

A celebration of life Catherine Goymer

21 February 1940 – 29 July 2019

11:40am Friday 9 August 2019, North Devon Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Humanists believe that we are responsible for the way we live our lives, showing concern and respect for our fellow human beings and the world around us. We aim to live positive, happy and fulfilling lives ourselves and to help others to do the same. This is exactly how Cath lived her life so a Humanist ceremony is an appropriate way for us to remember her and to say goodbye to her.

While we are here to say goodbye to Cath's physical presence among us and to celebrate her life and to express our gratitude for it, we are not here to say goodbye to her essence. That lives on in your memories and in a very real sense within each and every one of you. You whose lives were touched by hers will have been changed to a greater or lesser degree as a result of that contact.

While there is much that we all share through our common humanity, each of us is unique. This is the beauty of human life; our uniqueness and individuality add richness and diversity not only to our own lives but also to the lives of others. Cath was someone who through her caring, supportive nature and her sociability added colour and texture to the lives of those lucky enough to know her.

From a humanist perspective, life's significance lies in our actions and relationships, in the memories of those who knew us, and in any influence we have left behind. It is in the light of this that we recall and celebrate Cath's life today.

She was born in Willesden on 21st February 1940 to Joe and Rowley Beach and had an elder brother Joe and younger sisters, Irene and Gwen. Irene has written a tribute to her sister which I will share with you now.

Cath was my big sister – a Size 10 big sister. She was always there to stick by me. When we were growing up in Willesden Green, North West London, during street arguments, of which there were many if you lived in Willesden, street games didn't have any written rules so... the Beach Sisters were always right.

At school I followed two years after her, through Infants and Juniors, where I was always called Catherine. Then two years after me, our younger sister, Gwen, went to the same local schools, where she was always called Irene!

Our brother, Joe, was 7 years older than Cath. It must have been misery for him when my mother kept coming home from hospital with yet another girl.

Cath went on to gain a scholarship to a private girls school in Hampstead Garden Suburb: Henrietta Barnet School. Our parents were so proud of her and even I quite liked her school uniform.

She worked as a secretary, a very good and efficient one, and then she met Tony. I thought she was mad to be getting married at 21. Now, 58 years later, I was probably wrong.

Cath had met Tony at a youth club in the 1950s when they were both in their teens. They soon discovered a shared love of dancing. In addition to the jiving of their youth, over the ensuing decades they were to become very accomplished, gold medal standard ballroom dancers, even dancing at the Royal Albert Hall.

They married in Willesden Parish Church on 14th October 1961, living initially next door to Cath's parents before buying their first home together, a maisonette conversion. They later moved to Kenton where they had 10 wonderful years, enjoying a great social life.

Here Cath became a keen member, as well as chair and secretary, of the local Young Mothers' Club which morphed into the Women's Club and ultimately the W.I. Her secretarial skills made her ideal for these roles as it did in her role within the family getting everyone organised.

In 2002 Cath and Tony decided to move from Hatch End where they had spent the previous 20+ years to the Southwest. They toured the region, staying in B&Bs until they discovered Morteheo where they knew they had found their new home. They loved life down here.

Cath remained an active member of the W.I. in North Devon. She also indulged her passion for gardening, cultivating plants in the greenhouse and filling the garden, which birds loved to visit, with many beautiful flowers and shrubs. Tony was a very loyal labourer, doing the heavier tasks and tending to the large fish pond.

Cath loved music from the 50s music of her youth through to the Carpenters and Drifters whose music, played loud in the summer with the windows open, formed the backdrop to life in the 70s and there were the perennial dance bands such as those of Joe Loss, Billy Cotton and Edmundo Ross.

She enjoyed her holidays, the sunshine cruises with Tony as well as her adventurous trips with Irene such as the specialist cruises to Antarctica and the Galapagos Islands where she made a major breakthrough. She had always loved to swim but hated getting her face wet. But being in one of the best marine reserve locations in the world she was tempted to do some snorkelling. Because she was anxious the crew fitted her with a huge, bright yellow life jacket. Donning her mask and snorkel within no time her face was fully submerged. Experiencing this new underwater world Cath was quite happy floating about for ages but would often lose her sense of direction. She became affectionately known by the crew and fellow travellers as "The Yellow Peril"

Cath was one of those rare people who was loved by everyone who knew her. It was impossible not to like her. She was naturally friendly and sociable with a good sense of humour.

