

Local couple say Hospice has been amazing

Hospice care is more than just 'the last three days of your life'

From a young age, Tom would go to Miramar Public Library to read the encyclopedias after school.

Now, in a temperature-controlled room in his home in Paraparaumu, Tom has his own library of more than 6000 books collected over 75 years.

And the books are not just in this room but on bookshelves in bedrooms, the living room, hallway and even the bathroom - anywhere there's a wall, there's books.

"I'm a voracious reader," said Tom. "My particular interest is modern arms and conflicts and I've had that interest since I started school."

Tom and Fiona moved to Paraparaumu in 2009. They bought their house on Tom's 70th birthday. After a 60-year working life, Tom retired at 77.

"I finished school on the Friday and started permanent employment on the Monday. I worked in the public service nearly all of that time and studied economics and political science part-time."

Tom says he had some "responsible jobs" in the public service, peaking at Assistant Secretary to the Treasury.

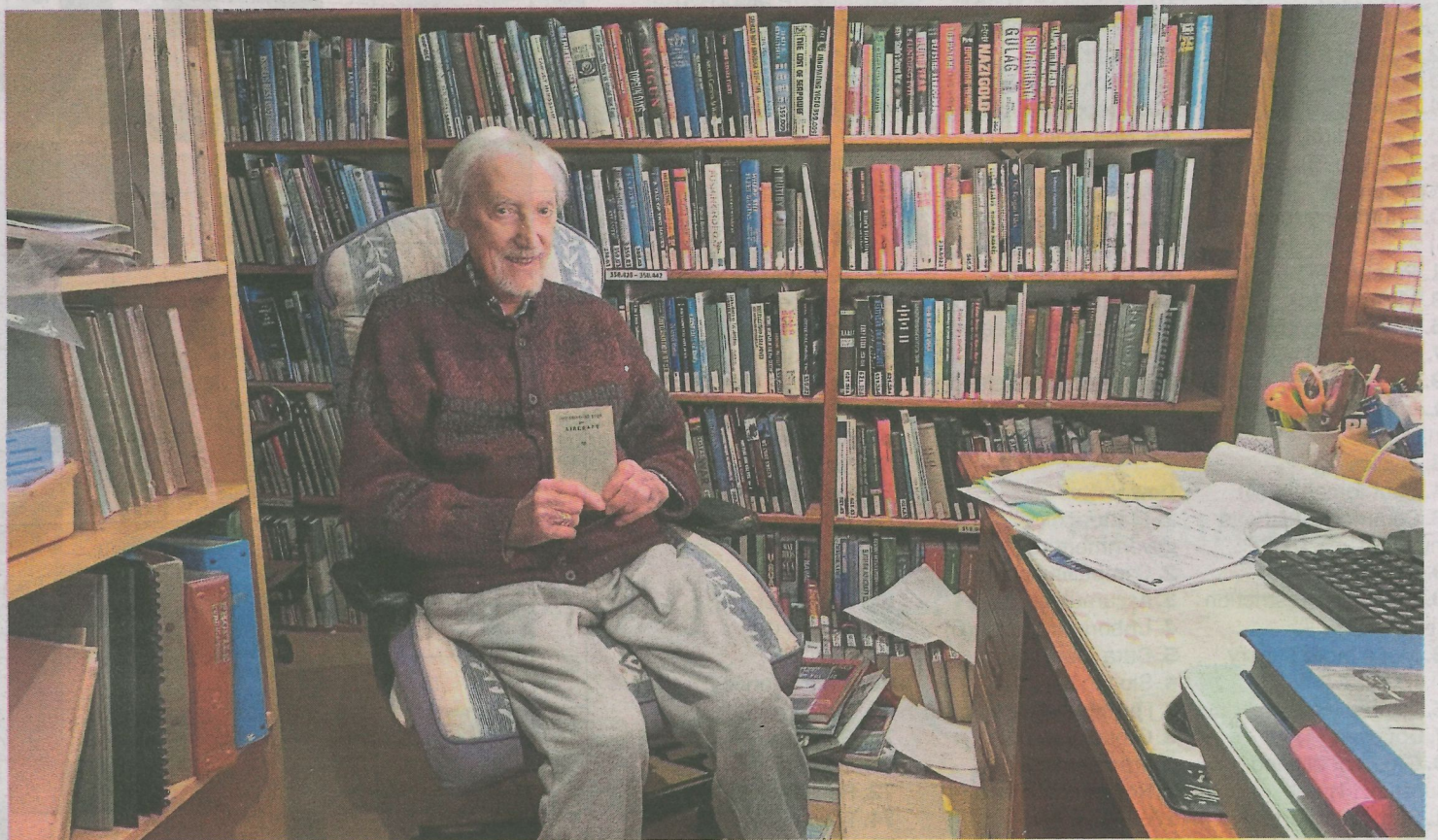
Among many other achievements, he is proud to have been the inventor of the Quota Management System for our Inshore Fisheries in the 1980s.

Fiona and Tom met online in 2005.

"When he said he gets home and listens to Mozart and his day job was looking ahead 30 years to what kind of New Zealand do we want, I thought 'right, he's a good one,'" said Fiona.

