

# Trevor Cooper 1934 –2012

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In the 20 years he lived in Warkworth, Trevor Cooper became known to many as the face of Warkworth Wellsford Hospice's garage sales.

Wearing his trademark cap, he would be seen almost every day of the week, driving hospice's silver butterfly van. Much like the men in the TV programme *The Last of the Summer Wine*, Trevor and his fellow volunteers – including Karl, Colin, Kevin, Trevor and John – would travel the countryside picking up and delivering furniture.

From visiting places with real giraffes and real tanks, to getting Colin to jump up and down on the back of the van to get traction on a steep drive, and women not always properly dressed when they arrived, Trevor and his crew had plenty of adventures. Seeing a mattress and a few other items drop out the back of the van when they hit a bump on the main road, Trevor, looking in the rear vision mirror, asked Colin 'shall we stop or just keep going?'



Trevor was very good at keeping going – he volunteered at Hospice for 17 years and was instrumental in increasing the furniture sales, which made profits soar.

Initially training as a Family Support volunteer, he quickly moved on to other things. He helped in the Warkworth Hospice Shop in its first year of opening but would ring his wife, Colleen, to come and cash up at closing time.

When the first call came asking that items be picked up, he found his niche. He then started taking the excess from the shop to the Salvation Army, until Christine Sanderson started her rag trade and garage sales. From his own car, to trailer, then van, he was unstoppable.

Trevor had a good business head. Working with Christine Sanderson and Faye and Lloyd Thomas as garage sale coordinators, and with the team that gathered around them, they built the garage sales into the successful business it is today.

A people person and a business person, Trevor had a real understanding of Hospice's work and he was a great front person. He got to know his donors and his customers and many of them became regulars. He would answer his phone any time, any day, and if there was a special need, he would open up the garages outside usual sales times. The only thing that really upset him was when people dumped their rubbish on Hospice's doorstep.

With a twinkle in his eye, Trevor had a way of making everyone feel special. He took great delight in teasing family and friends – his 13-year-old grandson believed for a long time that sausages grew in the garden because Trevor would bury them there before taking young Finn out to dig them up. He liked to wrap up unusual or funny things from the garage sales and leave them secretly for a Hospice staff member, then wait for a reaction. The nurses have quite a collection of nursing memorabilia, such as bed pans, courtesy of Trevor.

A humble man with a preference for quiet pleasures and an aversion to dressing up, Trevor grew up in Te Kauwhata and worked at the local hardware store after leaving school. He later moved to Auckland and worked in manufacturing then, in his mid-20s, went overseas with a mate. They worked in London, lived in Canada for a year and crossed the United States by Greyhound bus – an experience that opened Trevor's eyes to the injustices of segregation.

Back in New Zealand, Trevor met Colleen at a friend's 22nd birthday party and they married three years later. They lived in Pakuranga on the edge of farmland – now an industrial area – and raised two daughters, Sue and L'vonne. After a short stint as a dairy owner, Trevor started a successful floor surfacing business, retiring at 56.

He and Colleen moved to a 13-hectare block at Woodcocks, closer to Warkworth, and subsequently moved into town. It was after Trevor and Colleen each lost a brother to cancer that Trevor signed up as a Hospice volunteer.

A kind and wise friend to Hospice staff and volunteers, Trevor is survived by Colleen; Sue, Terry and Emily Rayner; and L'vonne, Adrian and Finn Jones.

*Contributed by Warkworth Wellsford Hospice*