

You & Me

This couple are proof love can strike at any age. Both widowed, they met each other at Azure Blue Redcliffe and married this year

Interview TONYA TURNER

Frank Atkinson, 78, Redcliffe

How did you and Mary meet?
We were both living at (retirement village) Azure Blue Redcliffe and got talking during some of the activities. We hung out together in a crowd and would have coffee together in a group, but eventually it was just the two of us going. We just clicked.

How would you describe Mary?
She's caring, fun and very competitive. She's very loyal, she's really good with kids and I admire her for all the things she's done throughout her life helping others. We enjoy doing everything together. We're about one kilometre from the waterfront so we like going for walks and having coffee. We are both involved in our church and we do a lot of activities at the village here. Every Saturday we have a big morning tea with the residents – it's like a big family. I've just joined Mary in doing Tai chi. My bones keep cracking.

How did you propose to Mary?
I went and bought an engagement ring, got down on one knee and then struggled to get up. No, not really, it was easy enough.

What was your wedding day like?
We got married in April this year. It was a simple wedding in the church we go to. I was standing up the front and Mary comes down the aisle looking very beautiful and says to the pastor, "Can I kiss him yet?" There were a few people missing with Covid, but about 50 people came. We had a great time.

Why did you decide to move to Azure Blue?
I came here with my first wife, Beverley, who had a lot of health issues. We decided it was a good time to move to a retirement village that was close to the beach, an aged care facility and hospital. I'd been widowed for about two years when I met Mary. Marriage the second time around is really good. We get on well and are so well suited.

Mary Atkinson, 82, Redcliffe

How did you and Frank meet?
We played bowls together and I often won – beat him nearly every week. He was so nice and easy to be with, he was friendly and funny, and always thinking of other people. He was always doing something, little things like moving chairs or whatever, always helping people. I had a fall once and he would come over with coffee in the morning, or bring soup over. He was always there if I needed anything.

What was it like finding love again?
I didn't want to get married again. My first husband, Wally, died when I was 32 and left me with two children. My second husband, Lionel, had a heart attack and died in my arms. I thought I didn't want to go through that again, but Frank changed my mind.

Why did you move to Azure Blue?
I was living in a granny flat on the Sunny Coast with my daughter and son-in-law when they decided to move to Brisbane. They were looking for a place with a granny flat when I found out about this place. I'm very pleased I moved here. Even though we went into lockdown soon after I arrived, everyone was so friendly when everything started to open up again. We used to bring coffees out into the hallway and talk, which helped get us all through that difficult time.

What's the secret to staying young at heart?
One thing I've learnt in life is if you don't use it, you lose it. I've always tried to keep fit. I used to do Zumba with a friend when I was in my 70s, but I think we laughed and mucked around more than we did the steps. You've got to get up and get out and join in with other people. To think Frank and I did that and fell in love is just amazing.



Frank and Mary Atkinson married in April. Picture: David Kelly