sending her love. On Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, she was informed by a PSW that her father was recorded as being in a "happy go-lucky mood", and this pleased her.

Two days later on Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, June was informed that her dad was recorded as having a sore throat on the Tuesday. This news upset her, and she immediately made a call to Orchard Villa. Without giving June a response to her question, the nurse walked the phone into her father's room and put it on speaker mode. George was barely audible, and June quickly realized that he was at high risk of being Covid-19 positive despite being told twice he had tested negative. June made a request for the nurse to provide him with a beverage and received a loud, rude reply. After a second request George was given a drink and was able to speak a few words. His throat was dry, and his voice very raspy and light. June quickly made arrangements to have a Skype type visit on the next day, Friday, April 24. It was a window visit, with June and George's wife about 20 feet away from a second floor window, with a voice only connection. The twenty minute visit included some story-telling, singing of favourite songs, with the last one being, Please Don't Take My Sunshine Away. June ended her visit with "I love you. I love you now, and always will. Love you forever. Never forget". George raised his right arm and did his royal wave - a significant and love-filled gesture for June, since he did not usually use his dominant hand because of Parkinson's.



The following Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, George was admitted to hospital refusing to eat or drink as the reason for admission given by Orchard Villa staff. At admission George was dehydrated, with a urinary tract infection and Covid-19 suspected, and medical notes included the term anorexia.

By Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> with George likely deteriorating quickly, June arranged an audio-visual Skype session. By 5:30 pm, the hospital had confirmed that George was Covid-19 positive. June waited anxiously for updates, and made further arrangements on Thursday for three Skype visits with her dad. Each time he recognized her voice and name, and his eyes flew open. One evening visit he voiced, I Love You Too, in response to her usual phrase "I love you now .....".

On Friday June arranged a six-hour Skype session, and sat intently watching and listening to her father breathe, with every hour on the hour, the nurse returning to the room to speak with

June, and adjusting her dad's resting position, both speaking to him. June coached the nurse to touch George in a way that he would believe it was her. After 6 PM, June's cousin Shelia called via WhatsApp from Scotland, and June unmuted the hospital A/V session so that George's niece could speak with him. His eyes again flew open and he remained attentive for the short call delighting June and Sheila. George seemed to feel comforted hearing June's and his niece's voice and expressions of love. When June later asked the nurse if her father could still see her the response was "no, I don't believe so." She asked the nurse to place her hand in George's left hand and June told George that she was in the room visiting with him. She asked him to squeeze "her" hand if he could hear her and he did. The nurse told June "George has just squeezed "your" hand and June was overcome with emotion, happy that her dad could still hear her and respond. Despite his grogginess George did his best to let June know he was still with her. The call lasted until midnight, when June, exhausted, went to bed.

Saturday was a challenge because the audio visual department was closed. June anxiously called the nursing station early to see if they would tell her dad that she had called and let him know she loved him. Fearing he would die alone in spite of her promise to be by his side, just as she was for her mother 40 years earlier, she spoke with the nurse once rounds were completed, and the nurse said that George had responded right away and opened his eyes when she told him that June had called to say she loved him. In response to June's request to again speak with her dad by phone she was, once again, able to talk with her father, telling him things about a friend who had previously departed and reminding him that Mom was waiting for him, to follow the light and not be afraid. The call started and ended with the usual "I love you....".

June called again several hours later, and spoke with the nurse in the room with her dad who recognized that June was exhausted and suggested that they call her at 10:30 pm that evening, so that she could take time to rest. The nurse promised that if the situation changed, they would call June immediately from this room phone. At peace with that, June rested, and true to her word, the nurse called at 10:30 PM on Saturday night.

Over the next 30 minutes, June reiterated her love, her concern, her wishes, and tried to soothe her dad, so that he would know it was his time to go to Marjory and his previously departed friends and family. She played Internet video songs, and sang along with the tunes between sobs - The Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen, You Will Never Walk Alone, and a few other hymns, then How Great Thou Art, one of George's favorites. June wished her dad a good night and told him to follow the light and to go in peace, with her love, promising to talk to him in the morning if she could. Her last tune was Amazing Grace before finally saying good night.

After a troubled sleep awakening early Sunday morning at 5 am, June spoke with a relative overseas. By 7am thinking of going back to sleep she played several versions of Amazing Grace, when the phone lit up with a call from Lakeridge Health. The nurse quickly asked June to say what she needed to say, as George's time was getting close. June reassured her dad that she loved him, would right the wrongs for him, asked him to go in peace and follow the light to her mother, while reminding him his childhood friend Ted, who had passed away two years before would be waiting to greet him.

George William Morrison passed away on Sunday, May 3, 2020 at 7:09 AM on the same day as his friend Ted had two years earlier.

A family member of a resident at Orchard Villa told June that she had brought love into that place when she brought in cupcakes and chocolates, and created a party for the residents to enjoy. She gave her love openly to her dad, everyone could see it, and George loved his one and only daughter.

In George's case the apple never fell far from the tree. George cared for seniors. June saw that and grew up knowing that elders should be treasured and taken care of whether family or not. June has George's kind heart and compassion, and many other of his skills and characteristics. She is a blend of both of her parents.



Reflecting back on her dad's reaction to being at Orchard Villa, she notes that he "hated" being placed at a table with others who were having tantrums, or who could not speak as he would expect. It disturbed him that he was placed with people who were not at his conversation level, and it is easy to understand why.

George, on occasion, had unexplained scrapes, bumps, and bruises and June was told he fell out of bed on one occasion, but found the explanation not believable. George's wife was told the same thing and she too thought the explanation unbelievable. June never got answers to her many questions, and with George's youngest son having Power of Attorney, and living in York Region, while she lived within five minutes of the facility, he was able to prevent June from gaining access to her dad's medical information, and her being able to question medical decisions and provide assistance to her dad.

She was also restricted initially from taking her dad out of the main dining room and she and her dad could not eat in the private dining room because of a restriction by the POA that they had to be supervised. This prevented June from taking her dad offsite to the Legion or the nearby Mandarin restaurant for a meal. George told her he felt like a prisoner. He wanted June to get a lawyer and have the POA revoked, as well as get him a private room, which was the 2016 agreement should he go into a facility in the future. June considered the breach of this agreement with George undue control and beyond the boundaries and intent of a POA role. She believes that whatever evidence of these restrictions exist in the facility records should be investigated.

June thought the problem was jealousy because of her strong bond with her father – something she describes as a sore spot with some of the family. As second oldest and only girl, she had always been her dad's confidante and the sole executor of his Will since the age of 18. In hindsight June realizes that she should not have suggested to her dad in the presence of his second wife to put her youngest brother's name as a co-Executor in order to prevent future family conflict, and to have him be a partner in decision-making.

When this kind of family conflict occurs and family members are shunted aside, wounds are created that are hurtful, traumatic, and can last a lifetime. Sadly it is often the vulnerable person who is also hurt by the conflict and may feel responsible. George was troubled at times and voiced his concerns and love for one and all. The unrest and family separation at special or seasonal events weighed heavily, as he clearly wanted his family to be united. In June's case she believes distance from those who hurt her by their actions seems the best course of action. She continued to love and support her father as best she could under the circumstances. She also sought assistance from the local MPP to gain access to her father in the last five days of his life while he was at the hospital, and is grateful to Peter for ensuring that she could visit remotely to comfort her father as often as needed in his final days and hours.

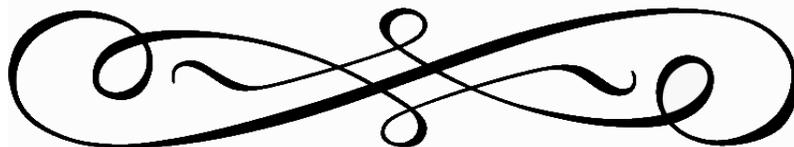
This story is a cautionary tale for older adults who must determine to whom to give their Power of Attorney, and whether it is a sole role or shared one. The time of a parent's decline and death can be very stressful for families. It is a time to be kind to one another. Harm inflicted at times like this can last a lifetime.

June was virtually with her dad until the end. The hospital nurse stated that only she (June) made arrangements for audio visual visits, and only she made the arrangement for a phone to go into the room. June was the only one who told her dad repeatedly Wednesday through Sunday, that she loved him. June also invited George's 2nd wife to have a phone call on the Saturday and shared a window visit with his wife at Orchard Villa on the Friday, a complete week prior to his passing.

