

# Fortieth Edition



methodist homes

MHA on the Bay



Autumn 2025



2025  
MANAGEMENT  
TEAM

**ATLAS**  
SECURITY







## THE PASSING OF A PIONEER: JOYCE ZEISS (9 June 1930—10 March 2025)

The MHA Family joins the Zeiss family in mourning the passing of a woman who was an energetic servant of the organization in its formative years, in support of her husband Bob Zeiss. Her voluntary service was briefly acknowledged in the MHA History book (pgs 17-18, 157) but, on reflection, she deserved more recognition, along with other pioneers and unsung heroes of MHA's early days. Joyce would probably not have approved of any such fuss or praise, but her contribution was significant; she left a rich legacy which will endure.

Joyce was born in 1930 in Grahamstown, brought up in the nearby Coombs farming district, and she then went to Victoria Girls High in Grahamstown. After school she moved to Port Elizabeth where she completed a Bookkeeping course. Bob and Joyce married in 1952 and moved to Johannesburg, then to Grahamstown, and then to Port Elizabeth in 1960.



Both Bob and Joyce involved themselves in many community activities. When Bob became very involved in helping to set up MHA in the 1980's, Joyce played a pivotal role behind the scenes, supporting Bob, fielding enquiries and helping to keep the books and paperwork up to date. The Zeiss family home even became "Head Office" for a period!

Both Bob and Joyce enjoyed travelling locally and abroad, and they spent their last years together in Cassia Gardens; they were married for 65 years until Bob passed away in 2017. Joyce suffered a severe stroke in 2018, and she peacefully spent her final years in the loving and supportive care provided at CP Bradfield Frail Care.

Joyce's daughter Joan said this at the memorial service: "We will miss her calm, quiet presence and wise counsel. Joyce was the wind beneath the wings of many people". This says it all.



## IRVINE VILLA'S SERENITY GARDEN



Irvine Villa recently held an official service to mark the dedication and blessing of their now-established Serenity/ Prayer Garden.

With planning having started mid-2024, and after much deliberation about whether this was needed or not, one of the village's three common areas was pin-pointed as the spot. The Maintenance Team set about restoring the damaged pillars of the walls, and tender loving care was needed for this somewhat neglected and seldom visited part of the grounds.

Nature, which will not be hurried, brought along its magic, and plants which had been dormant due to a lack of water, slowly started showing themselves over the months of preparation. A board of remembrance now bears plaques supplied by residents in honour of the memory of their loved ones.



Keith and Denise Rae, who both minister at St Hugh's Anglican Church, are residents at Irvine Villa and were asked to bless the garden. They chose beautiful scriptures, used gentle words of encouragement, and observed periods of silence throughout the short service. Even the birds added their songs at the perfect moment, confirming that this was indeed the ideal spot.

Far from being just a garden of remembrance, this garden is intended as a place where residents can enjoy peace and solitude when they need it; it's a place for prayer and meditation, but more importantly a place built on a foundation of life and love.







## METHODIST HOMES ALLEVIATION FUND: AN UPDATE (April 2025)

Our Fund has been in existence for nine months now, and so we would like to give you some feedback on the Fund's performance, to date, and to also share a few comments.

The reasons for setting up the Fund---to enable MHA to afford to assist residents who fall into destitution late in their lives---has been fully explained in the brochure which has been produced and distributed (and is available from your Manager, from Head Office, and on our website).

The Fund's dedicated Investec bank account opened with a credit of R500 000, which had formed part of MHA's overall investment portfolio. It was a positive way in which to kick-start the Fund!

Since inception, an additional R240 000 of funds has flowed into the Fund. This is a very positive start, and it demonstrates to the Board and Management the wisdom in launching the Fund.

Sadly, the list of residents requiring financial assistance has not diminished, and we have anticipated this in our scenario planning.

MHA continues to support needy residents, and that amount remains in the region of R1 million per annum. Until the Fund achieves critical mass (our long-term target is R15-R20 million), which would be when the Fund generates annual interest which would cover the support outlay, MHA will need to continue to use our general income to provide that support. This puts a handbrake on our ability to carry out all the work we need or want to do, on an annual basis.

