

Nov 20, 2010

6 WORDS THAT SAY IT ALL

Nursing home residents lucky to have each other



St Vincent Home residents Jane Peters, 98, and Peter Suppiah Lawrence, 70, depend on each other. She listens to his problems while he helps her move around. -- ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

MS JANE PETERS, 98

She is the fourth of 10 children of an office worker and a housewife. Her mother died when she was young, and her father put her in St Anthony's Convent, where she learnt to cook and sew and where she stayed for many years. All her siblings are dead, and Ms Peters - who has never married - has been living in St Vincent Home for the last 12 years.

Her six words: Almost there... grateful for life lived

Her story: 'Next year, on June 1, I will be 99 years old. I am already so old, there is nobody left except me. My younger sister who was here in the home died some years ago.

'Sometimes I feel so alone. I cannot go here and there, and I cannot go to church to pray. But Peter (see below) is very nice to me. I had a fall and my legs are not so strong, so Peter holds me when I walk. He accompanies me in everything, and buys me things and he is my very good friend. He makes me very happy. I cannot leave him.'

MR PETER SUPPIAH LAWRENCE, 70

He is a former shipping steward and now resident of St Vincent Home. A former civil servant, he was married with three children but his wife left him when she had problems with his mother. Heartbroken, he decided to become a seaman, traversing the globe for more than 12 years. He has battled the bottle, is diabetic and has failing eyesight. But what hurts him most, he says, is his estrangement from his three children. He saw his family in a shopping complex last year, but they did not acknowledge him.

His six words: Need purpose and reason to live

His story: 'Every day, I wake up because I want to take care of Jane, who is old and frail. She reminds me of my mother, and when I'm able to make her happy, I am happy also.

'I buy her dresses, shoes and jewellery and get her her favourite chicken rice from the coffee shop near here.

'She is the reason I wake up each day because she needs me. She also listens to me and my problems. We both do not have any family, so we are lucky we have each other.

'When I'm very depressed, I just pray.'