Kindness, respect and fairness, and thinking about the dying person seemed the most important to ensure no future regrets.

June wants the profit motive removed from care of older adults, and she wants long-term care facilities to understand that residents have rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed to them under the Canadian Constitution just like everyone else. Those rights are not parked at the door when they enter a facility. George had a fundamental freedom to associate with visitors of his choice, and he enjoyed associating with his only daughter. That should not have been denied him or her.

Like her dad June is a fighter, and this experience has transformed her. George has said in the past, "if you don't stand up for your rights, then you don't deserve to have them". June promised her dad that he would get justice. Doubtless that she will not give up until he does. Now it is June who is standing up for his rights and her own.



## **Paul William Russel Parkes (Father of Cathy Parkes)**

**A well-loved and respected, outgoing, social man who helped so many with their careers**

**“Make sure that you always buy a good pair of shoes because your feet take you everywhere”**

Paul William Russel Parkes was born on August 3, 1933 in Toronto. He married Patricia Dale on June 18, 1966 and together they had three children, two boys and a girl. His second marriage was to Sandra Foss.

His mom came to Toronto to give birth because Paul was born breach. He grew up in Dunnville, Ontario. One of his grandpas came from England, and the other built highways in northern Ontario. It was on Bear Island in Lake Temagami where Paul learned from Indigenous people how to fish, canoe, hunt and all about the outdoors – something he passed on to his children. He was someone who loved nature and sometimes said “if the world falls, we’ll know how to survive”.



Paul spent a lot of time up north with his cousin Peter Stollery whose family owned Stollerys in Toronto, and who later served as chairman of the Liberal Caucus, and then as Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State and to the Minister of Communications. In 1981 he was appointed to the Senate on the Prime Minister’s recommendation.

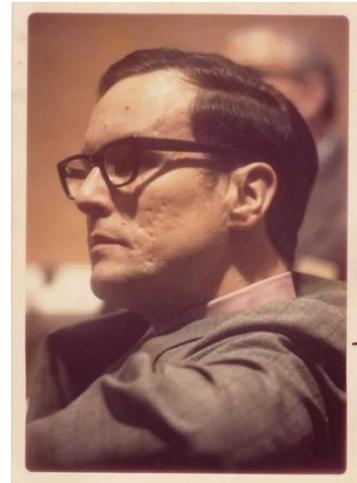
Paul’s ashes will be taken to the north country he so loved and scattered there.

As a young man he worked at the Fairmont Banff Springs hotel, but at age 18 took a job at Eaton’s as a stock boy. By the time he took early retirement in 1992, he was manager of Eaton’s Scarborough Town Centre where his staff loved him. After his death so many of his former employees contacted the family and told them what a wonderful man their father was and how they owed their careers to him. He was a man who gave people opportunities and the chance for a better life. After retirement Paul took up a sideline filling up pop machines, a pastime he enjoyed.

Paul was a gardener, and wherever he lived he had the most beautiful gardens right up to the age of 83, something he learned from his paternal grandfather. He was also an amateur meteorologist and taught his children all about cloud formations and how to tell when a storm was coming.

He was a spiritual man who took great pleasure in his religion, first at the Stone Church in Toronto, then at Agincourt Pentecostal, and finally at an Oshawa Pentecostal church. The teachings of Christ and salvation were very important to him and he would often engage in in-depth spiritual conversations with others. He was a communicative man and expressed his feelings freely, and this created a strong bond with others, but especially his wife and children. Both parents encouraged their children to have their own thoughts and opinions and to give voice to them.

As Paul got older he and his second wife lived in a large home, but he began to have mobility issues. Two different doctors gave two different opinions of what was ailing Paul. One said Parkinson's Disease, but another, a mobility specialist, thought Paul had water on the brain (hydrocephaly). Either way he was prone to falls because of foot shuffling and balance problems. Those difficulties led to a move to a Pickering condo in 2018 and then to a retirement home in Whitby. But when he had a fall requiring nineteen stitches the family contacted the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) and the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). They were told to choose 7-10 homes, but they actually had no real choice because the only places where beds were available were Altamonte and Sheppard Lodge in Scarborough or Orchard Villa in Pickering. Since his first wife volunteered at Orchard Villa and it was close to his daughter that is where he ended up. Professionals dictated when and how he would enter the facility and he moved in on November 8, 2019. He was only there for 5 months. His transition was made easier because his daughter Cathy visited him every day for two weeks and ensured he got enough to eat. He loved food.



Less than a month after his admission the first problems happened. Paul's legs felt heavy and he needed help to lift them into bed, but when he asked for help lifting his legs, getting his shoes off, and for a blanket because he was cold, the PSW taking care of him refused to help him and threw a blanket in his face, which was considered to be staff to resident abuse. He called his daughter Cathy and she rushed over and later filed a complaint with the facility administration. After that, obviously knowing that he had used his phone to call for help, his phone was mysteriously unplugged for the next two months.

During the same period he suffered a urinary tract infection, a kidney infection, became dehydrated and was hospitalized for a week at a time on two separate occasions, his urine the color of coffee. His eyes were sunken, he was unable to speak, and he grabbed his daughter's hand and squeezed unaware of who she was or where he was. A catheter was put in and his daughter was still fighting to have it removed when the home went into lockdown on March 14, 2020.

By January of 2020 there were other incidents. Paul was on diabetic medication, and his daughter found out he had not been given several meals. This happened when no one put

him in a wheelchair so that he could go to the dining room. Cathy demanded a tray be brought to his room and it was.

Cathy visited at least twice a week but on March 7th, 2020 when she went to her dad's usual lunch table he was not there. She went to his room where she found him in bed, half naked and his catheter out. She asked his PSW why he had not had his lunch and she replied that she was having trouble getting his catheter in. Half an hour after he had eaten and his daughter had left she got a call from the home saying he was being sent to hospital as they couldn't replace his catheter. The hospital then called saying he had been admitted, they had put in his catheter with no problem, questioned why he was even there, and were sending him back to the home. He was stuck in hospital, where COVID patients were present, for 10 hours because transport was unavailable and his family finally took him home in a cab.

On March 14, 2020 the facility went into lockdown and Cathy was forbidden from visiting. By early April one of the home Directors told Cathy there was a flu outbreak at the home in the Birch unit, where her father resided, but that her dad did not have it. Cathy investigated and went to the Durham Region Public Health site and learned that there was a reported rhinovirus outbreak at Orchard Villa. She began talking to her dad every day on the phone.

By April 9th her father was still going to the congregate dining hall even though his tablemate had died of coronavirus. Residents and staff were still gathering in groups in the lobby for singsongs. Cathy demanded he be given trays in his room rather than going to the dining hall, but it was too late. It was the first time her dad told her "I want out of here. Get me out of here".

By the next day, April 10th, her dad sounded tired and groggy when she called. She again checked the Durham Region Public Health site and learned then that there was a coronavirus outbreak at Orchard Villa. That was also when she learned that four staff and four residents were infected and that two residents had died.

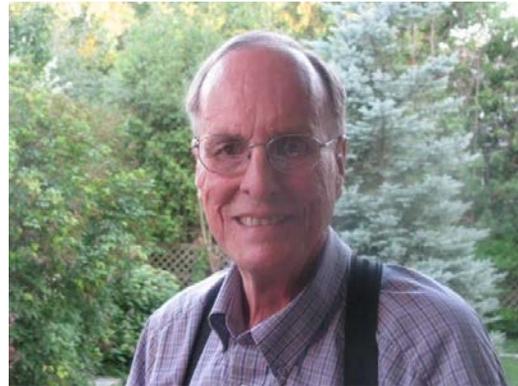
By April 11th, Cathy's birthday, her dad told her "I love you" three times. He didn't sound right and she thought he might be dehydrated and have another kidney infection. She called her dad's favourite nurse who told her that her dad had a fever, that things were really bad, with normally five staff on duty but that they were down to two staff and there was no personal protective equipment (PPE). He said he was exhausted.

Cathy spent the next 36 hours calling with her dad not answering and on Easter Sunday she could not get anyone at the facility.

On April 13th she called another of her dad's favourite nurses at 7 AM and was told the same thing in regards to his statistics that she had been told two days earlier. It was clear the chart was not up to date. When asked how he was doing, the staff member said "we are exhausted, there's no staff, no PPE, it's unbelievable in here". She asked what she could do and he said "please call the administration and tell them we need help". Cathy asked if her Dad had been swabbed and was told no, so she demanded he be tested that day and he was.