Donations received to date range significantly, from a one-off amount of R75 000 to a monthly payment of R100 added to the Levy. Every Rand donated, irrespective of the amount, is received with huge gratitude. Please know this.

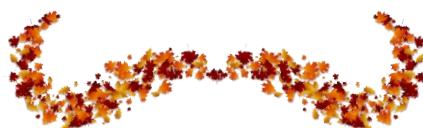
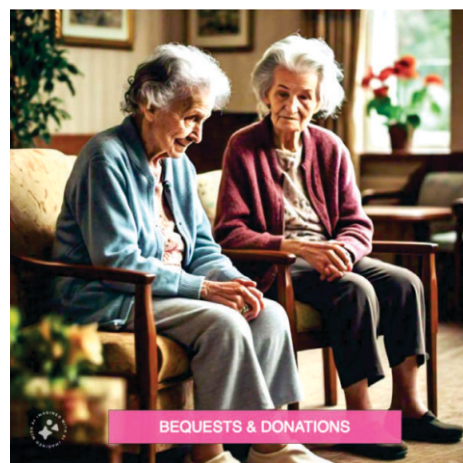
There is no way in which MHA can measure the potential income to be derived from Bequests; these usually only become apparent when an Estate is being executed, and we are informed of the generosity of a resident who made provision in his/her Will. Some residents have mentioned to the Fund Managers that some provision has been made, and this is heart-warming.

Since the Fund was launched, a few residents have asked questions such as: *Why should we support the Fund which has been set up to assist residents who may have been irresponsible with their investments/retirement funding, reckless in their spending, or perhaps supported family or others when they could not really afford to do that?*

*Does Head Office scrutinize the financial standing of incoming residents, to ensure that they have funds to see them through their final years? Is this being monitored subsequently?*

Challenging questions such as these are valid, and require a general response, because the Fund Managers and the Board need to dispel any negativism around the concept of donating or bequeathing. Perhaps the following may help those residents who have such concerns:

- ✓ The financial standing of incoming residents is established prior to a Life Right Contract being signed. MHA needs to be comfortable that new residents can afford to live independently, pay their Levy, and to enjoy life as retired members of the Village community, and when they transition to a Bedsitter environment. We don't interact with residents subsequently on this; we should consider a non-intrusive way in which to do this
- ✓ Needing to move to Frail Care, usually late in life, brings with it a host of challenges, not the least of which is the financial burden; many residents rely on pension structures which are 30+ years old
- ✓ Instances arise where a resident is well enough to continue in a cottage or apartment, but his/her partner requires Frail Care facilities. The cost of that is enormous, and is usually not anticipated when planning one's financial future
- ✓ Head Office is reviewing how MHA can best measure a resident's ability to afford to live in MHA facilities, and to deal with the financial and health curveballs which are thrown their way. We believe that we can tighten up on this, and also to research having guarantors in place
- ✓ Lastly, MHA is investigating changing the Fund's structure to provide tax incentives.





### THREE “FORTIETH” CELEBRATIONS!

This is a story of celebration; the birthdays of not only one, but two of the Methodist Homes Villages and the 40<sup>th</sup> edition of our very special MHA On The Bay Newsletter.

Beginning with the latter, the first edition was published in September of 2012. Compiled by Ron Cleland, this crisp and fresh communique saw CEO Hein Barnard as “recently appointed”. Wesley Gardens were celebrating their Silver Anniversary and Irvine Villa its First. Cassia Gardens had held a Birthday Tea and nominated Cheshire Homes as the beneficiary of funds raised. Port Elizabeth was experiencing its wettest winter on record, and Aldersgate had recently celebrated nine nonagenarians. Proof indeed that MHA was, and remains, an extremely active organization!

Easter Monday, 21 April 2025, saw Maranatha Residents gather at the Village Hall to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Maranatha Village 40 years ago, at that point under the leadership of St Hugh's Church. Special guest, Revd Ruthell Johnson who had turned the first sod on the site in April 1985, gave a brief overview of how the Maranatha Village had started.

