Eulogy for Granny

Margaret Burns was born on the 25th of April 1936 at the Jamestown Hospital. Marg was Michael and Margaret's seventh child and was one of ten siblings. The Burns family lived in Appila, although it was tough at times and money and food were sometimes scarce, mum recalls many fond stories growing up in a large family. The family home only had 3 rooms, mum recalls sharing a bed with Aunty Mary for many years while Aunty Pat and Aunty Joan top and tailed in the other bed. In the summertime, many of the Burns children would sleep on the veranda and count the stars. Mum attended primary school at Appila and completed high school in Gladstone in year 8.

As the family extended, mum took on more responsibility, she would have Wednesdays off school to help Nanna Burns with the washing, having to get up early to stoke the copper, the sheets were washed weekly along with the few clothes they had, she hated washing her brothers socks and hankies, as she would have to scrub the clothes on the wash board which was hard work she said. Although she missed going to school on washing day, she also treasured this valuable time alone with Nanna Burns sharing stories and much laughter together.

Saturdays was bath day in the Burns house ready for Sunday mass, Nanna Burns would stoke up the copper again and fill the bath and all 10 children would take their turn bathing girls first and then the 6 boys.

Every Sunday morning, Nanna Burns, and her 10 children would walk to mass in Appila come rain or shine, the family's faith was strong and every day after school, mum and her siblings would attend catechism lessons with Mrs Casey who prepared the children for their sacraments. Mum enjoyed these lessons and hearing stories from her bible, each child was given a holy picture saint from the bible and mum's was Saint Anne.

During mums' childhood, mum was best friends with Berni Babbage, who lived over their back fence at Appila. Mum recalls Berni having beautiful toys and dolls and they would play happily together for hours, this friendship continued throughout mum's life. Mum also had another great friend in Marie

Meaney. Marie was a year older both born on ANZAC day and mum loved that because most birthdays she would celebrate with Marie out at the farm with party food and toys to play with.

In later years, mum always commenced her birthdays with the dawn service surrounded by as many family members that she could drag out of bed.

Margaret started nursing at age 16 at the Jamestown Hospital.

Mum met Aubrey Leonard Patrick Williams known to most of us as "Sugar "when she was 18. One of my favourite stories was dad telling me that he was playing drums in a band at a local ballroom dance and this beautiful dark-haired woman came through the door with some other fellow. Sug took one look at Marg and knew instantly that she was the woman he was going to marry and two years later in 1956 he did just that in the Appila Church.

Marg and Sugar loved ballroom dancing and frequented dances in the district, everyone said they were a lovely dance couple and were often Belle and Beau of the balls.

At this time, mum was near completing her nursing training at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, but never quite got there as dad promised her wealth and wisdom if they moved to Tintinara to work in the hotel. Clearly Tintinara was not the hit that Sugar had promised, but mum did learn how to pour the perfect beer.

Mum and dad went on to work in numerous hotels including the four in Jamestown, Appila, and Yorketown. Mum worked hard during her life, but she always made time for her family.
One of dad's stories that he would often recall, "The two most valuable things in my life are my watch and my wife, and they are both still working."

Marg and Sugar welcomed their first child Anthony in 1958, followed by Christopher in 1960, Mary-Anne in 1963 and Gabby in 1970.

Christmas time with mum and our family was always so much fun, Aunty Mary and the Bowers cousins would come to stay. Mum and Aunty Mary would stay up late making dolls clothes, painting up old bikes and dolls prams making

sure that each child had presents to open on Christmas morning, even if they were hand me downs, we didn't care.

Mum would spend days preparing for our Christmas lunch always having to cook extra as dad often would bring home strangers from the pub who had no one to spend Christmas with. Mum and dad would always open the door and welcome people into our home, they did not have much but whatever they had they would share with others.

Fond memories for mum also were the Christmas shared in Yorketown with the Williams, Souths, Tahenys, and Luke families. Wendy, Francie, Deidre, and mum would talk for hours while the children ran around outside, and the dads had a beer or two.

Of course, not forgetting the Columbian calendars that we all received as Christmas presents.

Mum also supported so many people in the community, never judged anyone, she always saw the goodness in people. Mum was a member of the Catholic Women's league, Josephites, Hospital Auxiliary, Probus, and actively supported families who were struggling with alcoholism, as a member of the Al-Anon family groups association.

Marg loved her clothes and dressing up for dances, mass, and parties. In the earlier days, mum would make her own clothes and taught Gabby and I and her grandchildren how to sew. Cousin Marie would say that she loved spending time with us as she always thought that mum looked like a model, she loved to see what the latest fashions was were as mum would always wear them well.