Cathy went into action. She contacted the Premier's Office, Health Minister, her MPP, the Mayor of Pickering and let them know the situation at Orchard Villa. At 4:30 PM she called Orchard Villa and got the Director of Care who told her that her dad was fine, refused her entry, told her they had plenty of staff and PPE. At 7:30 PM, Carol Redmond, from the Mayor's office at the City called her. Deputy Mayor Ashe had called Lakeridge Health on Cathy's behalf and they were in contact with the administrator of Orchard Villa. They were also told that Orchard Villa did not need help.

The next morning, on April 14th Cathy called the Birch ward and a new staff person was on shift. She asked to see her dad at his 2nd story window. The staff appeared at the window in full PPE and raised her Dad's bed. He was on his back, comatose. He could not speak or open his eyes. The staff agreed to hold the phone to his ear, but there was no response. The staff was unable to give him Tylenol and he was denied oxygen, with the claim that he did not need it. When Cathy described her dad's usual demeanour, the new nurse, who did not know him said "then he's not okay". Cathy tried for three hours to reach the administrator and finally reached the assistant to the Director of Care who was extremely rude to her and obviously angry that she was calling. She said she didn't know about her dad, put the phone down, and Cathy overheard the administrator say "tell staff to take their PPE home, wash it, and use it again". The assistant returned to the phone, told her that her dad was doing fine and had had lunch, except that Cathy had seen him at lunchtime comatose. It seemed that no charting was being done.



Cathy called Ajax-Pickering hospital and asked if she called an ambulance would they take her dad, and they replied that they would. But when she spoke to the assistant to the Director of Care she said the hospital was lying, that the ambulance won't take him. Cathy asked to put him on oxygen and was told he didn't qualify.

On April 15, 2020 at 1 PM she was called by the home and told "Paul Parkes has died, when are you getting his body and collecting his clothes?" Cathy was in shock and did not think to ask for an autopsy. She had not seen her dad since he was at the window. Her request for a video conference was denied even though other families were being let into the home by April 16th and others were video conferencing. It seemed that she had been labeled a "problem family" and was not given the same rights as other more favoured families.

On April 17, 2020 her MPP finally called her back and told Cathy that it was not true that her father could not go to the hospital and that hospitals had been mandated to accept residents. That same day she called Orchard Villa staff and asked for her father's COVID-19 swab results, but was told they didn't have them.

At the April 18, 2020 viewing for her dad she and her family were shocked at how dehydrated and malnourished he was. He was swimming in a suit he had worn only a few months before.

From April 18-22, 2020 Cathy tried, but could get no more information. She works at Bell Media, and so she alerted them to the situation at Orchard Villa. The result was several exposes that appeared on CTV national news.

After that families started pulling their relatives out of Orchard Villa and had them taken to hospital where they were reported to have severe dehydration and malnutrition. Families were still being given no information and their family members were dying.

Beginning on April 24, 2020 Cathy demanded her father's records – everything.

She wrote a Call To Action with 70 family signatures and it was sent to both the Premier and the Health Minister, but the families received no response.



On May 14, 2020 the Premier ordered a management takeover of the home.

In her continued requests for her father's records she was told that his records were being "reviewed and redacted" allegedly to remove other residents' names from his file, although it is puzzling why any other resident's name would appear in his file. On May 6, 2020, after several requests, Cathy received her father's paperwork from Orchard Villa administration and discovered that he had been COVID-19 positive.

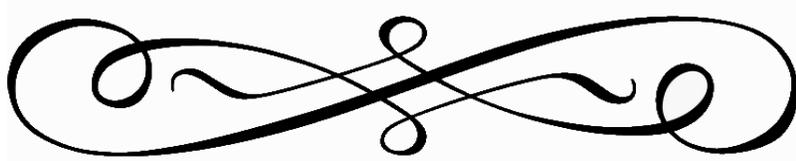
She contacted a lawyer and, together with her family, filed suit.

Cathy does not want the nightmare that her father and her family lived through to happen to anyone else. She wants the profit motive removed from long term care. She wants these facilities to be required to give families information, especially those with Power of Attorney as she had.

Paul Parkes was a good, good man. He worked hard, took care of his family, was well loved by the people who worked for him, and passed on good values to his children. He should not have been treated like he did not matter by Orchard Villa. He should not have been left, dehydrated, malnourished and dying. He should not have died alone. He should not have become infected with coronavirus in the first place, and he should certainly have been expeditiously rushed to hospital as his condition deteriorated. He, Cathy, and her family were treated in a patronizing and dehumanizing way. What happened to all of them is horrible and shameful. To think that residents of this home were dying of starvation and dehydration, sick with coronavirus, under the nose of local Councillors, City residents, that

the situation was known to the Ontario government, and that no appropriate action was taken and the families informed is beyond unbelievable.

Paul Parkes and his family deserved so much better. It is incumbent on all of us as citizens of this country, to ensure that what happened to Paul Parkes never happens to anyone again.



## **Ruth Lina Cramer (Mother of Fred Cramer)**

**A kind, sweet, and creative woman who loved her  
friends and family**

***“Gute besserung!” Do you know what that means?***

Ruth was born in Germany on May 15, 1929 and was a child during the Second World War, surviving a bombing raid thanks to her brother, who convinced the family to shelter in a bomb crater rather than go to the usual shelter. The shelter was bombed and no one survived. Throughout her life she was so traumatized by the war that she had nightmares about it, and described the burning bodies she saw.

She spent her childhood, as many had to after the war, scrounging for things, in this case going into the Black Forest to steal branches to make brooms. She, her father and brother would go during days that the rangers got paid because they were in the tavern getting drunk so it afforded them the opportunity. She described feeling humiliated as a young teenager, pulling their “treasures” through the streets in a cart. They also had to steal potatoes in order to survive.

Ruth met and married her husband at Schaub Lorenz which produced radios, where she made circuit boards and he worked in quality control. They were married in 1951 in Pforzheim, a town in southwestern Germany - the gateway to the Black Forest close to the Enz river.



Because their homes had been bombed, Ruth’s family were housed, for a time in the change room of a soccer stadium that Ruth’s future husband Fritz somehow managed to connect to hydro. Later someone at the City Hall who knew Fritz obtained an apartment that they made available to Ruth’s family. Once they were married they moved into the flat with Ruth’s family, then along came two children and the four of them lived in a 10 x 10 foot bedroom.

In 1954 Ruth’s husband made the decision to come to Canada, and in 1955 Ruth and the children, two and three at the time, made the difficult journey across the North Atlantic on the Seven Seas boat. It was a pretty rough crossing and Ruth got sea sick so they were all happy to

land in Canada and be reunited as a family. They lived in a flat in downtown Toronto on Markham Street for awhile, moving into a home in Scarborough at Markham and Painted Post in 1958. Ruth gave birth to Fred about a month before their move.

Ruth was a hard worker and along with child care responsibilities during the day she worked at two jobs at night. Often her husband would come home and then she would go to work at Towers in Scarborough. When Fred turned five, his mom went to work full-time and his sisters took care of him. She got jobs first at Scripto Pens and later at Litton Systems where she worked on the circuitry for bombs used during the Vietnam War. After the war she was laid off and she and her husband agreed she would stay home.

Ruth was a wonderful homemaker who made tasty meals of schnitzel, sauerbraten, and rouladen. She also baked beautiful tortes, but on Sundays sent Fred to Fabian's a local patisserie for special cakes to have with coffee. Cake and coffee was one of her favorite things in the world and she would often go out with girlfriends after community events for it.

In 1967 the family bought a lot near Parry Sound, built a cottage, and went up every weekend from when the snow was gone to when it re-appeared in the late fall. Friends joined them, and Fred is still in contact with one of his friends from the cottage who now lives in Florida. The cottage is now bequeathed to him. It was a special place for Fred's mom and dad, and these days he takes their ashes up to the cottage with him and brings them back home again.



Ruth was Swabian and very good with her hands and took pride in her physical strength. She taught her husband how to cut down trees for the cottage clearing and also taught her son how to solder wires on radio kits, one of her specialties.

Ruth loved crafts and made beautiful ceramics, and crocheted everything from table cloths to doilies to huge afghans, and could sew her own clothes. She even taught her son to sew and embroider and he used to mend his own pants. Her favorite color was orange.

She also loved to go to swim and gym at Centennial Pool when they lived in Scarborough, and would have cake and coffee with her girlfriends afterwards at the coffee bar.

