



Connect deeper to our cause! Meet Gerry

By: Michelle Brien, Development Coordinator, Prescott Meals on Wheels

Gerry may be 85, but don't let the number fool you! This delightful woman is articulate, funny and quick-witted. During our conversation, we laughed, cried and exchanged personal stories as if we had been friends for years. Gerry loves conversation and has a lot to share. She

is genuine and transparent, and when she tells me that Prescott Meals on Wheels has saved her life, I tear up because I know she is speaking from a saddened heart filled with gratitude.

Gerry and her husband Len met at a recreation center that they both worked at in 1956 in Philadelphia. He was 28 and just out of the Navy and she was 19. They married in 1956, moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan and had two children. Their son, the eldest of their two children, had severe asthma, so their doctor suggested moving to Arizona. "Well that was a better plan than surgeries and medication, so off we went", says Gerry. Len was a Psychologist working at the Veteran's Administration (VA) in Ann Arbor, so he transferred to the VA here in Prescott in 1967. Gerry tells me that at that time, there were only 13,000 people here and it truly was, "Everybody's Home Town." They watched the city grow and change and she sure misses the small town that it was.



They lived on the VA campus in the historic Fort Whipple Officer's Quarters built in the 1800's. She shared how charming the architecture was with beveled glass cabinets, a sleeping porch since there was no air conditioning back then, and a claw foot tub in the bathroom. Len was very well known in the VA system as a counselor to local veterans and served as a board member for 40 years for the West Yavapai Guidance Clinic. He started to show signs of dementia in 1990 and Gerry dedicated her time and heart to care for him up until three years ago, when he passed away in 2017.

Gerry was a teacher for many, many years; She tells me, "for 999 years" and laughs out loud. She was a reading specialist for the Prescott school district and as the community grew, she expanded into working with remedial reading students as well as teaching reading method classes at night for Northern Arizona University (NAU) and Arizona State University (ASU). When Len needed more care, Gerry cut back with her work and dedicated herself to honoring the vow they took in 1956, "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." Gerry chokes up a little and tells me that there were many days as Len became worse that it was a very difficult time for her. With the help of one of their three grandchildren, she was able to care for Len in their home until the doctors at the VA

suggested that he needed additional medical attention. Knowing that this was in his best interest, Len moved into the VA. Gerry was heartbroken, as she wanted to stay at his side at home up until he passed.

Two years ago, Gerry moved into a senior living apartment facility where she was able to make new friends, play bingo, practice Tai-Chi and socialize. Now, during COVID-19, she is lonely. She and her friends can no longer enjoy activities or exchange books in the library. After a little incident she had in her vehicle, she tells me that, "It was a sign that I should no longer be driving." She chuckles and shares that she is ok not driving, but now that she has to stay in place in her apartment she is frustrated that she is unable to get out and go for a drive. Her son is a tour manager for a really famous musician and travels a lot, but her daughter is here to check in on her, as are two of her three grandchildren, whom she speaks fondly of.

Gerry has been receiving meals from Prescott Meals on Wheels for a little over two years now. She tells me that she used to weigh 250lbs but is now down to 120lbs so she doesn't want three big meals. What she does with her daily lunch, is utilizes all of the extra delivered items (salad, bread and milk) to make three smaller meals for the day. She casually mentions that she used to be a gourmet chef and baker, but doesn't use the oven or kitchen much anymore, nor does she have pots and pans. She loves our food and repeatedly reminds me that we have saved her life and that she so enjoys talking with our volunteer drivers.



Back in March, we started a weekly Random Act of Kindness project where we randomly selected homebound clients to receive a **Kindness Basket**. The basket contained non-perishable food, cleaning supplies, home essentials and a few fun things like a jigsaw puzzle or activity book. Gerry was selected a couple of weeks ago to receive one of these baskets; She was overcome with emotions and so delighted. She colored a design for us (pictured to the left) with a sweet note attached, which read, "A great big Thank You for the honor of selecting me for the Random Acts of Kindness Basket. I was so emotionally touched that I cried. Your program has been a life saver for me. I appreciate all your volunteers. The meals are great too!"

It's moments like this that I love what Prescott Meals on Wheels gives to people like Gerry in our community. We are **More Than a Meal** and this conversation with Gerry today is proof. Gerry asked that I give her a copy of this Connection to the Cause so she can share it with her family. I can't wait to hand deliver this to her and meet her.