In attendance at the celebration was Errol Johnson, the architect who together with the late Betty Hawke, drew up the plans and drawings for the cottages. Mike Watson was also there, having been Chairman of the Maranatha Trustees when the Village and Frail Care were handed over by Maranatha Foundation to MHA in 2009. Marian Barrowman also attended; she has been associated with Maranatha for many years, and her late husband Peter was Chairman for ten years. Residents welcomed the presence of CEO, Hein Barnard at what turned out to be an afternoon of great fun, laughter and good fellowship.

The 31st of March 2025 marked the 40th Birthday of Cassia Gardens and the birth of the first village built by the newly developed Methodist Homes Association.

The idea to develop Cassia Gardens was introduced by the Reverend George Irvine who had become involved in Methodist Homes for the Aged on the East Rand. Upon transferring to Port Elizabeth, he recognized the need for a similar organization here and was soon joined by a team of people who shared his vision. This committee carried a wealth of engineering and organizational capabilities and so the project moved forward highly efficiently.

Reverend George had a few life-changing projects taking shape during the eighties, the development of Cassia Gardens being just one. This makes a person wonder if he ever had the time to relax and just casually enjoy a night of television. Had he done so, chances are good that he would have found that a popular weekly series “The A Team” was airing on national telly at the time. At Cassia's Opening Day on the 3rd August 1985, did we hear him echo Hannibal Smith's famous phrase “I love it when a plan comes together!”? It certainly was the phrase on everybody's lips in those days!

The present-day Village Manager at Cassia Gardens, Mrs Jenny van Niekerk, found, while refurbishing her office, a plaque which was no doubt presented on opening day. The plaque was mounted on a small piece of wood that had previously served as a key holder. To Jenny, it seems as though the plaque has been part of the furniture for the entire 40 years!







Jenny spoke with architect Elwyn Harlech-Jones, the sole surviving partner, who remembers the Cassia Gardens project clearly. He says that the project was basically handled by his partner, Ron Whitehead, who had previous experience with the Red Cross Homes (now Echo Foundation). He assisted with the initial design stage of the overall Master Planning such as site layouts and attended design meetings with his partner.

Boetie Berger was also involved with the project; he was considered an affable person with a candid sense of humour and was also an accomplished musician. Aaron Rummel's expertise found him running the day-to-day business of the practice and Elwyn learned much of the professional administration from him.

Elwyn remembers Bob Zeiss vividly as the co-ordinator between the Architects and Methodist Homes. He says he was a perfect gentleman in his dealings. He also remembers George Irvine's enthusiastic involvement with the project, but more so as the minister at St John's Methodist Church.

Elwyn was not present at the opening ceremony, but he does recall the importance in that it was seen as a landmark event at the practice. He left the practice to be on his own and the partnership disbanded shortly after that. He recalls that as architects, he and his partners took pride in serving the clients on a professional basis and always gave their full commitment to their work, delivering successful outcomes which added value to the community.

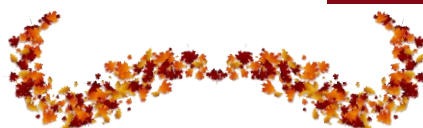
Jenny has recently had the office's stable door removed and replaced with an aluminium one. She thought it would be highly appropriate to mount the plaque in a deserving spot on the new office door.

It serves as a reminder of what has been. And it serves to remind us that when faith is turned into works, all things are possible.

It remains only to thank the Reverend George Irvine, the amazing man who put forward this idea and had the courage, along with his A Team, to take it forward.



*(article written by Alison Manasse)*







## GOING FOR GOLD



'MHA on the Bay' featured an article on Rev. Dicks Hills in 2022 when he came home from the National Masters Swimming Championships in Cape Town, loaded with medals.

We recently caught up with him to see whether he is still swimming. Now, three years on, Rev. Hills is turning 93 in August and has recently returned from the 2025 National Masters Championships held in Durban. Currently swimming for the Wahoo Masters Club, Rev. Hills was entered for five events, but unfortunately, due to a knee injury, was forced to stop while swimming his third race. He had no choice but to withdraw from the two remaining races yet still managed to bring home two silver medals for the two races that he was able to swim.

