

## **Eulogy for Maureen Davenport read by her husband John Davenport 08-01-2013**

Maureen was born on 30/01/1941 (and passed away 03-01-2014) to Esme Doreen & Lenard Frances James in Bundaberg. She started school life like all children in 1946; she remembers being hit on the back for not doing her homework, she replied that she could not see the blackboard. When the school nurse arrived for her annual examination of pupils she delivered the devastating news that Maureen had an eyesight problem. The head nun advised her parents to let her stay on at the school rather than go to a blind school in Brisbane. At end of the school year Maureen said to her father "Dad, I got my final exam results to day. He replied "How did you go darling?" Maureen said "I got seventh". He asked how many were in the class. Maureen replied 7. Much later she found out that he was a little sad, but not Maureen " There were 7 in the class so she came 7<sup>th</sup> , she never thought for one minute that she came last in the class, she knew that she did her best.

As a teenager Maureen was very disappointed that the 2 girls she went to school with did not keep in touch by phone and never invited her to any outings or even contact her at Christmas time, she was very isolated. She wasn't invited to any teenage gatherings such as parties etc. when I read this in her book that she was writing, I found this to be very distressful that she missed out on all those teenage years. Looking back I think I would have treated a vision impaired/blind person the same. (You just don't think!)

Maureen found herself in the company of older women. She had two wonderful grandmothers. Maureen's Aunt Ruby would take her out on outings to Maryborough & other places by car to visit her relations.

A friend once said to Maureen "For a young girl who can't see well you don't much". If somebody said "I don't think you can manage this" she would say "Tell me what it is you want done and I will think about it ". She usually found a way around the problem.

At 16 Maureen was granted a Blind Pension. The doctor said "Can you read any letters on the chart?" She replied "I can't see the chart".

The big thing in Maureen's life was when she received a phone call from a Miss Phyllis Courtice who lived in Bundaberg and transcribed printed books into Braille. She asked Maureen if she would like to learn Braille, without a second thought Maureen replied, I would love to. "She then learnt to use Braille & shorthand Braille."

It was suggested that Maureen learn touch typing, an approach was made to the local high school for Maureen to sit in the typing class – a sharp NO was the reply as it was felt it would be a distraction to the class -- another knockback . It was only a knock-back, Miss Courtice simply said "Well, we will just have to buy a typewriter for ourselves." It came with a book of instructions so they started lessons together.

In 1963 aged 22 Maureen stayed at the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Centre at Taringa, she did not need to be rehabilitated, it was a place to stay. Maureen enjoyed her stay there because the people there were her own age.

She was now ready for a job, she had learnt to use buses for transport to & from the city to where the switchboard training was done, but no job seen to come her way. After the end of the year The Courier Mail heard about her. In the paper they published an article & a

photograph showing her at a switchboard with the caption “Would anyone give this girl a job”.

A solicitor by the name of Mick Lyons read the article and this led to her becoming a switchboard operator in 1964. This was a Wonderful & Proud moment for Maureen, she now had a job. She stayed with the firm for nearly 25 years. The solicitors and some of the staff were very supportive and became very good friends.

Once Maureen settled into her job her parents & Beverley her sister came to live in Brisbane at Wavell Heights. In 1964 a new Adult Catholic Club was formed, Maureen & her friend Marie went along to see what it had to offer, it was wonderful, providing social events such as luncheons, theatre outings , picnics & weekends away. Things that she had never experienced even though she was 25.

One friend from the club Joan Crowley took Maureen on several holidays to New Zealand, Alice Springs and Darwin. This was her first real introduction to travel, she really loved it.

Some of the club members became great friends. John was also a member of the club for a short time only.

We were married in 1981.

I have always been very proud to have Maureen beside me no matter where we were, she once told me about an incident that infuriated her no end, even when she was a little girl: people would ask the sighted person with her if she would like a cup of tea instead of asking her direct. Maureen thoughts were I only had a sight problem not a mental condition. On one occasion we were visiting relations when I was asked “Would Maureen like black or white tea?” My reply was “I don’t know, you could ask her”. Maureen never had that problem again when she was out with me. After being made redundant in 1987 Maureen completed a Lifeline counselling course in 1988 and continued as a telephone counsellor for over 20 years.

In 1990 Maureen was asked to join a committee to help blind people, this gave her the experience of working in this field. In the same year a new support group for the vision impaired people was set up in Nundah and Maureen was asked to president and was in that position right up to her death, (22 years).

