

Springdene newsletter May 9 2020

'THIS is your hour,' proclaimed Winston Churchill as the nation came together to mark victory in Europe 75 years ago. And so it was for our residents last Friday, as emotions were stirred and family memories revived over spirited renderings of 'We'll Meet Again' in Springdene's own celebration of the VE Day anniversary..

Vera Lynn's famous song had special resonance for our families, since so many of you are separated from your loved ones during the current suspension of visits to the homes. But although the Covid-19 emergency stopped us from having the parties we had planned, our activities staff staged a splendid commemoration nevertheless.

At Spring Lane, Caroline worked hard making special anniversary packs for every resident, containing Churchill's victory speech, a VE Day word search, copies of articles from newspapers of the day and a Union Jack hat for all. There was Victory Day cake, muffins decorated with the British flag, ice cream and Victory mocktails. And best of all there was karaoke from the garden, with the music of Vera Lynn, the Andrews Sisters and Glen Miller.

Eirlys at Springview did a great job, too, arranging special t-shirts, balloons and decorations, and the chef laid on some splendid street party-style food. There were WW2 favourites sung in the corridors and the gardens to get everybody going. At Spring Grove, Steve, our new activities supremo, also sang some of the old melodies – and the nostalgia flowed.

For those of you who don't already know Steve Pointer, he is a seasoned entertainer who has done lots of fine work with the folk in our homes over the past ten years. Steve is a great personality and his routines are very popular. He has a full programme of exciting and stimulating new activities up his sleeve – which promise to be a lot of fun.

One person for whom this weekend's events had a special poignancy is our very own war hero, Ken Newman, a resident at Springview, who flew 29 missions over Germany as the tail gunner of a Lancaster bomber. Among his perilous assignments was the targeting of Berlin at the heart of the Nazi empire.

Despite his courageous brushes with death, Ken says, with a modesty typical of his generation: 'The point is, you had to do it. It was your job. So, you just went. I was confident with the rest of the boys that we'd get through safely. I just sat there and trusted in the rest of the crew that we would be safe and sound. You had to think like that.'

The trips were always at night, Ken recalls. Berlin was about six hours there and back and was particularly dangerous because of the defences and searchlights. The Lancasters carried a 4,000-pound bomb (which was called 'the cookie') plus some smaller bombs and incendiaries.

'The relief when you heard the bomb aimer say, "Bomb doors open!" you knew you were nearly there. And then he'd say, "Bomb gone", and you could feel it go. There was always a sigh of relief then, oh, thank goodness. And straight away the pilot would turn us around to get away – to head back to England.'

These days, Ken is happy in his quieter life at Springview – with his favourite crossword and cup of tea. 'It all seems another world,' he says. 'But the memories are never far away.'

Today, we're fighting a different though equally nasty war as our carers work on the front line to drive coronavirus away and to keep our residents safe and well. Fortunately we are still managing to obtain essential supplies, including personal protective equipment for everybody – which our carers wear at all times.

But we're disappointed that the test kits promised by Health Secretary Matt Hancock have not yet materialised. They would enable us to test all staff and residents even if symptom free, and allow us to plan for the next phase after lockdown. Our group operations manager, Mark, is lobbying hard for the kits to be despatched as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, you have very generously been sending in more gifts for our hard working carers. The family of Ransolina Casely-Hayford, a former resident of Spring Grove, donated a truly splendid hamper, brimming with good things, while volunteers Steve and Laura from Golders Green brought in another box of goodies.

Over at Springview, Domino's donated ten boxes of pizza, which were eagerly demolished by the carers. And the residents there have been charmed by the first letters from the Pen Pal Club, which have been dropping through the post with great anticipation. As the picture shows, resident Gladys Gathergood, aged 107, is among those who are delighted to be remembered!



Warm words of thanks are especially valued. Family member Anne Rawcliffe writes: 'We are delighted with the way that staff are caring for our relatives at this tricky time, especially as they are now the only point of human contact. Thank you for looking after your staff as well as all our loved ones.'

Another endorsement comes from Tricia Ellis, whose mother is a resident at Springview: 'Acts of kindness like you've shown and the commitment and care that the staff are continuing to give whilst up against such difficult circumstances have confirmed what I already knew, that the choice my family made entrusting my mum to the care and support at Springview was the best we could have decided for her.'

'Due to my husband and I needing to self isolate, it has now become even more invaluable as we know how much my mum needs human interaction, and if she was still living unassisted she would not have had any of this in our absence. Thank you all once more.'

Despite these troubled times, our homes remain very much open for new residents, who receive a very warm welcome. So if you know of anyone who might benefit from the excellent care we offer, please pass the word on. More information can be had by visiting our website www.springdene.co.uk or contacting Zoey Baik on 020 8815 2000.

Stay well and stay safe!