After his winning streak in 2022, Rev. Hills didn't bask in his own glory; he wasted no time in continuing training with his coach Bob Hatherley and went on to win five medals at the 2023 Championships held in Nelspruit. This time he brought home three gold and two silver medals!

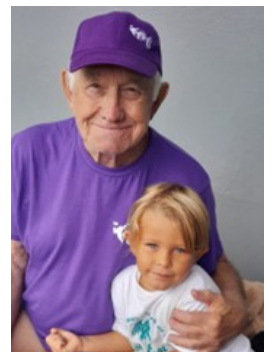


Usually, Rev. Hills swims Championship races against his arch-rival (who is actually a good friend), World Masters Champion, Patrick Galvin. Patrick is all of 92 years old and an Australian. When Rev. Hills won so many golds, he laughingly put it down to Patrick not competing that year.

Rev. Hills was planning to swim World Championships in Australia, but sadly his application for a passport was rejected due to his age. Personally, I think Patrick paid Home Affairs on the side! He knew that our South African weapon Rev. Dick Dynamo Hills was coming to take the gold from him. Sadly the 2024 National Championships saw Rev. Hills having to stay home with a particularly bad bout of 'flu.

In his cosy living room at Bob Zeiss Bedsitters was a photograph of a beautiful woman. I asked Rev. Hills about this. His face lit up; it's a photograph of Meryl. She was the love of his life, and they had been married for 68 years! As a young man he had always told her that he would swim the Indian Ocean for her. So, when he won the 2022 Championships he handed over his medals, telling her that it was too difficult to swim the Indian Ocean, but that he had been able to win them for her! She had loved swimming too and he swore that there was a sparkle in her eye when he told her of his victory! Sadly, due to Meryl's ill health the couple were forced to live apart when she was admitted to Maranatha some years back, and where she subsequently passed away.

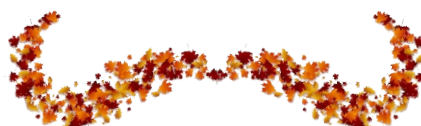
Standing chatting at the gate as I was leaving, Rev. Hills told me that he was sure that it was God's plan for him to swim in his later life. He also mentioned that when he was competing in Nelspruit in 2023, a young couple had asked him to baptise their child. They had not had the opportunity to do this due to some very difficult life circumstances. So right there in the pool, and with great joy, Rev. Hills was able to baptise their child. Given that he swam his last full set of races that year, perhaps the swimming could have been for such a time as this! God works in the strangest ways.



Rev. Hills says that when he leaves this earth it will be an absolute joy to see Father God waiting to bring him through the gates. But he hopes he will be forgiven for peeping around Him to see if Meryl is there waiting in the wings.

Surely though, when the final race is swum and when all is said and done, what greater gold could there be than for the Father to say, "Enter, my good and faithful servant"?

*(article written by Alison Manasse)*







## UNDERSTANDING AI: A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR SENIORS

In today's world, you might hear your children or grandchildren talking about “AI” or “Artificial Intelligence.” While it may sound complicated, the basic idea is quite simple.

### **What is AI?**

Artificial intelligence is like a very clever computer program that can learn and make decisions similar to how humans do. Think of it as a digital helper that can recognize patterns, understand language, and solve problems.

### **How Does AI Affect Our Lives?**

Even if you don't realize it, AI is already part of your daily life:

- When your grandchildren ask their phone a question and get an answer
- When your TV suggests shows you might like, based on what you've watched before
- When your doctor uses advanced tools to analyze medical scans
- When your bank detects unusual activity on your credit card.

### **Talking Points for Family Gatherings**

Next time your grandchildren mention ChatGPT or AI, you might ask:

- “What interesting things have you done with AI lately?”
- “How is AI helping in your work or studies?”
- “What should I be cautious about with these new technologies?”

