



MERCY COLLEGE ALUMNI

Where are they now?

Introducing:

*Dalia Hermes (nee Yousif)
Class of 1998*

Hello Dalia!

*Thanks for sharing your
story!*



*Photo 1: Inside the Melbourne Star Observation Wheel, being
host to cousins visiting from Canada, January 2016*

Thank you for the opportunity!

Q: Do you remember what it was like at College and when you left?

I became a part of Mercy's history between 1993-1998. I was one of only 2 girls who started year 7 from my primary school so it was a very daunting experience to not have any familiar faces in my homegroup on day 1 of year 7. This feeling was soon replaced by one of relief when the girl sitting behind me introduced herself to me and we became instant friends for the rest of the year and throughout high school. Whilst we lost contact initially, through the power of social media, we now keep in touch whilst living in different countries. We even managed to catch up in 2017 when she was back in Melbourne visiting her family.



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Photo 2: Sephora and I catching up in July 2017

Some of the wonderful memories I remember from Mercy over the years were History lessons with Mrs Jeffrey, Psychology & Maths Methods lessons with Miss Maragos, Geography lessons with Mrs Wickremasinghe and finally, Textiles lessons with Mrs Hickey. I would always look forward to Textiles lessons and was so enthused at making my own creations that to this day my mum has a satin navy-blue dressing gown that I made for her and she continues to wear it regularly. Another great memory was in year 10 when we had Asian Studies Day and our allocated country to research was India. Mrs Wickremasinghe lent us her beautiful and colourful Saris to wear on the day. The photo below shows me with two friends at our India stall, one of whom has been a huge part of my life since high school, through to university, and still to this day, Niki. I also keep in touch with Romina, as for a while we used to live close to each other and through social media.

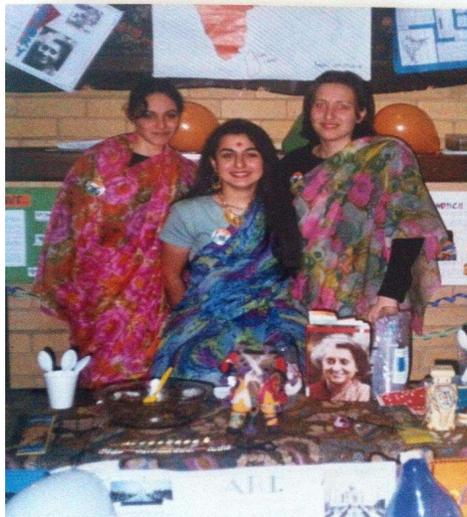


Photo 3: Romina (left), Niki (right) and I at Asian Studies Day in 1996

Leaving Mercy was both a sad and exciting time for me, as it meant that whilst I had formed strong bonds with some of the other girls, there were a special few that would remain close friends no matter where life took us, as we would all be parting ways to head into tertiary education.



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Q: Did you set out with a career plan?

In my senior years, I recall our year level being the first cohort to start using computers. This unlocked a whole new world for me as it meant we progressed from using typewriters (yes typewriters!) to keyboards! I knew I wanted to go to university, as this was a major factor in having my parents migrate to Australia in 1981 – to give our family a better future, so it was my way of showing my gratitude to my parents. Having the late Ms Cassell, as our VCE Coordinator at the time helped me to unpack my interests in Information Technology whilst also acknowledging that my other interests in Textiles, Accounting and Psychology were to be put on the backburner. The technological world was embarking upon us and I was ready to harness that opportunity. I was accepted at La Trobe University to study Bachelor of Computer Science with a merit-based scholarship. By the end of first year, I realised that the course was not for me, so I transferred to a Bachelor of Information Systems. It was essentially the same subjects but with less maths subjects and more flexibility to study other subjects. So, to incorporate my other interests, I took electives in Accounting and Criminology (Psychology).

I graduated with the offer of doing my Honours year, however after much consideration I chose to decline as I was eager to join the corporate world and begin my professional career. I began by providing IT systems training for a company in the manufacturing industry who had just implemented a new Systems Applications and Products (SAP) warehousing system across all their Victorian retail branches. Once all branches completed their training, I joined a software development company in the private sector as a System Tester. Internal opportunities within the same company allowed me to progress to roles such as Second in Charge Test Manager and Business Analyst. One of the perks of working in the private sector was being given a share of the profits. We celebrated product releases with some secret travel destinations. One memorable trip was when we were surprised with a trip to Sydney and were given the opportunity to climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge! It also was a turning point for me as it helped me to conquer my fear of heights! It was such an exhilarating experience and highly recommended! (5th from left)



Photo 4: Climbing Sydney Harbour Bridge with colleagues in 2006

I got married in the same year that I started at the software development company and remained there for 6 years. However, once I had my children, I needed to re-prioritise my needs and moved away from the hectic work demands and long hours of being in the private sector so I embarked on the IT journey in the public sector at the Department of Human Services (now DHHS), to better meet the needs of our growing family.