First and foremost, however, she was a family person, a loving and much loved wife to Tony for over fifty-seven years, a devoted Mum to Colin and Jonathan and a very proud Nanny to Rosie, Benjamin, Sam, Amy and Abbie.

Colin and Jonathan have between them written a tribute to their Mum which they will share with us now

OUR MUM

We wanted to say just a few words about our Mum.

It was never going to be easy for Mum! Being in a family of Chelsea fans and her being a life-long Arsenal fan it was always going to be a tad tricky. Our Granddad used to take Mum to Highbury ever since she was a little girl, travelling on the bus, lifting her over the wall of the ground with all the other kids before he went round to pay and go through the turnstiles. He would then collect her on the other side of the wall and they would go to their normal spot in the middle of the “clock-end” stand.

A favourite story of Mum’s was when she was a young teenager. On a particular match-day Mum had been out and was late home. Granddad decided that she obviously didn’t want to go and decided to leave without her. Mum returned home soon after and was devastated that she was going to miss the match.

Not to be deterred she ran up the road and, having seen Joe disappear into a cab in front of her, managed to get a seat in a taxi with some other fans also going to the match. She eventually got to Highbury, had someone lift her over the wall and made her way to the spot in the ground where her Dad would tend to stand along with the other thousands of fans. She couldn’t spot him at first (no wonder with every bloke dressed the same; suit, flat cap and everyone in black and white!). But, after a crowd surge, she spotted him. She said she always remembered the look on our Granddad’s face when she tapped him on the shoulder and said “Hello Dad”. She saw the entire contents of a Cadburys fruit and nut bar visible from the open mouth that greeted her!

When we were young, Mum would always encourage us to be “proper kids” to play outside as much as possible in the open air. We were always out on our bikes or playing footie in the local playground and parks with our group of mates. We only seemed to return when we were either:

- a) *Starving hungry and Mum would quickly refuel us or*

b) *One of us had fallen off our bikes and Mum would tenderly clean our superficial wounds, quickly stitch up the hole in our jeans before getting us back out there.*

*We loved Mum's food and she always had the ability to rustle something up at very short notice, be it prepping sandwiches for the beach, packed lunches for school or pulling something out of the bag during the frequent power cuts in the 1970s! Being the older Brother, I was allowed to stay up later than Jonathan on a Friday Night. So while he was tucked up in bed (and Dad was down the Pub) I remember sitting with Mum watching BBC sitcoms such as *The Liver Birds*, *Porridge*, *Open All Hours* etc drinking a can of *Shandy Bass* or some other fizzy drink, occasionally downing a favourite bowl of cold custard from the fridge and having a good chat.*

Although it took her 3 attempts to pass her driving test, Mum was a very careful driver, always driving with hands at the perfect 10 to 2 position on the steering wheel and dutifully sticking to the speed limit.

A residing memory for us is when we were on a family holiday in Cornwall driving along a lovely meandering country lane only to be confronted by a Combine Harvester coming the other way straight towards us. Mum slammed on the brakes as the width of this thing was from hedge to hedge and there was nowhere to go. We have hardly ever heard Mum swear but a little expletive may have come out on that occasion. Mum managed to skilfully reverse a few hundred yards back up the lane to a passing point with only a slightly visible quivering cheek and bottom lip as evidence that she was under any pressure. Very impressive!

As most teenagers do, we probably took Mum for granted as she became our personal Taxi Driver, (we now know the feeling only too well!). She ferried us all over the place to our various activities ensuring we were on time. She never complained and always put the family first before her own spare time.

Mum was always fair game for our practical jokes. Taking advantage of her fear of spiders we once hid a huge, black, plastic tarantula-sized spider in the sugar bowl in the kitchen.

Moments later Mum let out a deafening scream followed by an almighty crash of crockery as the plates and cups she was carrying smashed to the kitchen floor as she went flying backwards almost out through the kitchen door in to the garden. She wasn't best pleased so we both blamed each other...always the best policy!

As we grew older we were both fortunate enough to have the chance of experiencing some worldwide travel. This was obviously very exciting for us. At the time it never occurred to us that she might have been a little concerned and anxious. All we got from Mum and Dad was support and encouragement. In return they would get a short scribbled letter every few months or so, (it was well before mobile phones!). When we returned, Mum got on with washing a year's worth of dirty laundry without a moment of complaint.