### **Benefits for Seniors**

AI isn't just for the young! It can help us by providing:

- Voice-controlled assistants that make daily tasks easier
- Health monitoring that alerts caregivers if something seems wrong
- Friendly chat systems that can keep you company
- Simplified access to information and services

### **A Methodist Perspective**

John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, embraced innovation and knowledge in their time. They combined their Oxford education with a passion for reaching ordinary people. Much like how the Wesleys made education and spiritual growth accessible to all, today's technology can be a tool for connection and community when used thoughtfully.

Remember, you don't need to be a computer expert to understand the basics of AI. It's simply a tool that helps make certain tasks easier—just like how calculators helped with maths or how telephones connected us over distances.

### **Creating the Hein “action man” toy!**

An AI tool called ChatGPT is freely available; it is a model which, when given instructions, will provide text or an image which can then be refined until the desired result is achieved. The AI Shop was provided with a photograph of the CEO, Hein Barnard, with the request that a packaged “action toy” be created. To provide context to the toy, they were told that Hein is in his 60's, an avid golfer, is responsible for facilities for retirees and for the MHA organization. Via additional instructions ChatGPT could have enhanced the image to make it look even more like Hein, but the first effort produces an image not dissimilar to him, and illustrates the power of the AI tool used!



HEIN “ACTION MAN” TOY

*This article was prepared by Ekow Duker from The AI Shop for the MHA Newsletter*







## SAFETY AND SECURITY WITHIN MHA

Residents are often reminded that MHA focuses very keenly on matters relating to Safety and Security, and that the subject appears on the agenda of every MHA Board and other meetings. The global scourge of crime and violence, especially targeting the elderly, escalates daily.

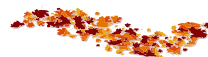
Talk is cheap, so it is essential that actions are constantly being taken to improve whatever is already in place. The safety and security of our residents, staff and assets is a non-negotiable priority for the Board and Management, and we do our best to be proactive in this regard.

Twenty five years ago our Villages had knee-high wooden ranch-style fencing as their perimeter barrier! The first Village to have basic fencing installed was Cassia Gardens, and the primary reasons for that were to prevent neighbours and their employees from taking a shortcut through the village, to stop local children from using the inner roads as a racetrack for bikes and skateboards, and to discourage buck and other animals from the Baakens River valley wandering up to the Village at night, eating the flowers. How times have changed!!

Some of the safety/security enhancements introduced in recent times are:

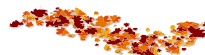
- ✦ Basic fencing was replaced by mesh/palisade fencing, and then by robust Beta fencing
- ✦ Automatic gate mechanisms were frequently upgraded/replaced
- ✦ Then came installation of electric wire protection on top of all fences and gates
- ✦ Maranatha Frail Care lift replacement
- ✦ Push-button gate access equipment was installed
- ✦ Batteries, then inverters /solar power, ensured 24/7 operation of the gates and fences
- ✦ Fire alarms installed at both Frail Cares and at Bedsitters
- ✦ Cameras monitoring the entrance gates were installed
- ✦ Then came CCTV; cameras cover the entire perimeter of all MHA facilities, monitored 24/7
- ✦ Every resident has an Atlas 'panic button' for summoning help in and around his/her residence
- ✦ Atlas Security and Relay EMS are our trusted service providers and partners

The total expenditure involved is R15 million, with the most significant costs being for CCTV (R4.3m), inverters/solar power (R5.3m) and for fencing/access control (R3.8m). It is a blessing indeed that MHA has been able to authorize the work and to absorb all of these extraordinary expenses. The safety and security of our residents and staff is priceless.



### 2024 LONG SERVICE AWARDS:

We congratulate and sincerely thank Beauty Kwintshi of CP Bradfield (15 years) and Pearl Butsaka of Bedsitters (25 years) for their loyal and dedicated service, over many years. Long Service Awards for 2025 will be highlighted in the next Newsletter.



Definitely feeling the love, groundsmen for Cassia Gardens, Reginald Busakwe and KhoKho Potyi used their initiative to celebrate Valentine's Day. They did what they do best! They trimmed the hedges and treated residents to a gentle reminder that Valentine's Day is not just for romance but indeed a day for all to spread their love.



*With grateful thanks for sponsorship and support*