

For Pearl on her 80th – by Wendy

(read at her birthday party at home)

Well, thank you everyone for being here today. Two of Pearl's three grandchildren are here, but I'm sure my sister's daughter Terri, who's in America at the moment, is thinking of her. In fact, she's just phoned this morning to wish her a happy birthday.

We're here to celebrate a very special birthday of a very special lady. To some of you she is Pearl or Mrs Clark, or Nana, but to Lyndell and me, she has always been, and will always be, our Mum. What can we say about our Mum? I could have written a poem, but she doesn't like poetry, so I'll just say a little about her.

Mum was born on Friday 23 April 1920, and had a somewhat restless childhood. Her father's death when she was a very young member of a growing family, led to her being brought up by her mother's sister, Edrie Williams. Lyndell and I loved "Auntie". This warm-hearted lady gave Pearl a loving home, although her husband's employment in the railways meant several moves. It's just as well Mum is a "people" person as she constantly had to meet and make new friends as she changed schools.

Although Mum left school without secondary qualifications, she's never stopped learning. By the time she was 14 she was managing the school tuckshop in the local grocery store. Later in her teens Mum worked in retail sales and during the war, in food production. One of her fellow workmates in the egg processing plant was Joyce. She and Pearl became firm friends and on the 15th January 1944, Joyce was Mum's bridesmaid when she married Bill Clark. It's a lifelong friendship, and it's lovely to see Joyce here today at Mum's 80th.

When she was younger Mum loved roller skating – that's where she met Dad – and later on, table tennis, gardening, sewing, cooking, knitting and reading. Reading is a hobby that she continues to enjoy through the book tapes. She and Dad loved going on camping trips around the state and many times to Melbourne, where we were able to keep in contact with Mum's own mother who we kids knew as "Gran in Melbourne".

Mum's never climbed Everest, sailed the world solo, nor been a career woman in the modern sense. But a hard-working mum she has been, always there for Lyndell and me. She made our clothes, wiped our tears when we were hurt or sick, and listened to our tales of woe or joy about school and work. Whether it was growing and preserving fruit and vegies, knitting the "stripey jumpers" I loved as a child, or playing a fighting finish in a game of snakes and ladders or ludo, Mum's always done things so well. She and Dad taught us to respect others, to be honest and passed on to us a love of animals and the ability to make a home out of a house. She taught us by example to admit when we're wrong, and to stand up for ourselves when we're right. I can't speak for my sister, but the only thing Mum never really did manage to teach me was to be tidy!

Mum grew up in an era of uncertainty with the Depression and World War II, and has never enjoyed good health. But she's always displayed tenacity and it's that amazing tenacity which has enabled her, despite being blind, to continue living in her own home since Dad died. Without her helpers, it couldn't have happened, but without her courage, it couldn't have happened either. In my heart I feel that our Dad is here with us in spirit, for he too would have been 80 this April.

There's no more to say now except – thanks Mum for all you've done for us, and congratulations on reaching this milestone – and a very, very happy birthday. We love you, Mum!