When we finally grew up and met our partners, Julie and Judith, she warmly welcomed them into the family and was a wonderful Mother-in-Law treating them as if they were both her very own daughters often chatting away for hours. (Since the joke spider incident she often kidded us about wishing she had daughters instead of sons!)

When our own kids came along she guided us into the world of parenting before morphing into "Super-Nanny".

Every Sunday all of us would descend on Mum and Dad's Hatch End home for a glorious roast dinner. Although Mum was cooking for this army of people she always seemed to have time for everyone and played for ages with the grandchildren. She absolutely loved and doted on all of her 5 grandchildren and they wanted to share just a few of their many special memories of Nanny with you. Also Julie, Sam and Abbie would like to say are really sorry they can't be here today in person, but are absolutely here in spirit:

Rosie remembers:

- *Eating porridge with honey with Nanny at the little brown table,*
- *Watching Nanny and Julie talking away in the kitchen usually both talking at the same time, (she thinks this probably taught her how to chat in the first place!)*
- *Helping Nanny to try on her new scarves before Mum and Dad's last holiday*
- *And of course Nanny's scrumptious pies, particularly Blackberry and Apple!!*

Benjamin remembers:

- *Playing with Nanny at the "Shove-ha'penny" game*
- *Recently carrying a giggling Nanny through the stream on Woolacombe beach*

Sam remembers:

- *Playing loads of word-games and crosswords with Nanny, something Rosie also fondly recalls.*

Amy remembers:

- *Nanny taking her swimming always followed by a trip to Pizza Hut*
- *Nanny and Granddad giving a fantastic exhibition jive dancing routine in the living room*

Abbie remembers:

- *Sitting on Nanny's knee on the beach, telling her stories, singing songs and keeping her wrapped up warm while the rest of us were playing games or in the water*

Even in her more recent moments, instead of complaining about her own difficult situation she was always more interested in them and wanted to talk about what was going on in their lives.

Apart from the lovely Roast Dinners, loads of Mum's recipes have been passed down to our families. Both Julie and Judith often prepare "Chicken Casserole a la Cath!" which is still a massive favourite!

Mum was a real trooper right to the end and, even when her Parkinson's had really kicked in and she was feeling poorly, she still made the effort to come out with the family for dinner.

There is not enough time today to tell you all the great stories and fond memories about Mum as it would take forever. For those of you fortunate enough to still have your Mum around. Please take the opportunity soon to give her the biggest hug and tell her she is "The Best Mum in the World".

During our meeting with Kevin, he asked us how we could describe Mum if we only had three words. We found this really difficult as Mum could be described by all the nice buzz words out there. We eventually came up with our three words, "Our Perfect Mum".

You will all have your own memories of Cath. While we now listen to *I Wonder* sung by Dickie Valentine you may want to reflect on what she meant to you personally, perhaps recalling some moments from the past that somehow sum her up for you.

Music: 'I Wonder' – Dickie Valentine.

Although Cath's latter years were affected by her Parkinson's disease, during our time here today we have recalled something of the person that she was for the vast majority of her life. We have said our goodbyes to her with affection and with dignity. You will carry within you personal memories of her. Hold onto those and cherish them. You may find it useful to talk to one another about her from time to time, sharing memories of her.

If you were to ask yourself "What would Cath want me to do now?" I'm pretty certain that the answer would be to engage fully with life and to make the most of each and every day. To do just that would not be a sign that you have forgotten her or that you don't miss her; rather it would be an indication that you reaffirm that life is for living and for loving. That would be a far greater tribute to her than any inscribed plaque or memorial could ever be.

In a moment we will end our celebration of Cath's life with a final piece of music, *Rock Around the Clock* by Bill Haley and His Comets, a song released when Cath was just 15 years old. Before that I would like to read a poem chosen by the family for today. Written by David Harkins, it is entitled *She Is Gone*.

*You can shed tears that she is gone;
Or you can smile because she has lived.*

*You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back;
Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left.*

*Your heart can be empty because you can't see her;
Or you can be full of the love you've shared.*

*You can turn your back on tomorrow and live for yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.*

*You can remember her and only that she's gone
Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.*

*You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what she'd want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.*

Exit Music: 'Rock Around the Clock' - Bill Haley and His Comets