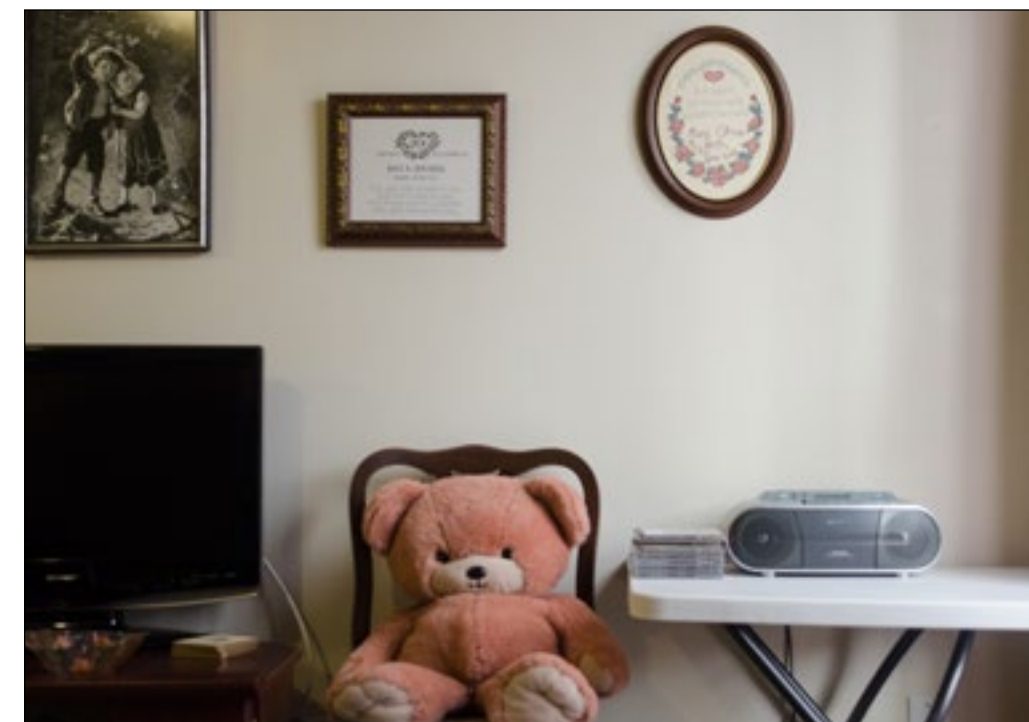




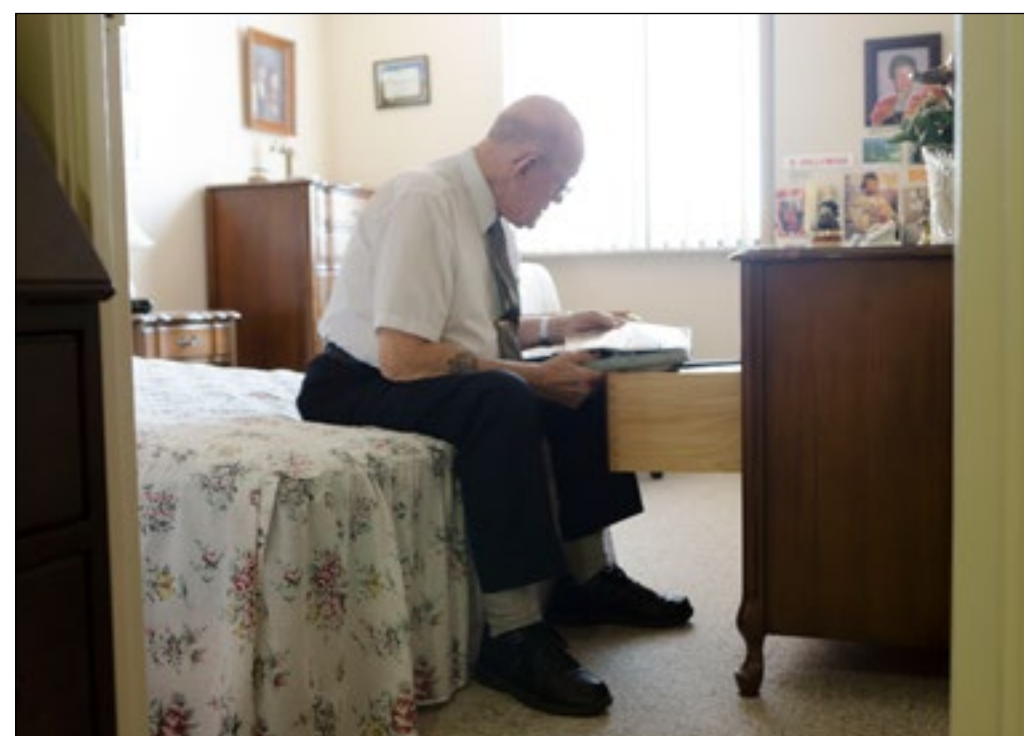
Hollywood often eats his meals alone in the dining room of his retirement home. On average, there are four times more widowed women in their eighties living alone in Canada than widowed men of the same age group.