Maureen saw the need for a similar group in the city which was established in 2000, both groups have been able to give friendship & support to those with vision impairments. She also raised funds for activities for the vision impaired by arranging musical morning teas, the first one raised \$1200, she ran one each year for 6 years.

Maureen was once asked “What is the thing you miss most in life”. Her answer was “My privacy and independence”. When we purchased a computer with a synthetic voice which could read out to her all messages sent to her, it was the first time in her life she could receive a message & send a message without anyone having to read it to her, she now had that privacy she always missed.

We have been on many overseas holidays and visited many foreign countries. People would ask “What do you get out of the holidays if you can’t see?” Her reply was “I do get a feel of the atmosphere, sounds & smells which are very different to home” . Maureen loved the

foreign languages constantly spoken around her and the company of other tourist on our trips.

International Year of the Volunteers to the Royal blind Foundation of Queensland

Australia Day Lilly Award for service in the Electorate of Lilly

Made a Life Member of Vision Australia

Vision Australia “ Make a Difference Award” (This award is given once a year to only one person in the whole organisation)

Premiers Award for Queensland Seniors for Outstanding Voluntary Service

2008 Lifeline 20 Years of Service

Invited as Guest Speaker at a National Seniors meeting

2011 Received on behalf of the Nundah Low Vision Support Group Nundah  
The Ted Tremaine Memorial Trophy Presented to Maureen on Australia Day

2012 Maureen was pleased to receive the Lord Mayor’s Australia Day Achievement Award



Maureen receiving her Certificate of Achievement from the Lord Mayor of Brisbane:  
Graham Quirk

We have been married for just over 31 years, I have not thought of her as blind person only as my wife who occasionally needed little help. Anything she could do herself I would not interfere, we did things together.

**Maureen got great inspiration from the book “The Power of One”**

**Maureen will be sorely missed by all her friends and those she helped over the years as someone who always thought of others.  
Maureen I will miss you most of all.**

<http://www.visionaustralia.org/about-us/news-and-media/latest-news/news/2013/01/07/vision-australia-remembers-maureen>

<http://quest.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx>

<http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Maureen-Davenport/797028998>

## Farewell Maureen Davenport

Mrs Maureen Davenport, Lifeline's Telephone Crisis Support volunteer for the past 24 years, passed away peacefully on 3 January 2013. Her funeral was held on 8 January at St. Paschal Baylon Church.

Mrs Davenport first came to Lifeline Brisbane in January 1988. Her volunteering work involved telephone counselling and crisis support on the Lifeline 13 11 14 Telephone Counselling Service. During her 24 years of service, Maureen was committed to fulfilling her regular fortnightly volunteer shifts and in doing so she volunteered 1,068 hours for the service.

We learned that Maureen had to leave school at the age of 13 due to her partial blindness and living in the country. She then went on to learn to read and write Braille and touch typing which opened a new world for her. She then moved to Brisbane at age 22 to take a full time position as a switch board operator with a legal firm where she stayed employed for the next 24 years.

Maureen is a caring person with a strong desire to help other people. She also feels a great satisfaction with being able to help others as many have done so for her throughout her life. When she finished her full time employment in July 1987, she embarked on a journey of helping others.

During the last 24 years as a telephone counsellor, the Lifeline callers never knew Maureen was severely vision impaired which she felt, put her on an equal footing with her fellow telephone crisis supporters.

Whilst volunteering at Lifeline, Maureen was also President of the Northside Low Vision Support Group (Nundah) for 22 years and President of the City Support Group for 12 years. She helped

many who were losing their sight. Although it can be a challenging situation when this happens, she walked beside them and showed them how to manage and find things to be happy about once again.

In January 2012, she was pleased to receive the Australia Day Achievement Award from the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Graham Quirk. Even though she received many awards from the Blindness Agencies, she considered that award to be special as it said to her that the sighted community had recognised that a vision impaired person had done valuable work in the community.

Many new TCSs and staff would soon come to know of Maureen as she was held in such high esteem by the program as a long-term volunteer. She cared deeply for both our callers and her fellow TCSs and went above and beyond the base level of service. She would attend social and Christmas events and always had time for a chat with the newer TCSs coming on shift.

Maureen had to roll with the punches as new software and computer programs were introduced that did not accommodate people with a vision impairment; she was very patient in working with us to find a way around this when possible. In spite of the challenges, she remained an inspirational, respectful and compassionate Lifeline volunteer.

Maureen tirelessly gave such a high level of service for so many years that she definitely deserves recognition of this. We were all incredibly saddened when National Office's new software meant that Maureen would not be able to continue in her role, and we have no doubt Maureen would have still been incredibly committed to the team if this had not have occurred.

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