

Marcela Bole, born Gec, was born on 18 June 1914 in Šepulje, Slovenia, near Šežana as the fourth child in a family of six children of Justina Žvab and Peter Gec. Her mother Justina was a widow at 21 years with a one year old baby boy, Janez Čefuta. Justina remarried with Peter Gec. Together they had four daughters, Ljudmila, Pavla, Marcela, Ema and one son, Ludvik.

Marcela's father Peter was a wise and hard working man. He owned a vineyard and made his own wine. For every child born he bought a piece of land and one for his wife Justina. Peter made sure that his children had a good education and had everything they needed. He was a happy sociable man and loved to show off his daughter Marcela with her ability to recite nursery rhymes. Peter was a good singer and wrote his own lyrics. Marcela's mother, Justina, was a tall good looking wise woman and a good mother.

Marcelina, as the family used to call her as an infant, was taken by her godparents to be baptised in Tomaj whilst her mother Justina was preparing lunch for the guests. When the priest asked the godparent's for the baby's name, the reply was Olga Marcelina. The priest told the godparents that they must name the infant Luisa as it was the feast of Saint Luis on that day. The frightened godparents never told the parents of the change in name. Mother Justina realised the name change when she took Marcelina for her vaccination.

Marcela was a very lively, happy child. As a three year old she was playing with her siblings as a herd of cows passed by. She ran in their way and a cow attacked and grabbed her by the horns, threw her in the air and tore her cheek. When Marcela saw her mother begin to cry in desperation, she stopped crying. Already at such a young age Marcela showed her courage.

Marcela had her father's happy nature and a talent for poetry. As a child she was performing on stage in school reciting poems and was well liked by all the school teachers. From an early age Marcela loved to read, especially poems. She had already written a fairytale whilst in primary school. When she took the cows out to the pasture, she would use a small stone to write on a stone slab. In those times the Slovenian schools were forbidden by the Fascist regime. Only nuns and priests encouraged children to read and write in Slovenian which gave hope to the people that there will be a time when they could speak and write in the Slovenian mother language. She completed 8

years of schooling at the Catholic Convent School in Tomaj, Kras in Slovenia where she was taught by the nun's. She was an excellent student.

In 1930 Marcela completed a Diploma of machine and hand embroidery in Tomaj. She started a dress making course which she was unable to complete due to her family commitments. Despite this she made her own patterns and sewed clothes for customers. Later in 1952, Marcela completed another Diploma of hand embroidery and in 1953 she completed a dressmaking course in Opčine, Italy.

When Marcela was bike riding with a group of friends, they came across a group of boys also bike riding their way. Marcela got off her bike and stretched her arms out stating 'Stop boys, you are not going to escape us!' A boy by the name of Silvester Bole was so impressed at her courage that he fell off his bike and after that he could not forget 'Mischievous Marcela'. After that they fell in love and later married on the 28th May 1939.

In 1939, Silvester returned from military service from Calabria, Italy to marry Marcela. After three days he had to return to the military. Soon later he was called back to his previous job as a cabinet maker in Monfalcone (Trzic). They were living in Sistiana (Sesljan), near Trieste (Trst). On 10th of June 1940 it was announced that Italy and Germany are at war and that Russia will help with the food supply.

Marcela was walking to Trieste in labour as there was no transport during the war. A car stopped by and took her to the hospital. She was in labour for three days and gave birth to her first daughter 'Neva' in Trieste in 1940 with a candle due to the bombing in the war.

In the cold winter of January 1941, Silvester was taken by the 'Fascists'. One week later, Marcela's sister Ema notified her that Silvester was taken with many others to jail in Šezana where they were then forced to join the Special Battalion (Bataglione Speciale). Marcela's parents sent Ema to pick up Marcela and the baby to take them to their native home in Šepulje as Marcela was very sick. Marcela's sister Paola experienced the same thing and also came home to her parents. In Marcela's parents home there were four surnames - Čefuta, Gec, Gorup and Bole.

Marcela went through considerable fear during the war. In 1944, Marcela gave birth to her second daughter 'Danila' in Šepulje.

Marcela wished to be a nurse although her family did not allow this and as a result she worked various jobs on the farm. She was a hard working person who adapted to any job, be it on the farm, waitressing or hairdressing. She was sewing for people, doing odd jobs and even made hand made toys for her children. Her family was always well provided for.

Marcela often helped soldiers by giving them civil clothing so that they would be safer to return to their homes. She was good hearted and empathised with everyone.

