# Transcript of Purple Orange Podcast, ‘It's The Little Things’, Season 3, Episode 2

SPEAKERS

Carey Scheer (narrator), Chris Spencer, Judy Spencer-Gepp

**Carey Scheer** 00:00

Hello, my name is Carey Scheer and I make stories for the Purple Orange Podcast. Some stories stay with you. The one you are about to hear definitely will for me. This one comes with a trigger warning. You're going to hear the voice of someone who has passed away. I first met Trudy Gepp years ago when we filmed a story about her home. It was designed for her, giving her the freedom to live life on her terms. A few years later, I told yet another story with her, this time about her career at SA Ambulance, where a little upfront effort to make her workplace accessible led to over 30 years of dedicated service. But then we made one more story, and this one is different. About a year and a half ago, I ran into Trudy again. She was beaming. She told me about Chris, a man who had been widowed and had started using a wheelchair later in life. He had, in many ways, shut himself away from the world. And a mutual friend nudged Trudy to reach out to him, and so she did. “Let's ride the train”, she told him. “To anywhere, to nowhere.” And that's what they did, over and over again, until one day their friendship became something more. I knew right away this was a story that needed to be shared. I worked on it and sent the recording to Trudy for her to hear. She never got the chance. The next day, her husband, Chris, called me. Trudy had passed away the night before.

Although Trudy didn't get to hear it, her family and friends did. This story was played at her celebration of life, and now her husband, Chris, wants you all to hear it too.

**Chris Spencer** 02:29

She used to encourage me, “What are you doing today?” I said, “I've checked the diary.” Diary’s got nothing in it. [Laughs] So, yeah, do you want to meet Sunday and go for a train ride somewhere? Yeah, why not?

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 02:48

I'd come from Campbelltown, right? And you come from here by train. And we'd meet at the train station.

**Chris Spencer** 02:55

And then train that was leaving, we'd get on it.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 02:59

Wherever was first.

**Chris Spencer** 03:01

And then it come back. Sometimes we get on another one, go out again.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 03:05

Just because we could.

**Chris Spencer** 03:06

To go out on a train and go somewhere and have a meal with Trudy and stuff. It took a lot of, uh, took a lot of stuff away from the inside of me, and I got rid of it. I loved it, because it was like freedom.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 03:30

There was a day pouring with rain. Chris met me outside Cinema Nova, and I only found where he was because of the tyre tracks. I just followed them. And so we went into Cinema Nova. The movie wasn't on for quite a while.

**Chris Spencer** 03:46

She said to me, she said, “Do you want to be, do you want us to be mates? Or do you want to take it any further?” And I thought about it for about two seconds, and I said, “No, no, I don't want to just be mates. I want to be with you.”

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 04:09

So went into the movie. He didn't know whether to put his arm around me or hold my hand or what to do.

**Chris Spencer** 04:18

I was nervous.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 04:19

Yeah, and it would sort of start to go up, and then it was like, no, I won't. And then he just didn't know what to do. And so I was just sitting there watching the movie, and I thought, he'll work it out.

**Chris Spencer** 04:34

The other thing, did she tell you how she loves ramps?

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 04:38

No.

**Chris Spencer** 04:39

Oh, did she tell you how she likes to go through water? Does she tell you how she likes to slide around on gravel? Oh, you need to talk to her. We can be going along a street and she'll disappear. There's a ramp going up into a building. She goes up it and back down it.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 05:01

Because I can.

**Chris Spencer** 05:05

She don't care about the chair, yeah, she just drives through this pond, splashes water everywhere,

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 05:11

Because I can.

**Chris Spencer** 05:15

Sliding, you’ll get hurt. Don't do that! Oh, I'll be all right, slipping and sliding around. She doesn't worry about falling out of chair or anything.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 05:26

You've got to explore. If you don't explore, you don't know.

**Chris Spencer** 05:35

I've learned a lot from Trudy's disability. She's a good guidebook.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 05:42

He has a form of muscular dystrophy that he didn't get till later. I've been through the stages that he's going through now, so I can, mentor is not the right word, but give suggestions. Hey, try this, or just because it doesn't work out the way you want it to, that's the way it is, and just get over it.

