

...On Valentine's Day, Mindemoya couple ended their lives together

...continued from page 1 was talented in this area too." The couple would go on to enjoy many more dances over the ensuing months where they discovered they had a lot in common and going on to meet each other's family.

Ms. McDougall's family moved briefly to Little Current after her parents, Donald and Grace McDougall, purchased a hotel there.



Donna Nevills lovingly made cards with special notes for each of their family and friends to be given out after the couple's passing.

The two young people moved to Toronto where each found jobs, but the lure of the Island remained strong. By December 1949 they had returned to the Island to tie the knot that would bind them for the next 73 years. The wedding was blessed with an absence of snow. Jim's brother Harry served as best man and Doris Hutchinson attended to the bride. Their reception was held in the Providence Bay Hall before going on to a honeymoon in Sault Ste. Marie where they visited relatives.

The Nevills settled into their first home, a farmhouse across from where Community Living is today in Mindemoya. After renting another house behind St. Paul's Anglican Church in Mindemoya they built a home on Mr. Nevill's property and went on to have five children together.

Mr. Nevills worked for the Ontario Department of Transportation and Communication (which became the Ministry of Transportation) and Ms. Nevills did hairdressing in the family home. In 1969 they took a big leap, purchasing Stanley Park and moved to the site. Both kept up their day jobs.

"The park was smaller then," said Mr. Nevills' son Brent, who agreed to sit down with The Expositor to talk about his parents' life and their decision to leave life as they had lived it, on their own terms—together.

The younger Mr. Nevills, like his father and his father's father before him, is a mechanic and a veteran, having served for 33 years in the Canadian Forces (first in the army and then moving on to the air force).

"My father was very proud of the (Royal Canadian) Legion (his father belonged to Little Current Branch 177). He didn't get involved in the running of the Legion, but he was at every Legion event," said Mr. Nevills. The Nevills' Island roots run deep,

descending on the maternal side from Humphrey May, the first male "Hawater" (settler born on Manitoulin).

The couple settled into retirement.

"Even after retiring, my father always had a fondness for his coffee break," relayed his son. "They would each sit in their chairs here (in a sunroom with glassed doors over-

guy," said their son. "Whatever came up, I was able to find a way."

"We could order something online, we could take mom to see him," said their daughter-in-law.

But then the pandemic shut down access to the nursing home.

"It was to keep everyone safe, we get that," said Mr. Nevills. "But it was really hard on mom. I couldn't explain to her why I couldn't make it better, why I couldn't fix things."

The idea of medical assistance in dying (MAID) actually came to the couple well before the advent of the pandemic, however,

through a friend. Ms. Nevills was in the habit of visiting friends who were laid up in hospital and one day, while visiting one of her closest friends, she stopped in to see a 100-year-old neighbour who was also in the hospital.

"As she was leaving the room, she said 'well, I will see you next week,'" recalled Ms. Nevills. "The lady replied, 'oh, I won't be here, I am leaving tomorrow.'" In the ensuing conversation, Ms. Nevills discovered that her neighbour was to be among the first people on Manitoulin to access MAID.

She went home and told

her husband what she had discovered. The couple decided to further explore the potential solution to their mutual fear of one of them dying first and leaving the other to face life alone after their long journey through a life they had shared together.

The couple had always been "take charge" kind of people, noted their son. A fact graphically illustrated when he hauled out a large bin filled to the brim with cards and favours, each lovingly hand crafted by Ms. Nevills.

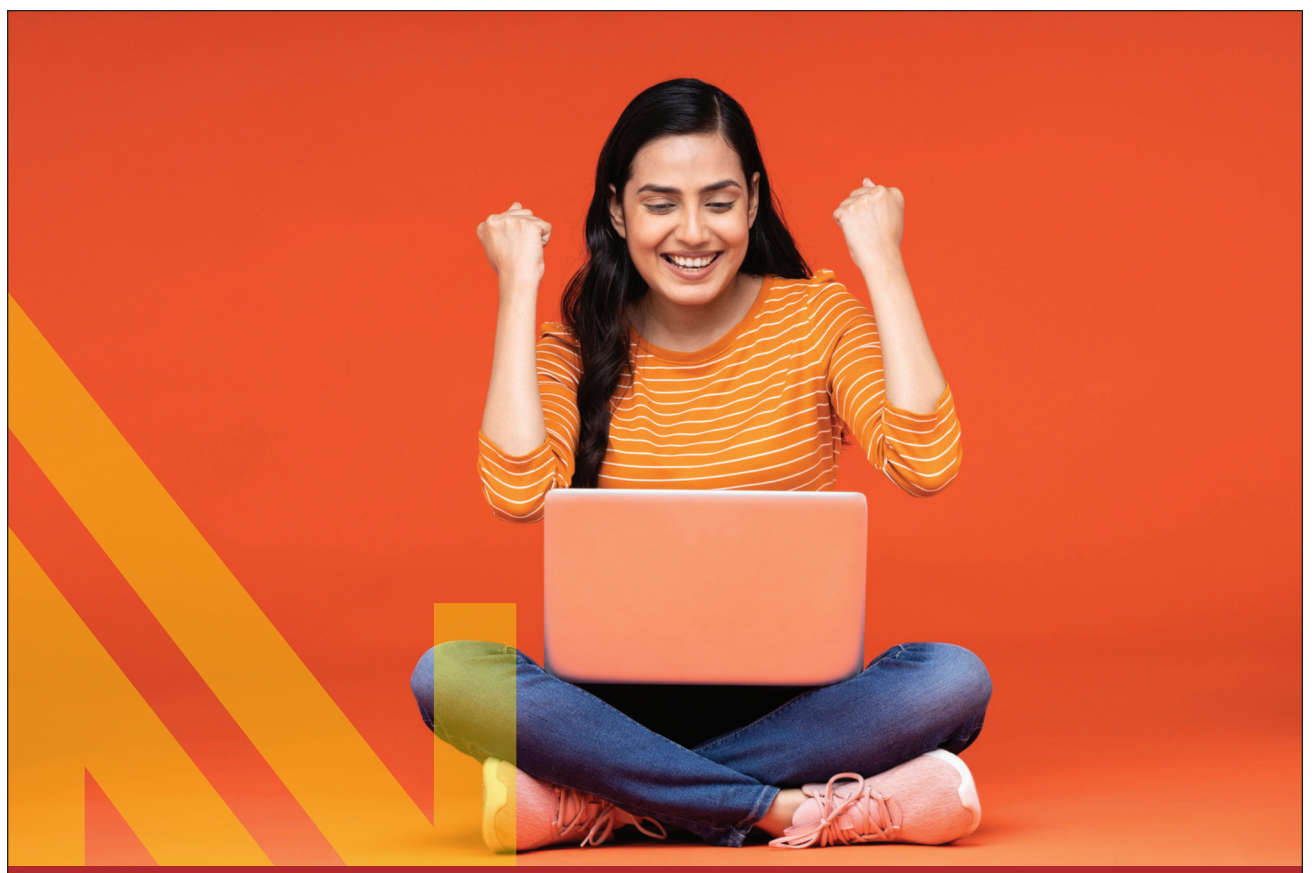
"Mom had been a quilter," said her daughter-in-law. "When she got older

her arthritis got too bad to do that, so she took up making cards." The hundreds of cards were each adorned with meticulously cut out decorations and customized for his and her side of the family, with others destined for the grandchildren. Mr. Nevills' family favours sit in a white wicker basket, bookmarks and pins, handcrafted.

"They had all of the funeral arrangements made out beforehand," said Ms. Nevills. "Everything was worked out to the very last detail."

But as the day for their departure grew closer,

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