Mum was always very honest about what everyone was wearing, and you soon knew if she loved or strongly disliked your outfit and if it required ironing. She didn't like black, ripped jeans, and was never a big fan of a strapless mini dress. She also took great pride in her makeup and should have had shares in Nutrimetics. She would always tell us that it was important to have quality skin products and makeup as clothes come and go but you will have your skin for the rest of your life, so look after it and take your makeup off before you go to sleep.

Mum was always there to support her family and loved us all equally. She always looked forward to when her grandchildren would come to stay in the school holidays. She was the most caring loving mother to Anthony, Chris Gabby, and I, and then became the most adoring granny to her 9 grandchildren and dearly loved mother in-law and friend to Michele, Louise, Anthony and Tom.

Every time I would call mum the first thing she would say was, how's Felix, how's Miraede and how's Tom. She loved to hear all about what her grandchildren were up to, followed all their sports and achievements and relished in triumph when the Crows would beat Port Power.

Mum loved going on holidays, she didn't do it often but when she did, she had so much fun and shared so many stories with us about her travels. Mum travelled to New Zealand with Aunty Valda, Europe with Pat Dowling, she always said she loved Scotland the best. Mum often came on Holidays with my family, the most beautiful memory of my mum was the day we took a ferry in the Sydney Harbour, and as we went under the Sydney Harbour Bridge she looked up in awe, there were no words but the look on her face said it all. The hard-working little girl from Appila was all grown up now and was taking a ferry ride under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Mum was so happy and thrilled to be there, it was always the small things in life that brought mum so much pleasure.

We are all going to miss you so much mum, you have been our heartbeat and the centre of our universe for so many years. You will still probably get a call from time to time, especially whenever we lose something so you can pray to St Anthony to help us find it, or when we need advice and your guidance, we will know you are not far away and always watching over us and your heartbeat will continue to beat strong in all of us.

Now you are resting peacefully in the arms of your husband Sugar and your dear son Chris, reunited again with the witty ones, oh the banter and laughs that you will share together.
Thank you for everything you have done for all of us mum you are just the best mum ever. "Take it easy don't work too hard" last touch, forever in our hearts. God bless you mum.

Granny was not only a dedicated mother, Granny and friend to so many, but she is well regarded as one of the best nurses in the Mid-North, some might say the world. Having never worked with Granny, I could not even begin to imagine the breadth of nursing stories her friends would have, some of whom are here today. Over the last couple of days, I have been made aware of a few highlights, whether it be covering for hungover nurses letting them lie down in a spare ward for their day on shift or almost being struck by lightning in the hospital carpark. Granny always had a story to tell after her shift, even last week when she was telling us that back in the day, she would do 28-night shifts in a row by herself and we'd say "were you really all on your own?" And she would tell us "Well I had the patients".

Granny was so dedicated and never late to a shift, even bringing the garden hose with her one day, arriving at the hospital with the full-length hose dragging behind the car… Granny always had a story to tell and a laugh to be had with her nursing friends and patients.

A fond memory of many who worked a Christmas shift with Granny was her famous cherry spit the pip competition, the hallways of the hospital would come alive, and a fierce competition would commence, one rule, Granny always had to win.

Granny loved to play cards, especially with her family where she would only play for money, whether it be 5 cents or 5 dollars. A pivotal part of her social life was her fortnightly bridge nights with her friends. Up until the end of last year, these nights had been a regular chance for the ladies to get together, play some cards, but more importantly update and support each other over the last 40 years. Laura would like us to mention here that she was always the main "Bridge 'setterupperer', she did it all… set up the tables, mixed the lolly bowls, made the punch and of course the crustless sandwiches!"

Granny was truly fortunate enough to have supportive and close friendships with her neighbours too, and was even nicknamed Bushell's by Grandpa Sug, as she constantly had people calling in for a cuppa tea. Granny would say "I don't even drink Bushells!". For many years, Granny enjoyed the over the fence conversations with Yvonne and Skete Case, often joining them on New Years Eve most years for a Baileys, or even when she quit smoking and would pop over to her other neighbour Alice to smoke her cigarettes, because at

least she wasn't buying them and therefore it didn't count. Granny also cherished her long and close friendship with Kaye Meaney, where they frequently enjoyed sharing a cuppa and catching up on the latest news from both of their families. Marie Fulwood and her children were often seated around the kitchen table laughing and sharing a joke or two.