Fiona was born in Glasgow and emigrated to New Zealand from Zimbabwe in 1994. She lived in Africa for 20 years. Her consultancy work has taken her around the world - the Philippines, Thailand, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, the Middle East and more.

"After Covid the international work went but I'm still working, delivering competency training in the emergency management area - to Coastguard, Land Seach & Rescue and Police. I teach people how to train staff and volunteers to standards and measure



Tom in his library holding one of the first books he ever purchased, *The Observer's Book of Aircraft*, published in 1955.

their competence against them," said Fiona.

Both have family from previous marriages.

Alongside their busy lives and family, Tom and Fiona have also found unexpected support through Mary Potter Hospice.

"They've been wonderful. Recently the physiotherapist came here. He put him through his paces, gave him some exercises and followed up. One time I was in conversation with the Mary Potter nurse and she said 'would you like the doctor to come and see you?' What! Normally you're trying to get an appointment three weeks ahead. The doctor spent a whole hour totally fo-

cused on Tom and what was happening with him," said Fiona.

"The first Hospice person who came was the social worker and she went through the whole thing, explaining advance care planning and all the things you can do.

"The time and attention you get from everyone at Mary Potter is amazing. You never feel you're being a nuisance," said Fiona.

"Our view of Hospice was it's the last three days of your life. We never knew about all the rest, and it's all the rest that gives you quality of life," said Fiona.

Tom said he has no pain and a good

quality of life. "Looking ahead, I've signed up for assisted dying. It's a last choice but I have it in my back pocket. In the meantime I proceed merrily along knowing whatever I decide, I have the Hospice beside me and supporting me."

Tom and Fiona said they have enormous respect for all the Hospice people they've dealt with.

"Whatever you say you've got a problem with, they've got a solution."

For Tom and Fiona, Hospice isn't just about the end of life - it's about living well, with dignity and support, every step of the way.

Hospice calls for support for renovations

Mary Potter Hospice has been supporting whānau from its Kāpiti base for almost 30 years

Leanne Warr

Nearly 30 years ago, the Kāpiti community came together to support the building of the Mary Potter Hospice base in Paraparaumu.

Now the hospice is calling on the community once again to help with renovations.

It was in 1996 when the Kāpiti community got together to raise money to establish the Mary Potter Hospice Kāpiti community base in Warrimoo Street, Paraparaumu, says chief executive Tony Paine.

"Local people raised more than \$350,000 so families could receive hospice care close to home rather than travelling to Wellington," he says.

"That strong spirit of ownership and support is still alive today - it's why the hospice feels like such a community place."

Each year around 200 people living with a terminal illness, along with the whānau who walk beside them, are supported from the Kāpiti base.

Tony says it was originally built to support a team of six.

"It now has nearly 20 staff and volunteers."

The base acts as the hub for the Kāpiti team with doctors, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, counsellors and volunteers working from it, coordinating care and support for local families.

It also provides space for outpatient clinics, counselling, art therapy and day programmes and is used for meetings as well as a place where people can come for guidance and connection.

However, Tony says, the building hasn't kept pace with today's needs.

"It was designed nearly 30 years ago and, while it has served the community well, the spaces are now too small and no longer fit the way modern hospice care is delivered."

Tony says some of the team work out of port-a-cabins. Others share spaces originally designed for patients. Heating is outdated. Bathrooms lack privacy.

And there's little room for quiet conversations or visiting clinical staff, he says.

"Even in these conditions, our team continues to deliver outstanding, compassionate care. But it shouldn't be this hard to deliver a quality service," he says.

"With more people in Kāpiti needing support, the base needs upgrading so our teams can continue to provide the very best care."

When the hospice was first built, the population of the Kāpiti Coast was 39,400 and has since grown by 46% to 57,700.

While some people might perceive hospice care as being only for patients with a terminal illness who are in their final days, that's not the case, Tony says.

"It's about helping people live well so they have quality of life," he says.

Mary Potter Hospice has community teams based in Newtown, Porirua and Kāpiti and each team is made up of doctors, nurses, counsellors and therapists who provide holistic care, mostly in people's homes.

"We work alongside patients, their

whānau and their GP to create an individual care plan that's about dignity, comfort and living fully," Tony says adding that the team is available seven days a week, with doctors on call for advice 24/7.

The Hospice also has a companion service for people who would like company in their home.

Local architect John Tocker has been working pro bono on a cost-effective solution for the renovations, which the team are very grateful for.

The total cost of the project is expected to be \$400,000 and \$180,000 has been secured through grants, foundations and generous individuals.

A gala night held at Southwards Car Museum also raised around \$15,000 in ticket sales.

Tony says it shows how much people value having local hospice care in Kāpiti.

The organisation is still looking to raise the rest of the money and is hopeful the community will be able to support the fundraising.

The total cost of the project is \$400,000 and to date, \$180,000 has been secured through grants, foundations and generous individuals.

i If you are able to contribute to making this local Hospice base in your community possible, please contact: Sandy McGregor, the director of fundraising, marketing and communications, email: Sandy.McGregor@marypotter.org.nz, or Phillip Harris, senior fundraiser, email Phillip.Harris@marypotter.org.nz



Nick Tansley was the MC for the Gala Night for Mary Potter Hospice.