One of her many joys was playing board games with her children up at the cottage something she did often.

Ruth also enjoyed dancing, and after her husband's retirement she and he joined the Schwaben club after their move to Kitchener in 1990.

Ruth raised her children well, teaching them the value of a dollar and that they needed to work for what they got. Fred had a paper route and had to earn money to buy things he wanted.

In 2015 after Fred's dad's health was failing and he moved his parents to Brooklin to a retirement home things changed for Ruth and her family. She got Alzheimer's and it completely changed her personality. In 2018 Fred's father passed away and Ruth got a cancerous lesion on her head and had to have radiation to treat it. Fred was the only caregiver since one of his sisters still lived in Germany and another lived in Boston. He was very close to his mom and visited often. She got help with meals and cleaning, but often had trouble turning on the TV, and Fred would come by and do that for her.



It was tough for her to be on her own and on February 3, 2019, exactly one year after her husband passed, she had an anger episode that resulted in her being admitted to Lakeridge hospital in Oshawa. She could walk when she went in, but lost the ability to walk the very next day.

On May 14, 2019 she was transferred to Whitby hospital – a geriatric unit, to wait for a long term care facility.

By September 3, 2019 she was admitted to Orchard Villa in a not very welcoming way, and from day one things did not seem right. They clearly were not ready for Ruth even though she and the family arrived fifteen minutes late. Her bed was unmade with just a sheet thrown across it and no one was there to assist with transferring her into it so the ambulance attendants lay her on the sheet in her bed while Fred and his wife handled the two hour intake with the facility. The dietician came by to "assess" her and ground food was ordered. Fred and his wife thought they might have lunch with their mother but instead were taken to the activity room where they were served lunch and after lunch had to conduct more business.

When they arrived in their mother's room she was in an awkward, uncomfortable position in the same unmade bed and seemed upset and confused. Fred called a PSW to help get her into her wheelchair. He said some PSW's were pretty grumpy and handled her roughly when they changed her diapers.



On day two, the family visited again and Ruth indicated that she had to go to the bathroom so Fred rang the call bell. It took forty minutes for anyone to answer, and when they did they said they needed two people and had to come back, which they did ten minutes later. Staff left her sitting unattended on the toilet and she began calling out for her son, and finally his wife went in to attend to her. It became clear that the home was short staffed.

When the family complained to the nursing supervisor about the call bell problem and Fred explained that his mother could have been lying on the floor bleeding, the nursing supervisor was very polite but suggested they call the Ministry to complain. At this point Fred was left wondering “what did we do?” putting his mother in there.

A few weeks went by and the facility called to say that his mother had fallen and her hand was swollen. It was not clear that a doctor had been called, and so Fred requested that.

A couple of weeks later, his mother fell again, and even though she had a fall mat and an alarm pinned to her, many times it was not actually attached to her shirt. Her hand and knee were injured this time, and Fred had to ask again to have a doctor see her because again it was not clear that one had been called. The pain she was experiencing was blamed on arthritis and she was given Tylenol and Voltaren for her knee. Fred sometimes saw the doctor in the facility but was never able to speak with him directly.



About six weeks after Ruth’s admission to Orchard Villa, their second choice, a facility in Oshawa became available, but the family decided not to move her because she seemed to have adapted to Orchard Villa, and they did not want to keep moving her, figuring things were probably the same everywhere. Besides, she had three nurses who treated her very well and were familiar to her.



By mid-October, 2019 Ruth looked different. She leaned to one side and her mouth also pulled to one side. She had a blank stare and her eyes seemed glazed. The family questioned the home about whether or not she had suffered a stroke but the home denied this. The staff took her vitals and said they were good. Fred’s sisters came to visit from Germany and Boston. This was the first time in thirty years the four had gotten together at one time. It was very special to Ruth.

On January 16, 2020, Ruth fell again, this time out of her wheelchair right in front of the nursing station. Fred commented that the station was often unattended and that it could be a runaround to find anyone. She had no seat belt on because the home claimed this was a restraint and was not allowed. This time her nose was broken and she was sent to emergency where she was kept overnight because no transport was available for her to go back to the facility.

Fred did notice that there were not always people at the entry to the home to ensure that anyone who did enter engaged in proper sanitation, and people walked by and often did not sign in or use sanitizer. Workers also walked in with a box of gloves at the beginning of their

shift and walked out with them at the end of their shift. This made Fred wonder why this was happening.

On March 13, 2020, the last time Fred saw his mother in person, they had a very good visit. He showed her videos of her home town in Germany, walking tours through the town, and she could name the rivers and seemed to know her way around. He asked to play a game with her, but she wanted to watch more videos. Needless to say, he brought along her favorite – coffee and a donut to have with her.



The next day, the government shut down visitations and Fred was only offered window visitations and Facetime calls. He was worried that she might become frustrated with those because she was deaf and would not be able to hear him, so at first he did not accept them.

When he called to check on his mom he was always told that she was happy, eating and drinking. After the respiratory infection outbreak became public around March 19<sup>th</sup>, Fred was told by the clinical care person that Ruth was still eating in the dining room. When he phoned he had trouble getting through to anyone, but when he did he was always told the same thing that she was happy, eating, and drinking.



On April 15, 2020, Fred was called and told his mother had tested positive for coronavirus even though he had not been told previously that she had been tested or had symptoms. He asked if

she had been moved out of her old room and she had not. At 6 PM Fred did a Facetime call and Ruth was in bad shape. His mom could hear him but he could not hear her on the Facetime call and Fred noticed tears in her eyes. He asked if they could have a second Facetime call with the grandchildren included and this was postponed as there were other families who hadn't spoken to their loved ones yet.



By Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the facility called to say that his mother had died and he was asked “what funeral home do you use” and asked what belongings he wanted. Fred replied just pictures, and her wedding ring and to go ahead and donate the wheelchair, fan, and furniture.

Attending at the home to pick up her belongings Fred confronted a macabre scene. At 3:30 PM there was an ambulance in the driveway and they were taking someone out. Two vans were taking bodies out of the home, and he had the awful thought that this is how his mother's body must have left the facility earlier. The garbage can was overflowing with personal protective equipment (PPE) and staff were taking off their gloves and masks and putting them in the garbage, but some were falling on the ground. Residents were outside smoking and appeared to have no masks on. They must have come through the building without a mask or PPE while the building was in quarantine.

He learned from others that residents were not being given anything but tuna sandwiches and his mother did not like tuna or sandwiches. He wondered if she had been left in dirty diapers and starved to death. No soups were apparently available which would have provided both fluids and food. He heard that a PSW had gone public and said they had to change 55 diapers in one shift, and Fred wondered if the PSW had proper PPE and was he spreading infection?. There did not seem to be much hand sanitizing that took place at the best of times, and "pump in pump out" coming to and leaving rooms was not occurring very often. Hand sanitizers at entrances were sometimes empty.



Fred thinks the home should have had a pandemic plan. He learned from others that several people had been transferred to hospital in a malnourished, dehydrated state with urinary tract infections after the Lakeridge Health teams went in to the facility – ordered there by the Medical Officer of Health.

He thinks there should be alternatives to these kinds of institutions so that people can age in place and not have to keep being moved around as his mother was.

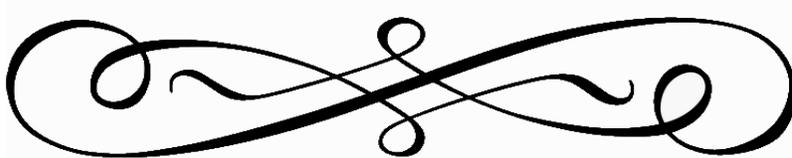
He believes that profit has no place in the care of older adults.

Fred has a shrine in his house to his mom and dad that contains things that were important to them – their urns displayed on one of the doilies she crocheted, along with ceramics that she made, chestnuts from Germany that his dad loved and his beloved pocket knife that he was never without.

Fred's mother was a sweet, friendly woman who was creative and loved her family. What happened to her at Orchard Villa was a travesty. Fred's desire that there be alternatives to these institutions would ensure that no one would ever have to enter one again as she was forced to.



His mom sometimes said to him “don’t put me in a nursing home”, but Fred had no choice, and perhaps that is the real tragedy. Because people are old there are no alternatives for them. And perhaps that makes this a human rights issue.



