

A Legacy of Caring

Norma Spice nee Cumming

Editor: At the Britton Family reunion I met Norma Spice. During our conversation I learnt that she and other members of her family had been involved in the community providing accommodation for people suffering from mental health issues and with special needs. Norma attributes their caring role to the philosophy handed down from their grandparents and parents. I asked if she could share their story.

You asked me to write about our side of the family. Each one of us has something to offer in different ways, things that had always been instilled in us from our grandparents and parents.

We learnt the value of family, love and caring, opening our homes to others where all were welcomed. There always appeared to be someone dropping in or staying. We had a great life in Riverstone, going to school, making friends and running free.

Mum was Eva Britton and dad, Stuart Cumming. There are nine children and I am the eldest of the Cumming Clan.

Each member of the family had and still have open homes in some shape or form. Five of us had supported accommodation facilities for those with mental health issues and special needs. The third youngest of us is still involved, having cottages for those who need it.

Other sisters have been involved in community work, craft and two knitted booties for adults and children undergoing chemotherapy in Westmead and Penrith hospitals.

Our involvement with supported accommodation came about when facilities in Queensland were closing down, literally putting people at risk when out in the community with little or no support for them or their families. Social workers were trying to find suitable, safe housing which, when we were approached, agreed to open places where the residents could be accommodated and treated with respect and in a caring way.

At times there were challenges, but I would say our lives were enriched by those for whom we cared for those who are still in our lives.

It was by the grace of God that we were in a position to help those in need. On my fridge I have written a saying that I have had for many years:

"I shall pass through this world but once, any good that I can do or any kindness I can show another human being let me do it now and to not defer it, for I shall not pass this way again."

I feel that this is the philosophy handed down by our grandparents who arrived in Riverstone one hundred years ago from England.