Title : My grandma, Maria

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Today I want to introduce you to my loving grandma, Maria. She is known to us as Yia-Yia, which is Greek for grandmother. Yia Yia is my mum's mum and she was born in a beautiful seaside port in Egypt, called Alexandria.

Yia Yia was born in 1950 to Greek parents, Magdalene and Nick Papageorgiou. My Yia Yia has an older brother, Manuel, who is 14 months older than her also. Sadly, my Yia Yia's mother Magdalene died 4 weeks after she was born from an illness. Yia Yia's father Nick decided to return to Greece with his son Manuel but left Yia Yia to be raised by her maternal grandparents.

At the time she was born, Alexandria had a big population of Greeks that called the city home. However in 1956 there were political issues and the Egyptian government required all foreigners to leave the country with just one suitcase and a small amount of cash. So at 5 years of age, Yia Yia left Egypt with her grandparents on a boat and sailed to Italy before boarding a ship to Australia. The ship was called the TN Sydney. The ship's first port was to Fremantle in Western Australia before sailing to Brisbane. When they arrived in Brisbane, they travelled north to Maryborough where they had family living.

Yia Yia stayed with her grandparents and cousins in Maryborough for one year before moving with her grandparents to Melbourne. In Melbourne, they moved in with my Yia Yia's son for many years. Yia Yia attended primary school and high school in South Melbourne and after many years, her grandparents qualified for a housing commission flat in North Melbourne.

After finishing school in 1966, Yia Yia got her first job working in the Defence Department as a clerk. She moved across various government departments until she was married in 1978, bought a house in Kealba and moved in with her husband. In 1979 she fell pregnant with twins and because it was a multiple birth, she was told to rest from around 5 months so had to quit her job. On August 16th in 1980, her twin daughters were born and she was so happy.

Yia Yia lived in Kealba until 2016 before she sold her house and moved to Hillside, near Caroline Springs. Until the Pandemic earlier this year, we would see her on an almost weekly basis for dinner and now we can only catch up on FaceTime calls. Yia Yia just turned 70 and we hope to be able to celebrate her birthday a little later this year when restrictions are lifted.