## **Doreen Nisbet (Mother of Simon)**

**A courageous, classy, proud woman – the strongest  
woman her sons ever knew**

***“If I’m going through this how must it be for others”***

Doreen was born in Toronto’s west end in 1931, part of generations of her family going back to when Toronto was still York. She used to tell great stories about the time Hurricane Hazel hit Toronto and how her family home’s backyard backed onto the Humber River, so they had first hand experience of the flooding that ensued.

She married and had a son with her first husband who died relatively young of emphysema. She raised her boy on her own taking a full time job at a lumber company. The owner took a liking to Doreen and they began what would be a life-long relationship that resulted in Simon, born in 1964. Even though she and her beau never married, she loved him until he died, and they visited frequently and vacationed on his boat when Simon was young.

Doreen later went to work for Philco and what became Philco Ford which built electronics for the Ford motor company. Doreen was an expediter, working in the office to ensure that the production lines were always supplied. She retired after 40 years.



During her tenure there she happened to find out that one of the men was earning a lot more than her and took up the fight for equal wages with her union the United Auto Workers (UAW), not just for herself but for the other women too. She would not back down, and went to court, Buzz Hargrove with her, and her case set a precedent – earning the women equal pay, paid retroactively. She was a woman to be admired because it took guts at the time to stand up for her rights and those of others, but that’s was just who Doreen is.

It also took guts for Doreen to raise two boys on her own who could sometimes be a handful. But she was a tough, caring mom and she raised boys who loved and cared about her and who have been there for her in her old age.

Simon admits he was a bit rebellious when he was young, and maybe a bit of a chip off the old block, certainly when it came to advocating for justice for his mom and his own independence, and that has served him and her well.

Doreen also enjoyed life. She loved a good steak and other fine food and wine. She had class in everything she did. She enjoyed travelling and shopping and had a deep love of music, everything from Belafonte, to Neil Sedaka, to the Blues, to Drake. She always stayed current and loved Pink Floyd, David Gilmore, BB King, Eric Clapton, and was a fan of Maroon Five. Her love of the blues was shared by her son Simon and they often went to Blues concerts together. She also loved birds and animals and especially cats.

Doreen lived for awhile in Don Mills, moving to Pickering in the 1970's. Eventually she and Simon shared the same home, from 2005 until she entered Orchard Villa in 2017. It was always Simon's intention to keep his mom at home, and they were always close, but her hips were not in good shape and it became impossible to properly care for her after she had a bad fall and ended up in Ajax-Pickering hospital for three months. The bones in her hips were so fragile that they were not even able to use pins and had to use a gamma nail to stabilize her hip bone. They tried rehab but that did not help and the search was on for a nursing home for her. Her son looked at 15 facilities, and described being shocked at how ill prepared the province was to help older adults. Like so many other families, neither he nor his mom thought about the possibility of placement until they had to. In the end they decided on Orchard Villa because it had a short waiting list, and it was very close to where her son Simon lived so he could be there a lot. Simon felt fairly confident about her being there because he supplied her with a cell phone and a tablet to be able to be in touch if she needed to.



Doreen made the journey through the Birch to the Linden to the Pine wings, Birch having been where she received the worst care and treatment, with things improving in the Linden wing. She finally got her own private room overlooking a courtyard in the Pine wing – something that turned out to be very fortunate once the pandemic hit.

Her first year there was a constant struggle to get staff to use a bedpan instead of forcing Doreen to wear diapers. Diapers would have been easier for staff, but not a dignified way for Doreen to have to live and she was a dignified lady. She used to restrict her fluids so she would not bother staff too much to have to use the bed pan too often. But after two weeks or urine soaked sheets and staff trying to convince Doreen she was having “accidents”, Doreen called her son at 11:45 PM one night and said “you wouldn’t believe this”. A staff person

had walked in holding a bed pan with the bottom cracked. Simon rushed over there and demanded a proper bed pan. He was told he couldn't have one that they would have to order it. He insisted and admitted to getting a bit loud, but staff kept pushing back that he could not have a proper bed pan for his mother. He continued to insist and it looked like one of the staff might call the police when a staff member got a new bed pan and slammed it down on the counter, then walked away. After that encounter his mom seemed frightened – afraid of retaliation, and that was not who Doreen was. Simon became determined to get her moved and she was, but it took eighteen months to finally get her into a private room – one that she loved, on the courtyard. Even there though Simon had to fight for a motorized wheelchair for his mom so that she could go independently out to the courtyard and read, and watch the birds and squirrels. The facility tried to deny her that saying someone in a motorized wheelchair had clipped the door, which meant no one else was allowed to have them, but Simon also won that battle for his mom.

He said that 90% of the staff on the Pine wing were wonderful to his mom, but there was one who appeared to take a dislike to her and was rude to Doreen. When Simon asked a question about sheet changes, the same staff unloaded on him, shouting so loudly she could be heard in the hallway. Doreen seemed afraid of her and Simon regularly checked and asked his mom “is she hurting you”. His mom kept her mouth shut, afraid of retaliation, but she cried. And crying was also not Doreen. In 2018 that staff person stopped caring for Doreen but continued to give her dirty looks on a regular basis. She had been moved for a different reason, so that Doreen was no longer one of her patients.

By 2019 things were going missing out of Doreen's room. Her son used to bring her Pepsi and Ginger Ale as treats and one day he brought her a whole box of small bags of chips but by the next time he came back, it was gone – disappeared. An uncle had left \$100.00 in cash for Doreen, but \$60.00 of it also went missing. The thefts were reported to administration but there was no follow up. Simon was always told “we'll get back to you” but no one ever did. His mom's concern for others shone through even during this difficult time and Doreen remarked “if I am going through this how must it be for others”, especially those who were non-verbal and more disabled.

As for Simon, overwhelmed by the number of small things that were wrong, he tended to let them go as long as his mom was safe and happy. The everyday things that go wrong in these facilities can be overwhelming and after awhile it is easy to let many things pass as long as the major things are taken care of.

By March of 2020 with city-wide outbreaks of coronavirus in long term care homes, Simon asked Orchard Villa about the outbreaks but received no clear responses, except an admission that there had been a rhinovirus outbreak but his mom was not affected.

By early April the home went into lockdown and he was no longer allowed to visit.

On April 22, 2020, the facility called Simon to tell him his mom had tested positive for coronavirus. She was lethargic and not getting out of bed, eating little, but still drinking it was reported. Simon went to the courtyard to see his mom through the window every day and took out her laundry to wash. He called her all the time on his cell. Over time Doreen seemed to become confused, forgetting to charge her cell phone, and so he stopped calling.

One day during a courtyard visit he blew kisses to his mom and waved to her, but he could see that she was unhappy and in bed crying and alone. He wondered if she was eating and drinking and was concerned about malnutrition and dehydration. Simon spoke to a friendly staff person who told him “your mom is living on ginger ale”.



friendly staff person in the parking lot who told him “we can’t do IV here” Simon knew he had to do something to rescue his mom from the facility. He had seen a steady deterioration. When he called a nurse who was on duty from Lakeridge Health and asked “what has she eaten and drank in the past 48 hours” she checked the file and said “get her out of here”. He did. But

when he told Orchard Villa he wanted an ambulance the response was “oh really?” Nevertheless, an ambulance was called and she was transferred to hospital.

When she arrived she was so badly dehydrated that her kidney function was at 400 and should have been less than 100. The hospital had managed to get it down to 151. It was usually 84. Simon, her dear son, had probably saved her life.

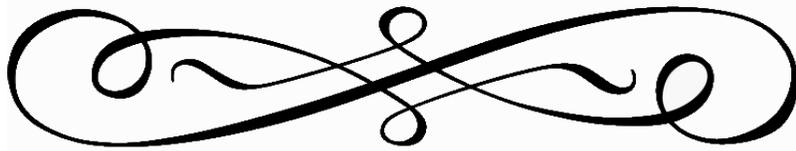
Doreen had also probably aspirated the day before according to a doctor and she had lost kidney function, but was starting to recover. Doreen is one tough cookie.

The doctor told Simon on May 19, 2020 that she had 22 patients from Orchard Villa with more coming in every day and she described each one as “a complete mess”.

Simon wants a criminal investigation into what happened to his mom at Orchard Villa and was one of the 41 signatories to a formal request by Orchard Villa families to the Chief of Durham Region Police Services asking for one.

Simon is a hero, exactly like his mom. He also wants profit removed from long term care and believes it has no place at all in the care of vulnerable people.