While I'm sure there were many more funny neighbourhood interactions, there was always one story that Granny remembered fondly…One of Granny's neighbours came over and said "Oh Marg your cat has been hit…it's laying on the road dead..."And she said "Oh so it is". Granny promptly popped the corpse in the wheelbarrow without a second glance and buried him in the backyard along with all the other former family pets. Two hours later, Skete pops his head over the fence and asks, "What are you doing over there Marg?", which Granny replies, "What does it look like I'm doing… I'm burying my cat" to which Skete replied, "That looks a lot like your cat standing behind you, Silly Billy is looking pretty healthy to me?" … talk about resurrection.

To summarise all the wonders and joys of our Granny is not exactly a simple exercise… and didn't Granny love her exercises. But, as Granny always told us, "If you just tell yourself you can do it… then you can do it." 22 Gloucester Rd is the heart of our childhoods, Granny, our rock and teacher, always at the front door to welcome us home. The walls of Granny's house hold the echoes of our laughter, invisible glow paint messages and a couple holes we've made jumping on beds. Granny has told us a story with every cup of Tetley tea and Yo-Yo biscuit, every drive to Stacey Park to teach us to drive, over every game of chase the ace and morning slice of Apricot Jam toast.

Granny nursed us when we were sick from a broken heart, had consumed too many easter eggs, or just when we needed a day off school. Granny is the peacekeeper, the voice of reason, she has broken up many enthusiastic cousinly feuds…you may notice all us grandchildren are sitting in the front row today. For the last 30 years, we've all fought over the front seat of Granny's Corolla. When one of us would lock ourselves in the front seat 2 hours before Granny took us to the bakery or to Bundaleer for a picnic… Granny would say… "On the day of my funeral you're all sitting in the front pew!"

Granny loved learning and teaching us. Josh found joy attending 'The School of Granny Williams' where she relentlessly taught him geography, spelling and times tables at a very young age which gave him a huge head start for when real school began.

Paddy loved doing the Saturday Quiz with Granny, trying to always get 50% and if they didn't it was never their fault, it was just a hard one…If they got to question 5 and they hadn't got any correct, Paddy would exclaim "Well this is a hard one" and Granny would say "Well yeah, it's definitely not our fault, of course it's a hard one!"

School holidays were jam packed with fun adventures with Granny and the other cousins. Ellie fondly remembers these days filled with card games, table tennis and road trips to Appila Springs. There was not anywhere in the local area we didn't explore with Granny.

Granny loved to travel when she could, Felix will always remember sitting next to Granny on the Scooby Doo roller coaster at Movie World… hearing her say "Oh Shii -eshh" every time we turned a corner or went down backwards. Granny would always look forward to staying on the farm at Crystal Brook. When Angus was little, he loved having picnics with Granny amongst the Gum trees or underneath the road crossing, down the creek.

Granny was Laura's rock, too many memories to count for her, many of which involved endless card nights. We would all be laughing until our stomachs ached, and just at that moment, Granny would quietly hold up her crooked pointer finger to make us laugh even more.

Granny taught us how to do the finer mechanics of life excellently, for example I can hang washing out and fold towels impeccably because of her! But she also taught us to see the magic around us. When Granny would pick me up from primary school, we would walk along the bike track home. I was enamoured with this one tree I would call my fairy cubby house. There was a bush off to the left that Granny would call the fairy post office and each day after school there would be a new leaf, delicately threaded with a piece of grass hanging on a branch. There would be a fairy letter written on the leaf in cursive, the fairies would ask how my day at school was, what I learnt and how grateful they were for my cubby and it's beautiful interior. I would only ever

get mail from the fairies on nights Granny was staying over. When I'd tell Granny I know it's you, she'd say: "Don't be stupid, I haven't got time to do that!"

As we began to grow into adulthood, Connor would find it particularly memorable when Granny would without fail every time ask us... "How's your love life?" ... Whether it be the day after a breakup or the day of a wedding. One of Granny's happiest days was watching her first Grandchild get married at Hillary and Sean's wedding. Hillary will always cherish and be grateful that Granny could be there, as we know Granny was too.

Granny was a favourite person to us all, raising us to never be a sore loser, which is still a work in progress for some of us, to always shake the hand of your table tennis opponent no matter the result, to "Go on" have another serve of chocolate pudding, to live life to the fullest, always reminding us "to take it easy". I believe we all wish we could be as effortlessly positive, honest and stoic as her. Granny was more than just a Granny to her own grandchildren, but anyone who was lucky enough to be known and loved by her. She will continue to inspire us to work hard, achieve our goals and to always love. Not being near you will no doubt make us feel homesick, but we know you'd say, "You'll be right, today's a day of celebration".

Thank you for everything Granny. For being our storyteller, for sharing your wit and for showing us what it means to be resilient and kind.

Cya Granny, and "Take it Easy". We Love you more.