In 1946 after the war, Marcela's family went to live in Opčine, near Trieste where she was working at home as a dressmaker. Silvester was now working in the Venezia Giulia Police Force. In 1954 due to political unrest, Silvester was worried about losing his job and successfully applied to migrate to Australia without Marcela knowing. It was very sad for the family to leave and farewell their loved ones given that in those days, families would rarely return home to visit.

The family lived for three months in Brunswick, then Pascoe Vale with the Zavadlal family. After three years they moved into their own house in Pascoe Vale, Melbourne, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

Marcela was homesick initially however once she met other friends at the Slovenian Association Melbourne (SDM) in Prahran and she subscribed to the Slovenian magazine 'Misli', she was no longer homesick. The years passed quickly for Marcela. In Australia Marcela worked full time as a machinist until 57 years of age. In addition to that she was also making dolls to help her husband pay for the house.

Marcela was a talented seamstress and loved to sew clothes for both herself and her family and was always well dressed. She was very talented in many arts and craft and kept herself busy making many items for friends and family and often donated items to the church to be raffled or auctioned. Marcela attended mass regularly at the Slovenian St. Cyril and Methodius church in Kew. She donated much of her time raising money for the church by selling raffle tickets and taking part in fund raising events.

In Australia, Marcela wrote her first prose in 1956 at the time she was attending the Slovenian dances in Prahran, Melbourne. In 1979, in the long nights when Marcela was sick, she began to write prose and poems again.

She bought herself a typewriter at the age of 64 and taught herself to type. Marcela was passionate about writing poems and stories about her life experiences, friends, family and events of interest. After being encouraged by various people, Marcela sent her poems to Slovenian newspapers and radio. At first she read her poems on radio 3EA on incentive of Kati Hartner and Helena Leber and later on Elica Rizman and Meta Lenarčič. Alexandra Ceferin and her husband Drago encouraged her to further her writing and connected her with the Art Society. In 1984 Marcela published the first collection of poems with the support of Alexandra Ceferin under the title [Kraški izlivi](#) - *Karst Spills*. Two more collections of poems were published which include [Iz Krasa po svetu](#) - *From Karst to the World* in 1989 with the support of Savina Venier and followed by [Kraški odmevi](#) - *Karst Echoes* in 1991 with the support of Draga Gelt. Marcela has left a lot of unpublished material.

Events and celebrations, funerals, youth concerts and performances at all clubs in Victoria were the source of inspiration for Marcela, who prepared a perfect poem for every occasion. Marcela often wrote welcoming speeches for dignitaries and clergies.

Marcela's favourite hobby was to recite her own poems on stage at various Slovenian venues throughout Victoria, in particular at the Slovenian church in Kew and the SDM Slovenian Association at Eltham. She had most happiness in the SDM club and Draga Gelt often asked Marcela if she has any poems to recite on stage. She had a very spirited personality and loved to socialise, perform and entertain. Marcela loved music and happy company. She was very proud of her heritage and actively involved in the Slovenian community. She enjoyed dressing in traditional costume, singing Slovenian songs and baking traditional Slovenian dishes.

Marcela was recognised by the Slovenian community for her contributions by being honoured with the presentation on her life achievements in June 1999. She was also awarded with a Certificate of Recognition for Contribution to Multicultural Australia SBS radio on the occasion of the International Year of Older persons in 1999. She had multiple other achievements, for example 'Mother of the Year' awarded by the SDM Slovenian Association, Melbourne in 1989 and 2002.

Marcela was very grateful for her success to the Kew religious centre, Alexandra Ceferin, Draga Gelt, Savina Venier, the radio presenters of 3EA and 3ZZZ, the presidents of all the Slovenian clubs, teachers and all the people that asked her to write for various special occasions.

Marcela had problems with her health and had numerous operations throughout her life, especially in the later years. Although she had health problems, she insisted on looking after her ailing husband until the age of 87. Marcela looked after Silvester until she no longer could. Silvester went into Villa Del Sole, the aged care hostel. A year later, Marcela joined him there where they were well cared for. Marcela steadily deteriorated and passed away on 28th June, 2006 at the age of 92.

Marcela was a good hearted person who found good in everyone. She loved her heritage, family and adopted country Australia.

Marcela tells her [Life story in Slovenian](#), about the humble beginning of [Life and Work in Australia](#) and also about [How people used to live in Kras pre the 1900's](#).

October 2014