

Mrs Lyndsay Woodruff (nee Wise)

The Woodruff and Charlton families have established a Named Donation in the Educational Scholarship Fund. The families have honoured their mother by establishing the L M Woodruff Memorial Donation, which will provide scholarships to assist young women in the Limestone Coast to undertake a nursing career at any level.

Mrs Lyndsay Woodruff (nee Wise) commenced her nursing training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital after serving the required probation period in the Preliminary Training School, in November 1933 and was registered as a General Nurse in the State of Victoria in November 1936.

As was the custom at that time, she resided in the Nurses Home attached to the hospital where the rules stated that she must be in her own bedroom by 10:00pm unless she had a late pass, when the hour is extended to 11:30pm. No visiting other bedrooms to take place after 10.00pm.

During her time at the Royal Melbourne Hospital she also completed a twelve week course in Invalid Cookery at the Emily McPherson college of Domestic Economy.

Following her graduation, she was invited to go to Caulfield Convalescent Hospital as a temporary relieving sister and she completed a fourth year as a staff nurse, for which she received a supplementary certificate.

There were many tales of nursing pranks during her time of living in the hospital, but from the references she kept, it seems that the authorities were satisfied that she was a responsible and reliable nurse.

Like many nurses of that era, she met and married a doctor, Philip Woodruff, in March 1939. Philip became the Medical Superintendent of the McKay District Hospital taking Lyndsay with him to live on site. She was of course not allowed to be employed there, but spent a lot of time caring for babies in the nursery. It was here that she became particularly attached to a little aboriginal baby who had been abandoned.

On the outbreak of war, Philip went to serve in the Medical Corp in New Guinea, leaving Lyndsay in McKay with their small son who had been born there. Lyndsay remained in McKay for a time, but when it was deemed unsafe, she travelled to Sydney by train to live in rental accommodation, until moving again to Melbourne to be closer to her family. Their family continued to grow both during and after the war and Philip returned to Melbourne at the end of the war, where he took up a position as a chest physician both in private practice and with a hospital appointment.

Lyndsay devoted her time to caring for their four children and was left to do this on her own when he took up a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship in the United States of America for a year. She always had a desire to return to nursing, but this was neither practically possible nor deemed to be the right thing for a doctor's wife to do.

In 1949-50 the family moved to Adelaide where Philip had been offered the position of director of Tuberculosis Services in Adelaide and he subsequently became director General of Public Health, a position he held until his retirement. During this time Lyndsay fulfilled her desire to return to nursing by becoming active in charity work.

She was chairman of the Northcote Home committee. Northcote home provided accommodation to children whose families were compulsorily detained in sanitariums to treat their tuberculosis and once again Lyndsay found herself caring for young children, many of them young aborigines, who had been sent there from the outback while their parents had treatment. She very much enjoyed the opportunity this gave her to introduce these children to the beach and the sea and as children we spent many happy hours playing at Grange while she attended meetings and activities there.

To satisfy her dietetic training, she became very involved with Meals on Wheels, establishing a kitchen in Aldgate and managing it for many years. Strangely, she was never so good at accepting help from them when she needed it during her last few years of independent living at Stirling.

Lyndsay entered the Hostel at Boandik Lodge in 1998, where she lived very happily until the time of her death in August 2006. She found the transition from Charge sister to resident very hard to make and was affectionately known as "Matron Woody" by many of the staff at Boandik Lodge.

Her children were very keen for her to be able to be cared for in her own room at the hostel when she became bedridden in the last few weeks of her life and provided the opportunity for some special nursing for her during this time. The family spent long nights sitting with special nurses who assisted in Mrs Woodruff's care and it was then that her son John became very impressed with the stories these nurses had to tell of their path to nursing.

"As a result of the dedication of the nurses at Boandik Lodge and the stories they told of their path to nursing I decided that I would like to establish a scholarship fund to assist young women to undertake a nursing career at any level. I heard stories of nurses needing to undertake extra study to qualify for entry into the nursing training and of difficulties with childcare and travel, not just of the cost of the course. The most impressive thing to me was the caring and dedication of these people who went off duty and resumed the role of managing a household. I felt that by providing some form of assistance perpetually, to this group of people would be a fitting way to honour my mother's life" donor John Woodruff said.