Doreen and her son Simon are fighters, but Orchard Villa almost defeated even them. Almost. But in the end, courage and determination won the day. Doreen is alive today because her son took the action he did. She can be very proud of him. He is living proof that the apple does not fall very far from the tree.



## **Karen Joan Leswal (nee Morton) (Wife of Ralf)**

**A woman who loved animals, gardening, and babies.**

***“She didn’t ask for her situation” (Ralf Leswal)***

Karen was born on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1950 at Toronto East General hospital. She would have been only 70 when she died prematurely in Orchard Villa. She had inherited Huntington’s Disease from her father who was a carrier. It often appears in a person’s 30’s or 40’s and includes symptoms of irritability, depression, small involuntary movements - jerking and twitching (chorea) that become more pronounced over time. It can also involve trouble learning new information or making decisions. Huntington’s interferes with a person’s



ability to walk, speak, and swallow, and causes changes in personality and a decline in thinking and reasoning ability over time. All of these things made it very hard on Karen, but also on her loving husband Ralf and their two boys.

Ralf’s brother had his eye on Karen in high school after Ralf and Karen met in December of 1964. He was in first year, and she was a junior. But she had eyes for Ralf instead and the rest was history. They married two years after the Summer of Love in April 3, 1969, and that love lasted all of their lives in spite of the many hardships they encountered. They had two boys, Veejay, born in January of 1974, and Ryan Robin Paul born in October of 1983. Veejay lives in California and Ryan lives here.

Through her late teens and early twenties, Karen worked for the Toronto Dominion bank. She was also a very social person before Huntington’s hit.

After getting married, Ralf and Karen lived for awhile in Montreal where Ralf conducted audits for Canada Permanent Trust and Mortgage Company all over the eastern region. It later became, through acquisitions and mergers, part of Canada Trust. They came back to Toronto to be closer to Karen’s family in Don Mills and that is where they lived for decades. Karen’s parents had a home there and she loved the garden. She also loved animals, especially a little Yorkie she had at the time she entered Orchard Villa and who was admitted with her.

Once Huntington's hit, Ralf took care of Karen, and never stopped taking care of her through all the difficult years. He was a man of his word and took his marriage vows – in sickness and in health – seriously. They lived in an apartment in Don Mills and Karen had difficulty walking and struggled with out of control emotions. Nevertheless, Ralf stood by her, right to the end, his comment being “it was true love”. Indeed it was and still is. In spite of her affliction, Karen had what many others would have loved to have – true love and devotion from her husband.

When things became very difficult, Karen and Ralf were forced to make a gut wrenching decision, and she entered Orchard Villa around 2005 and lived there for about 15 years. When she went in she could walk using a walker, talk, and interact, and she had her beloved Yorkie with her, but her dog died in January of 2010.

There were issues with Karen's care over the years, but Ralf let them go as long as he could take care of her, which he did, every day, except for a few days when he, himself, needed surgery. He kept her clean and fed, cleaned her room, and ensured that she was comfortable, and most of all, he kept her company while living out of his car all those years.

When COVID hit, Ralf, who describes himself as a “bit of a rebel”, insisted that he be allowed to stay with her, so he was a witness to what transpired.

At first he would just drive there and see her through a window. Karen was in the new section on a ground floor so he could see her through the window and they had window visits initially in March of 2020. He could still see her on March 14<sup>th</sup>, but six weeks later, his beloved Karen was gone. Ralf said that no one said anything except that they couldn't bring her to the window because there was no staff to do so. Ralf called every day to check up on her.

In mid-April the home called him and said “you had better come” and he did, staying for two hours before being asked to leave. He said there were masks and cheap gowns but no visors as personal protective equipment.

They did not tell Ralf that Karen had coronavirus and he ended up getting it himself.

The day after the first phone call he called the facility, but no one answered, so he went there and stayed at the front until someone came. Ralf was a determined man. He wanted to know his wife's health status – sooner rather than later. He also kept phoning until he finally got through. He said they were pretty unprofessional answering the phone, and he could hear lots of noise and commotion in the background as he spoke with the assistant Director of Care. He wanted to know Karen's status and if she had been tested for COVID. The response was cold and callous, that she didn't know, but eventually he was told Karen had tested positive.

The second time the facility called a few days later, with Karen not doing well, Ralf visited again and said Karen was fine initially but then started to crash. They told him “you need to go now” and he replied “you’ll have to drag me out of here”. He never left. His determination allowed him to stay with Karen the last few days of her life. There was no way that Ralf was going to have his beloved Karen die alone.

Seeing what he saw during those last days he wondered how many had actually died of COVID and how many died of neglect.

Ralf says there were some wonderful staff at Orchard Villa, but that for others it was just a job. He took care of most things for Karen so that the afternoon and night shifts didn’t have anything to do. He ensured she did not get bedsores by regularly repositioning her, and he kept her skin clean and dry. The charge nurses, usually one to a floor, seemed not to be in charge and did nothing when staff stood around chatting instead of seeing to the needs of residents. They just turned a blind eye and gave residents their medications. Similarly the facility always seemed to know when inspectors were coming and those inspector visits seemed like window dressing to Ralf.

Because of Ralf’s long association with Orchard Villa, being there every day, he noticed things. And he especially noted the changes in 2015 after Southbridge took over the facility. It used to be beautifully kept by a groundskeeper, with clean windows, and pets allowed. The meals were good. After Southbridge he says the meals got worse, and were totally disgusting. The windows got grimy and the grounds were not well cared for. He was told they couldn’t afford to hire more staff and part timers became the norm, especially on weekends, even though Ralf was told that the facility tried to hire full time staff but could not get them. Ralf wondered “who wouldn’t want to work full-time?” Something did not seem right.

He tried to bring up his concerns about substandard care to the management over the years but nothing changed. It all seemed to fall on deaf ears, and so he resigned himself to just looking after Karen to make sure she was all right. Management assured him that staff were getting in-service, but Ralf thought it pretty much went in one ear and out the other, because some staff had a “my way or the highway” approach to things. Ralf thinks if you are going to work in these facilities you should at least have some compassion.

Ralf knows why infection control was a problem that became apparent during the pandemic. There was food on the door frames and the door handles were grimy. The whole place was dirty, which is why he, at least, cleaned Karen’s room.

The leadership of the home was also pretty cold and callous with the Director of Care and Regional Representative for Extencicare seldom able to look him in the eye. It was always “rush rush” he says.

After Karen passed on April 30, 2020, not on her own terms, Ralf got the same cold treatment as always. He was called and asked what he wanted to do with her body and to collect her belongings. He was devastated at her loss and the way she had to die.

These days Ralf is still trying to recover from COVID himself – a hard legacy of his time caring for Karen at Orchard Villa. He was tested at Centenary and was negative at first but he was having trouble swallowing. He had no fever, but he was not hungry. He was put up in the Super 8 motel to self-isolate after exposure to Karen, and nurses from Durham Health made sure he was okay. No one took his temperature, and he still couldn't swallow properly, but his quarantine went reasonably well.

Finally, his quarantine over at the motel, Durham Region got him a seniors apartment. Ralf has never wanted to ask for help. He's pretty independent. But sick and having just lost his wife, he finally had to accept help.

He has tested positive now and is once again in quarantine. He became dehydrated and spent a day in hospital with an IV in, and they made sure he was fed. He gets calls every day now from Durham Health.

Ralf is a pretty smart man, and he loved Karen dearly and still does.

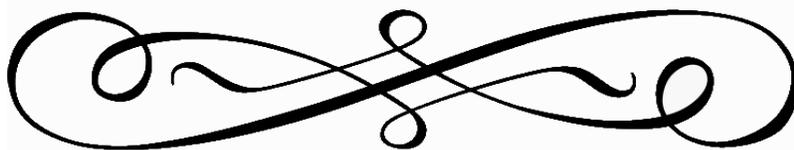
He has some concerns about the long term care sector and the way it is run. He doesn't think people who lack compassion should be working in long term care facilities, and he doesn't like that so many people are abandoned there and end up dying alone.

Ralf is right. People should not be abandoned to die in impersonal institutions. People who work with them should see them as human beings and treat them with respect. Too often that does not happen.

Thankfully, that kind of treatment did not happen to Karen, not because of the care she received at Orchard Villa but because Ralf provided much of that care.

That did not happen to Karen because she had a very special gift in her life that so many others do not have. She was loved by a very good man.