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I initially started as a Senior Business Analyst – to put it simply I translated non-technical language from the business into technical terms for the IT ‘nerds’ to develop and deliver IT systems which provided services to the Victorian community, such as housing and child protection computer programs. Rapidly gaining experience and skills in those roles, I was successful in further job applications still within DHHS from an IT Business Partner to Business Engagement Manager. Leveraging my stakeholder engagement and management skills, I’ve temporarily moved away from the IT branch and am now I’m currently in an organisational transformation role as Manager for Corporate Services Transformation, also at DHHS. This has proven to be a refreshing challenge, offering new ways of working and thinking by taking me out of my comfort zone of IT speak. I’ve always played it safe with my work, so this was the first time in a long time where I’ve taken the risk, and harnessed the opportunity to gain experience, skills and knowledge in an area that I’m new to but so eager to learn. I’ve been at DHHS for 8 years now and each new role is like starting at a new organisation.

Q: What were the significant milestones that have impacted your life journey so far?

The most significant milestone for me has been finding my soul mate, my partner in everything that we do, and the blessings that we’ve received in our 2 children. The support I receive from my husband has enabled me to continue working and raising our children, both of us as equals to our family unit. Everything we have done has impacted our life journey in more ways than we could have ever imagined. Building our future together from day one, we have always had the drive to provide for our family.

The support we have received from my parents during the early years has been tremendous – from being our babysitters, cooks and mechanics, we are indebted to them forever. I am truly amazed at the relationships formed between grandparents and their grandchildren, and only wish I had this strong bond as a child. I only had the opportunity to spend time with my maternal grandmother for a few short years.

Acknowledging that a grandparents bond is unique, this was a pivotal point in our family’s lives. Our children have been blessed with also having their paternal grandparents living in the USA, so we made it our mission to have them meet as soon as it was feasible to have them remember the memories.

In 2015, we spent 7 weeks in the USA and had the trip of a lifetime – we went to Disneyland, Las Vegas, Arizona, San Diego, Michigan (where my in-laws live), New York and also to Canada! I hope to go back to New York again in the future, it was my favourite place to visit!



Photo 5: Seeing the Statue of Liberty, New York, June 2015



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This adventure injected in all of us a desire to travel more. Since then we've also been to Fiji and are now also packing to go to Hamilton Island next week to celebrate 15 years of marriage, as well as my husband's and daughter's milestone birthdays. It will also be a mini vacation to relax after a super huge year in our lives of celebrating both our children's First Holy Communion and building and moving into our dream forever home! To say we've been busy would be an understatement.



Photo 6: My husband, son, daughter and I celebrating our children's First Holy Communion, June 2019

Q: Have you maintained any school friendships?

Before social media, it was difficult to maintain all the friendships from Mercy, however I value the close friendships I had and still have to this day with 2 friends, Linda, whom I met in year 7, and Niki whom I met in year 10.

Linda and I made sure we made time for each other regularly even though we attended different universities. She was one of my bridesmaids at my wedding and just recently she also attended my children's Communion party. Whilst Linda has been living in Sydney for some years after getting married, we constantly visit each other, sometimes for mini girls' weekends away or a day trip out, sometimes with our husbands and kids and sometimes without. ☺ We usually chat on the phone for hours just like we did in the good old days after school but instead of using the land line we now have our mobiles! Our emails have also been known to become quite lengthy newspaper worthy reading! Having this close friendship to provide support in every aspect of our lives has been very therapeutic (& much cheaper!), we constantly joke about doing the things we do now well into our 80s!



Photo 7: My best friend Linda, at my children's Communion celebration, June 2019



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As mentioned earlier, whilst I met Niki in high school, we grew much closer during university life as we both were studying IT courses. Niki supported me by helping me navigate through the confusing time of figuring out which course I wanted to continue with and for this I am grateful. Post university life, and we have celebrated each other's birthdays and weddings, as well as attended our children's baptisms, birthdays and communions.



Photo 8: Niki & I celebrating our uni friend's birthday, January 2010

With the power of social media, I have reconnected with many friends from my year level and have leaned on some of them for advice from early parenting techniques, job satisfaction, cooking recipes, schooling for our kids, books to read, tv shows and movies to watch, places to visit and lots more! It's a wonderful community to be a part of and a special bond as a result of a shared Mercy history. Last year, my year level celebrated our 20-year anniversary reunion! Here are some of us who went along and reminisced about the wonder years.



*Photo 9: Attending our 20-year Mercy Reunion, October 2018
From left: My, Hayley, Rund, me, Josie*

Q: What's next for you?

More traveling – our next big goal is Europe, but it may be a few more years away still as my son starts high school next year and the focus will be for him to excel in his studies.

For me personally, it would be to put more focus on my fitness goals and smash out more milestones! A few years ago, I met my motivational fitness guru, Michelle Bridges and I learned so much from her about myself, my strengths and my sheer dedication to strive for betterment.

To be the best person I can be for my family, my friends and my colleagues, I need to be looking after myself with more priority.



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Photo 10: Attending Michelle Bridges 12WBT Spring Festival, October 2014. I am at the bottom right of the steps with my gym buddy. Check out Michelle's abs, she even has them sitting down!

Q: What message of encouragement, advice would you give to current students?

I always remember something that Miss Maragos told us during Year 11 Psychology class one time, and it was something along the lines of - if you work hard in high school to get the results you want for university, you will spend the best years of your life at university. Miss Maragos wasn't wrong, university life was amazing, it was a whole new world brimming with opportunities, knowledge, experiences and even more friendships!

Final piece of advice – follow your dreams and fulfil your passions, you only have one life, so make it count. Don't change who you truly are, be true to yourself and stand up for what you believe in without letting others change you.