**Chris Spencer** 06:06

Trudy's like she is now. She's been like it all her life.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 06:10

To me, it's what I do, is just life. I know no different. I've had to adapt it, but enjoy it. As long as you wake up every day and you're breathing, that's a good thing. What you choose to do in your day, that's up to you and your abilities. But just do it.

**Chris Spencer** 06:34

I'm still grappling with it. I've gone through a normal life, and now I'm in a disabled life. I mean, how can I put this? It's like, when I first started losing the ability to shower myself, I had to then allow other people to do it. It's like, it's so hard.

To be able to have someone do it to you, and for you, it's, it's very, it mucks up your mind.

I know how to drive a car and everything, but I can't do it. It's, it's frustrating, is the word. I worry about everything. And I just, I think, oh, I should be able to do that.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 07:30

I put perspective on the situation.

**Chris Spencer** 07:34

Get over it.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 07:36

Get over it. Suck it up, buttercup, is the latest thing. It's no urgency. Carer is going to be here. That's why we employ them, is to help us.

**Chris Spencer** 07:52

You got to learn to allow people to do the things they can do for you and accept the fact that they're not going to do it the same way you would have done it.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 08:05

One of my favourite sayings is, choose your battles, like, as long as it gets done, it might be different to the way you want it to be done, but as long as it's done, in the end, there’s nothing to worry about.

**Chris Spencer** 08:26

I said to her one night, I said, “Would you like to marry me?” Well, what'd she say? Oh, yes, yes.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 08:37

In a heartbeat.

**Chris Spencer** 08:38

In a heartbeat. I'm much happier when she's around, and we're doing things.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 08:45

And we can bounce off each other.

**Chris Spencer** 08:49

Trudy, even though Trudy and I go to bed together, we don't react together in bed. We just talk with one another. And yeah, that's the way it is. For me to be able to give her a cuddle and to have a kiss, it can take 10 minutes just to get ready to get in the right position so that we can actually have a kiss. I have to set up my chair right, and normally I have to put a headrest on, and then I have to position myself in a certain position alongside her chair, which is sometimes gets a bit hard, and then I've got to be able to get her over to me, and I've got to position myself in the right way, and her head's got to be right. There's a lot to it. But once we get there, it's all right.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 09:44

Or, you know, we might go and, you know, it might be nice day, so we’ll go, say, to a park or wetlands or something, you know, sit under a beautiful tree, have a talk, you know, ra-ra-ra, and you're talking for a while, and and then you sort of feel like a bit of a smooch right now, and it's like, there's a carer coming in 10 minutes.

**Chris Spencer** 10:06

That's not gonna happen. It's not spontaneous. The idea is that's where it ends.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 10:13

That's right.

**Chris Spencer** 10:16

But we will sit side by side in the sun. She'll face that way, I face this way, and I just had my arm over her like that. We put her chairs back and just rest, and

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 10:27

We're happy with that. It's just contact.

**Chris Spencer** 10:33

It's the little things we do for one another. I hold her arm up so she can scratch her ear or something like that.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 10:40

Sort of, yeah.

**Chris Spencer** 10:42

I pick up her hand sometimes and kiss it. Even in bed of a morning, like when they're dressing Trudy and everything she rolls towards, they roll her towards me. And if I'm still in bed, I could put my hand over there, I could touch her face. She'll kiss my hand and stuff like that.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 11:01

And sometimes, I'm getting really intimate now. Sometimes when, like, Chris puts his arm over, and I can, you know, lick his hand or lick his arm or something, and the carers wouldn't even know what's going on. And it's like, yes, we can do this.

**Chris Spencer** 11:21

Yeah, they got to make the most out of the little things.

**Trudy Spencer-Gepp** 11:23

And you know, it might only be for 16 seconds, but it's 16 seconds of your life that is just memorable.

**Carey Scheer** 11:49

We want to thank very much Chris Spencer and Trudy Spencer-Gepp for taking the time to share this beautiful story with us. As you know, Trudy has since passed away, and we want to acknowledge her with deep respect. She was much loved in our community, and her voice lives on in the stories she shared.

If this story has raised anything for you, please remember you can call Lifeline anytime on 131114. We'd love to hear your thoughts on this story and the podcast in general. You can reach us on our social media, our Instagram, our Facebook page, or send us an email, stories@purpleorange.org.au, or pick up the phone, 08 8373 8388. I'm Carey Scheer, and thanks so much for spending time with us at the Purple Orange Podcast.