Karen had a great admiration for elephants and loved them for their loyalty and how they bonded for life as a family unit. It was such a gift that she married someone who also demonstrated loyalty and bonding for life and the importance of family.



## **Margaret and Brian Kelly (Parents of Linda Melanson)**

### **A fun loving, outgoing couple who loved to be together.**

Brian Kelly was born in Birmingham, England in June of 1932, and his wife, Margaret was born in August of the same year, also in Birmingham. They married on December 19, 1953. Brian and Margaret were high school sweethearts who were together for 71 years, and married for 66 of those years. They had two children, Linda who was the oldest, born in 1955 and Steve, her brother born in 1961.

Brian was between jobs a lot because he worked on the line for Austin Motor Company that makes Mini Coopers and so got laid off regularly. He tried taking a job at the post office, but found it did not pay much, so in 1969 he decided to emigrate to Canada for a better life. His aunt and uncle were already here. He got a job in security at the University of Toronto and Margaret worked at Sidney Smith Commons, also at the university's downtown campus.



Brian went on to work in security for Ontario Hydro, and the couple lived in Willowdale where Margaret worked at a credit union until she retired. But she soon got bored with retirement and went back to what she did in England, working in a school kitchen in Scarborough. She loved cooking and she enjoyed her job.

Once grown Linda and her brother lived in Whitby and Oshawa respectively.

Brian retired in 1999 and the couple moved to Whitby, but Brian also got bored with retirement and went back to work in security, this time as a commissioner with the Centre Street Library.

Brian and Margaret did everything together including buying a nice trailer that they kept at Pigeon Lake. They loved it there and spent almost every weekend on the lake.

Margaret is a happy go lucky person who enjoys a good joke and to have a laugh with people. She is dignified and likes to look nice. She is also a bit superstitious.

Brian preferred to have Margaret do everything for him and she liked to take care of him. He was an only child whose own mom spoiled him and Margaret continued that tradition. Even after she had suffered falls and couldn't get up anymore, Margaret insisted that she had to look after Brian.

Eventually they moved into a senior's apartment in Whitby, but after a time the kids were getting a lot of Lifeline calls about their Dad or Mom. After a few falls, Margaret who has osteoporosis, had to begin to use a wheelchair. She was finally taken to emergency after

another fall. That hospitalization ended with her placement in Orchard Villa on December 17, 2018.

Brian was still in the senior's apartment with in-home assistance but after he double dosed on his insulin and also ended up in hospital a short time later, he was also put on a list for emergency placement at Orchard Villa on December 24, 2018.



Margaret is a very strong woman who was rarely ill, and even now is recovering from coronavirus. She had a stroke last year but also recovered from that.

Brian's health was not as good. During a sleep study he had a panic attack and suffered congestive heart failure. He spent two weeks in the hospital. In November, 2019 he was bleeding from his bowel and had to have an endoscopy that, because of his medical condition, he was awake for. That brought on congestive heart failure. He was kept for two days in hospital and it was thought that at 87 another test might kill him. He had breathing problems and needed oxygen. He also did not want to leave Margaret all alone.

During their time in Orchard Villa Brian watched over Margaret, telling his daughter that he didn't want to leave her alone because "they don't treat her right". He had asked for water for her and the staff brought a jug of it but did not pour it for them, and they could not pour it for themselves. They were not drinking enough fluids. A beverage tray would come at 3 PM, but generally the family felt that staff did not do the job they were supposed to. The family attended the family council but were constantly told by the home administration that "they were working on it" when the council raised things. Nothing changed even after a year.

Brian died in April of 2020, and that left Margaret alone. Not long after, she tested positive for coronavirus but had no symptoms. She was moved to a private room in the Pine wing, where the family thought the staff were quite good, especially the nurses.

There were a lot of problems while both were in Orchard Villa. There were some good staff but others who weren't great and there were problems with the part-timers who came in on weekends. Call bells would go unanswered when Margaret had to use the washroom and one staff told her to just soil herself, and that made Margaret cry. She was always a dignified woman and that was humiliating. When there were not enough staff to attend to Margaret's needs and the family asked about it they were told that the facility couldn't afford any more staff. The facility often seemed short staffed and many PSW's who were working seemed angry and unhappy. Personal protective equipment, like latex gloves, were taken away because it was alleged that staff were abusing them, and taking them away, so the administration stopped providing them. Family felt the home was pretty lax on everything, and so when they visited they often took Brian and Margaret back to their rooms from the dining room, otherwise they would have been left sitting in the corridor in their



wheelchairs. Margaret needed a special bowl and her meat cut so that she could eat it. That happened inconsistently, and that meant she often did not eat. Once the military came in, Margaret got some of the best meals she had had in a long time. Apparently the kitchen staff were down with COVID, so the home first hired a catering company and the family thought those meals were like cardboard, but then the military brought in cooks that made really good meals.

The family describes the windows as needing cleaning, and the facility was pretty dirty. Deep cleaning crews were brought in once the teams arrived from Lakeridge but the family wonders how long the facility will stay clean after they are gone.

Linda had window visits with her mom and often found wires hanging down in front of the windows, which her husband tucked back up again. There tended to be no security or anyone at the front desk. Smokers often stood at the front of the building. Linda and her brother witnessed a confused woman escaping across the parking lot, and had Linda's brother not stopped her and taken her back she would have made it to the street without anyone noticing.

Things often go missing from the laundry and Margaret ends up getting other people's clothes. Margaret likes to look nice, but staff tell her what to wear. Brian was often left sitting on the side of his bed not getting any help to put his shoes and socks on, so he would go out in his wheelchair with no socks.



When Brian passed, Linda got a call from the facility asking what the family wanted to do with his body and clothes and that was pretty much it. Even after he had died and Margaret had been hospitalized, Linda kept getting robocalls, and then Lakeridge and the military came in. Four or five people had apparently died on the Pine unit.

Linda commented that we treat animals better than we treat our old people and that is certainly true given the description of Brian's and Margaret's life in this facility.

Linda did want to especially commend a nurse named Kim from Lakeridge Health who was particularly kind and compassionate.

Neither Brian nor Margaret should have had to endure this kind of treatment in their old age. They were a couple who cared about each other a great deal, so to have had to witness each other's mistreatment must have been an especially wrenching experience. Margaret still lives in Orchard Villa, but without Brian – a heartbreaking situation for her and for her family.

Linda would like to see this facility permanently cleaned up and staffed properly and for people to be around to provide good care and ensure that residents are treated with dignity.

That seems a very tall order at the moment.

## **Georgina (Georgia) Ebejer Cachia**

### **A strong woman who raised eight children**

***“Why don’t they get me out of here?”***

Georgina (Georgia) Ebejer Cachia was born in Malta on July 17, 1927. She married Anthony (Tony) in 1945 at the age of 19 and had ten children in total – two in Malta who died, and eight others who survived. Maria, one of her daughters is a twin and Georgia was pregnant with Maria and her sister when she emigrated to Canada in late fall 1951. Tony came over first to get work to support his family, and Georgia, 6 months pregnant, followed him a few months later traveling by boat to New York’s “Ellis Island” with 2 young children, very little money in her pocket, some clothes, and not able to speak English. Then she travelled by train to Port Colbourne, Ontario where she ended up living all of her life.

It was not easy raising eight children on a low income, but Georgia who was a strong person, strict, and a bit of a bully did it after her husband died on June 12, 1964.



Georgia loved people, music, bingo, dance and flirting with the fellas.

Maria, her daughter, one of the twins, moved to Toronto when she got married. After having a child she was separated and worked at the Catholic Childrens’ Aid Society. She spent her time raising her child and visiting her mom regularly on weekends. Once Maria left Catholic Children’s Aid and her son was grown up and married, she spent almost every weekend or any days she didn't work part time at her mom's place.

Georgia got a bad case of shingles in December 2014 became weak and was not eating well which was a problem. Because of her diabetes and heart condition she ended up hospitalized in Welland.

By 2015, Maria’s sister took over care of their mom and Georgia was moved to Whitby to stay with her daughter. She was first hospitalized at Oshawa Lakeridge Health Centre then went back to Maria's sister’s home before being admitted to Bomivelle Lakeridge Hospital until a bed became available at Orchard Villa.

Georgia always thought she could go back home, but that never happened, and she ended up placed at Orchard Villa with very few personal belongings on May 4, 2016. That was upsetting for Georgia who thought she might still go home. The sad task of telling her she was not going home fell to Maria.