Sydney Hollywood and Elizabeth 'Betty' Hewlett were married for 58 years.



Much of the decor in the Hollywoods' apartment has not changed since his wife passed away.



Hollywood looks through family photos and reflects on the life he shared with his wife.



Hollywood's desk is cluttered with mementos from different parts of his life.

Age of Loneliness

On a frosty Sunday morning in November, Sydney Hollywood, 89, sits alone in his apartment in Christie Gardens, a retirement community in downtown Toronto. He is smartly dressed, wearing a crisp, white, short-sleeved button-up, securely fastened at the neck with a tie.

Two large anchors tattooed on his forearms betray his formal attire and hint to his larger than life character. Despite his age, his health is stable and his ever-strong limbs are supported and balanced by a thin wooden cane.

Hollywood has the gift of gab. He will talk your ear off if you give him the time of day, and he is bound to recount stories with elaborate detail – such as his first job as a newspaper delivery boy where he earned \$7.50, about being arrested on the Don Valley while riding in (unbeknownst to him) a "hot" car and all about how he met his "little beaut" Elizabeth while working as a delivery truck driver.

Hollywood is never shy to start up conversation with whoever crosses his path. He goes out of his way to chat up his elderly peers and enjoys nothing more than putting a smile across their faces. He's a ladies man. It is ironic that a man so socially outgoing and eager to interact is privately grappling with painful feelings of isolation and loneliness – something that affects many retired people.

"It's the loneliness that is really getting me more than anything else." Hollywood reflects, as he wipes away tears while sitting in front of his cluttered desk. Coupled with his struggle to develop meaningful relationships with his peers that go beyond simple small talk and the death of his wife, Betty, over four years ago, he is moving into a widow faze of his life that is normally populated by women.

"My kids are busy and I don't bother them because I know they're busy and they don't got time for me. Every now and then the phone rings, 'I'm coming over to have some dinner with you dad' and she comes over to have some dinner and that's the last I see her for months and months."

On a small whiteboard above the small kitchen table "Love you lots Grandpa Hollywood!" is scribbled in childlike handwriting. The message has adorned the wall for over a year now – since the last time he saw his grandchildren who live in London, Ont.

Hollywood's compact and tidy apartment is littered with treasures and mementos of his late wife. She smiles down at him from a framed photo above his desk. A decorative wooden panel in the hallway leading to the bathroom reads "Betty's Powder Room." The apartment is still just as much hers as it is his.

"I know he's lonely, I know he misses his wife a lot, but he's not much of a joiner [of social programs], even though he gets invitations," says Barb Rebelo who co-ordinates activities for the men's club at his retirement home.

"He's always talking to people, always interested in getting people's stories and telling his own stories, so I am surprised that he doesn't join the men's group activities, but he never gets involved. Sometimes he'll walk by the games room, and I'll ask him to join, and he'll say 'no'."

For a multi-media version of this story, go to: <http://www.qnetnews.ca/?p=33570>



Hollywood keeps a message from his grandchildren on a whiteboard. The message has been there over a year - since the last time he saw them.



Sydney Hollywood, 89, sits in his bedroom in the apartment he used to share with his wife Betty until her death in 2009. He lives in a retirement community near Christie Street and Dupont Street in Toronto and struggles with feelings of loneliness.



Hollywood often watches television by himself in his small apartment.