

# Celebrating Generations: Day of Older Persons

*International Day of Older Persons is celebrated on 1 October. As our theme for this issue is 'Games', we interviewed 75-year-old grandfather of 10, Mr Laurie Townsend, and his youngest grandchild, six-year-old Jack Townsend, about the games each of them played at the same age.*

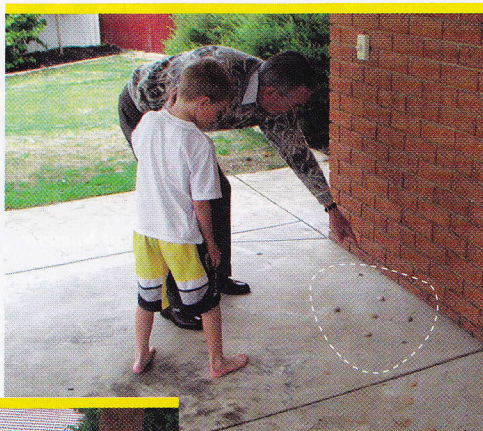
Mr Townsend's childhood and primary school life in the 1930s were dominated by the Depression. He was also part of a large family, so money and material possessions were hard to come by. Families could rarely afford to buy games or sporting equipment such as a cricket bat, a yoyo or even a simple tennis ball - even as a birthday or Christmas present.

Jack, on the other hand, like the majority of Australian children these days, has a growing collection of games, toys and sporting equipment. He delightedly receives these for his birthday, at Christmas and sometimes in between.

We asked each of them to describe his favourite game.

Mr Townsend's was a game called 'Five Stones'. Five flat stones were arranged on a hard surface in front of a wall. Each stone was allocated a certain number of points. A tennis ball (an old one found on the grounds of a tennis club) was used to try to hit a stone. Points were gained if you caught the ball after it ricocheted off the stone and the wall.

Jack's favourite games are football in winter and cricket in summer. He plays with friends in his backyard or in his cul-de-sac, with an eye out for neighbourhood cars. Each child owns a 'footy', a set



In Mr Townsend's youth, children were very rarely allowed to play inside—even if it was raining. 'If you were inside, you had to do chores,' Mr Townsend explained. 'So we made sure we were scarce!' At night, and on the rare occasions he did play inside, his family played cards and sang along to a wind-up gramophone. There was no TV in Australia at this time and his family did not own a radio.

Jack prefers to play outside as he loves sporting games. If it is raining he is not allowed to play outside. He amuses himself by playing games on the computer and watching television. 'I also like to pretend to bat and bowl in the hallway,' Jack added.

'And I'm allowed to kick a ball made of socks in there too, sometimes.' Another inside activity Jack enjoys is singing. Along with his two older sisters, he performs 'concerts' where he plays his toy guitar and his sisters play the piano.

Marbles, chasey, hidey, Red Rover and flying home-made kites were other games and activities Mr Townsend played. He also remembers his sisters playing games such as Drop the Hanky, Statues, Noughts and Crosses, playing with home-made cloth dolls and the game of knucklebones. Knucklebones from the Sunday roast were collected, dried out in the sun, then painted. Mr Townsend tried to play this game but never managed to master it. His sisters did not join in his rough and tumble games as girls always wore frocks in those days and weren't allowed to get them dirty.

Jack mentioned that girls also play in his Aus Footy and Kanga Cricket teams. His sisters and other girls join in street cricket, footy and also basketball and soccer games. 'And they don't wear dresses very much,' he remarked!



of plastic or wooden stumps and a cricket bat. Jack also plays Aus Footy on Sunday mornings in winter and Kanga Cricket in summer.

Street cricket is also a game Mr Townsend enjoyed. Traffic in the street was not a concern as no-one owned a car. His brothers and other boys in the neighbourhood would put bricks in an empty four-gallon (20 L) kerosene tin to be used as the stumps. 'If you didn't put some weight in it, the tin would go flying down the street when someone was bowled or run out!' he explained. The cricket bat was a cut-down fence picket, made by his father. 'Mum was forever digging splinters out of our hands,' Mr Townsend added.

The students in your class should enjoy listening to and discussing the similarities and differences between the games played by Jack and his grandfather. Your students will have similarities and differences between themselves and Jack. We have provided a blackline on page 51 in the form of a questionnaire for students to answer themselves and then ask a grandmother/grandfather or older person.