Maria was about to go and visit her mom at Bomiville hospital when she received a call from another sister who told her that her mom was not in the room and had been taken to Orchard Villa. She got in her car and drove straight there. The facility tried to keep Maria out because she did not have her mom's power of attorney, but Maria persisted and managed to get to see her mom. When she got to her room she saw Georgia crying and crying not knowing what was happening. Apparently Georgia had just arrived at Orchard Villa and was in a room with her older daughter and husband and one of their daughters was completing the paper work for admission. Maria forced her way into the room, and when Georgia saw Maria she stood up and put her finger on the table and said she wanted everyone out of the room and asked for Maria.

Things pretty much went downhill from there for Georgia, Maria and the family. Georgia had been the glue that held things together. A family meeting was held with everyone including Georgia, who had not yet been told she was not going home. With no help from the government and none of the children able, for various reasons, to take over care of Georgia, she had to stay at Orchard Villa. Besides that, her house was now gone and all of her belongings with it.

Georgia said to her daughter Maria "I raised eight of you and this is where I end up?" "All my stuff, I have nothing". She told Maria "I can't stay here anymore".

Things were not good at Orchard Villa. Georgia threatened the staff that she would run away so they put an alert bracelet on her wrist. Maria was not allowed to take her mom out for a day because she was not the P.O.A. even though Georgia was still capable of making decisions. That was very upsetting for Georgia and Maria.

Things were not good at Orchard Villa from day one. On Georgia's first night there she had a roommate who was yelling and threatened to choke her. Her mother was moved after that to another room in the same unit "Pine #17".

Her bed was not locked sometimes and it moved making falls almost inevitable. Georgia had unexplained bruises and cuts on her arms, face and neck. Maria has pictures of those injuries. The cleaners were blamed for not locking the beds.

Georgia was often placed facing other residents whose mouths hung open and who sat hunched over in their chairs, unsupported. Georgia cried that she had ended up in a place like this. Maria's heart was torn apart seeing her mom crying all the time and wanting to go home and repeating to Maria "I raised eight kids".

In her washroom there were metal pillars under the sink and when her daughter Maria used the sink one of them fell out and hit her in the leg. When she took it to the desk she was told to just take it back and slide it back under the sink. It took four days for maintenance to fix it after Maria demanded it.

The rooms were very small and the furniture was not secured to the wall. You could not fit a walker/wheelchair between the bed and a dresser. Maria moved the furniture so Georgia would not get injured.

When Georgia or Maria used the call bells, no one ever came.

Georgia was also hospitalized because the staff seemed not to be handling her insulin properly.

Maria said they would not get her mom to participate in exercise programs, or any events - nothing, and no one was able to talk to her mom because she would be in her room, so the woman who loved people and music lived a lonely, isolated life.

Georgia also told Maria that the staff hurt her. "Maria, they're so rough, look at my arm and bruises". She would also tell Maria "they are nice to me when they see you".

Sometimes her nails were black, dirty and then turned a green color until some fell off. No one ever seemed to notice. Georgia had rashes on her legs and her legs would be swollen because of tight socks that were put on her.

Maria has many pictures to show this lack of care that Georgia received at Orchard Villa.

Georgia was allergic to chicken but they still gave it to her. She also got ice cubes in her drinks which was a choking hazard.

She was put in a broken wheelchair before it was fixed and slept in a bed with a mattress that hurt her back. The home would not replace it. Finally Maria threatened to buy her a mattress and the home replaced it a week later. They forced Georgia to wear diapers.

The last few months of Georgia's life she needed an oxygen tank periodically which Maria noticed was not working and so Georgia was not getting the oxygen she needed. When Maria went to report it she was told she had to shake it. She had previously reported the problem and it had not been fixed. She was told "we don't have a new one".

The day before Georgia passed away Maria visited with her mom all day. In the afternoon Maria took her mom to the lobby area where the piano was. Georgia enjoyed looking outside. That day Georgia was also hooked to the oxygen tank and again it was not working properly so Georgia was not feeling well. To make matter's worse, there were feces on the floor by the window. Maria reported it to staff who replied that it wasn't their department. When the maintenance person finally showed up the two cleaners were arguing about who was going to clean the feces up. Finally after the second request to clean it and 40 minutes later someone finally came and did.

Maria has some regrets about her mom's last days that she still thinks about. The day before Georgia died Maria brought her some Mediterranean food which her mom enjoyed. After spending the day with her mom Maria was getting ready to leave. Her mom asked her to stay

with her for the night but Maria was tired and wanted to go home because of the situation at the home. She said she would be back in the morning as she had done many times. Before Maria left her mom closed her eyes and said “you know I love you and I love all my kids”. Maria asked her mom “please open your eyes and look at me and tell me again that you love me” which Georgia did and said “I love you Maria”.

The next morning, Maria had a problem with one of her basement windows and was late getting to the facility. She got a call that morning at 11:00 am that her mom had died just after breakfast.

She went to the facility and sat holding her mom’s hand, thinking about what her mom had said so often “I raised eight children and no one could take care of me”. Maria believes her mom died of a broken heart and did not get the care she needed. She stayed with her until Georgia was picked up by the funeral home before midnight that day.

Georgia’s story is one that happens in so many families. As older people fail siblings begin to argue, someone takes charge, sometimes not in a good way, the parent is placed and their home sold, the proceeds divided, or sometimes not. They are left abandoned in an institution. Sadly, many who “benefit” from an inheritance before an old person is gone find little comfort in it. As so many have learned over millennia money does not buy happiness or peace of mind. Family dynamics that have persisted for decades – sibling rivalries, buried resentments, jealousies, personal hurts and betrayals – all come to the surface when an older person is approaching the end of their lives. And the children are left with the regret, the anger, the pain that is sometimes passed on to the next generation.



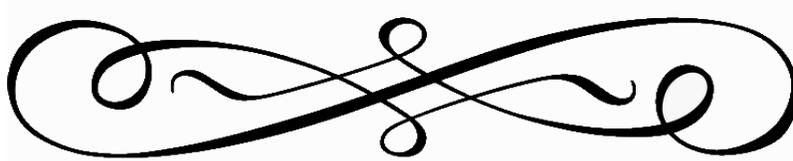
It is a cautionary tale. What is the cost of lack of compassion and kindness to one another during these tragic life passages? There is no question that every family seems to have a black sheep – a scapegoat that carries the whole family’s pain and anxiety. Tragically, that does not make the pain and anxiety go away. It just displaces it, and the tale of what happened to a parent becomes part of that family’s history.

Georgia was not a perfect parent as she tried to raise eight children, at one point on her own. Their lives were not easy, and neither was hers. But Georgia was still a human being who did not deserve to have society fail her as it did, forcing her to spend her last months and years in a dehumanizing, archaic institution. There should have been other more home-like options for her where she could be treated kindly and have access to the food, music, and people who she loved so much.

Maria is sorry that her mom’s life ended with her feeling unloved and sad. She tried her best for her and knows that her life will never be the same without her mother. She appreciates

everything that Georgia did for the family, will always will love her and believes that she is watching from up above!

Georgia deserved better, and her tragic story and broken heart are testaments to that.



## SUMMARY

These are only a few of the stories of the real people who lived and died at Orchard Villa. They lived their lives, enjoyed their families, had to overcome adversity, contributed to their society, paid their taxes, were part of their communities. And this is what happened to them.

You can be sure that not one of them ever thought they would end up somewhere like Orchard Villa, but the lack of support to keep them in their own homes and communities, and the lack of small home-like, fully staffed places in the community, run by non-profit organizations were not available to them. The only thing available to older adults who require more care than their families are able to provide are institutions – impersonal, understaffed, routinized places where no one wants to end up.

We have a choice in this province and in this country – to create a vision of caring for our older adults in ways that afford them dignity and choice. With the vast majority wanting to stay in their own homes, that should be an option with in-home assistance available at much higher levels than it is now.

If they do need to be placed, it should be in a small, community group home with a fenced yard, a back patio, and a front porch where they can sit and watch the birds, or wander paths through a garden, and be able to smell their dinner cooking. When they express their needs – for a blanket, for a word, for help getting their shoes on, or their feet up onto the bed, it should be met with care and comfort. Surely we can do this. Surely we can bring humanity back to the care of older people. Surely we can do this for them, and eventually for ourselves. But for that we need to speak up. We need to let our elected officials know that we will no longer accept institutions as the only option in our final years. It matters. And as Dr. King reminds us:

***“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”***

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