



Our Kitchen Table - The Draper Family Photo/story credit – Rosemarie Draper

Who is in our family

Oscar and June Draper and Taos

What we are eating

Gnocchi, capsicum and sausages (cooked by Taos)

Respect for older family members

My parents June and Oscar Draper had 6 children, I'm the eldest and my sister Andrea (Tao's mum) the youngest. The four oldest children were born in my parent's birthplace, Rangoon (Yangon) Burma (Myanmar).

Although Burmese born, both my parents have a mixed Eurasian ethnic heritage so had multicultural influences when they were growing up. My youngest two siblings were born in London, where we moved to, following the military coup that occurred in Burma in the early 1960s. The whole family later moved to live in Melbourne in late 1976, after having lived in London for 12 years. Given this, our understanding of and respect for older people has been influenced by our Burmese heritage but also by other cultures.

Within our nuclear Draper family, I think having respect for older people generally was just something that was seen as a normal and natural way of behaving. We grew up calling almost everyone we knew who were older than us, Aunty or Uncle and were gently and regularly reminded to treat them respectfully. This particularly meant paying attention to and anticipating any needs that any elderly or frail visitors or family members may have. It also meant accepting that they may want things done differently from what we were used to, and to try and learn to appreciate their individual differences.

As my parents have aged, I think respect and love have become very much entwined. They have done so much for us, that we, their children and grandchildren, want to reciprocate - if they let us, as my parents still want to feed and look after us too!

I think my siblings feel like me, that it's never been a burden or duty to visit but more like regularly returning to a sanctuary where you know you are always welcome and loved. Even though as individuals my family are very different in so many ways, with different religious beliefs (or none at all), different political views, different interests etc. this doesn't matter as we accept and respect these differences and when together focus on our commonalities and the joy we get out of each other's company.

This has all come out sounding as if we're a 'perfect' family - which we're not but despite any personal issues and problems we may have, I think we're very lucky to get on so well together and to have a common goal of wanting our parents to continue to age in the best way possible. For us, this means respecting the decisions they make even when we don't always agree with these, accepting them taking risks we might not feel comfortable with and supporting them to live the way they want, for as long as possible. While at the same time talking through the reasons, we may have concerns about any of this and trying to reach compromises that make each other comfortable.

The Kitchen Table is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd, a charity combatting ageism and building respect for older people. The aim of #TheKitchenTable is to promote respect for older people in families. The project documents portraits of families at their kitchen table and their stories about who is in their family, what they are eating and how respect for older people in their family is shown. More information on the project webpage: celebrateageing.com/kitchentable