

A celebration of life

Margaret Saunders

25th November 1924 – 10th November 2019

Breckland Crematorium, Scoulton, Norfolk
Tuesday, 26th November 2019

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Margaret was born Margaret Uphill, in Croydon, South London, to parents Sidney and Ellen, and grew up with her older sister Hilda.

Margaret's birth would have been one of many in 1924. For example, it was the same year as Jimmy Carter, Doris Day, and Marlon Brando were born. The world was very different then. There was a failed coup in Estonia, staged by Communists, and Hitler was released from prison, having spent his time there writing *Mein Kampf*. Closer to home, we had two Prime Ministers that year: the Conservative, Stanley Baldwin, and Labour's Ramsay Macdonald.

Like many children in large cities, Margaret's childhood was disrupted by the Second World War, and she was evacuated to near Cromer. Evacuees and their hosts were often astonished to see how each other lived. Some evacuees flourished in their new surroundings. Certainly, Margaret spoke fondly of her time near Cromer, and it may have been this taste of Norfolk that influenced her returning here years later. There is no doubt that Margaret's education was disrupted during this time. She was a talented artist, specialising in charcoal drawings, and we can only guess what she might have achieved if the war hadn't happened.

When it was safe, Margaret returned to London, and, in time, met and married Albert Saunders. They were both members of The Communist Party of Great Britain, which was established in 1920. Margaret considered herself to be a Socialist, and lived by those principles throughout her life. She was, however, an inclusive woman, who respected the views of others, even if different to her own, and did not allow alternative opinions to stand in the way of collaboration or friendship.

Margaret and Albert had three children: Janet, Donald, and Ann. Albert worked as a toolmaker, whilst Margaret looked after the children and the home. Her skills in this area cannot be underestimated. She was talented at sewing, and was a prolific knitter – although the jumpers she knitted for Don tended to have arms longer than was necessary, and were fondly referred to as gorilla sleeves. She always retained her love of drawing. She was in charge of the family finances, and was also good at controlling Albert without him knowing that he was being controlled! These are the skills of a strong woman – a true matriarch.

Margaret was the type of woman who liked to feed people. She always made her own bread and would put the crusts back into the oven ready for her grandchildren, who loved to pop in on their way home from school to drink squash and eat what they called "Granny's Crusts". She spent time making preserves, and her pickled onions were as strong as they could be. Don has memories of her macaroni cheese, and the family remember Margaret's steamed treacle pudding, which would be made with old bed sheets, only sacrificed when they were completely past the point of being usable, cut to the required shape. The pudding would then be served with custard, and was absolutely delicious.

Although the children spent part of their time in Finchley, their parents had always wanted to have a small farm and to be as self-sufficient as possible. They bought a small holding in Rocklands, and, whilst Albert continued to work as an engineer, Margaret threw herself into rural life, looking after the families' chickens and pigs. Margaret became very involved with her local community, and was a keen member of the Women's Institute. She was appointed as delegate, and attended the National Conference in London in a time when many people would rarely leave their local area.

They continued to live in Rocklands, until accepting that farming life was becoming too difficult, so moving to their cottage in Carbrooke. Once again Margaret was involved in her community. She spent time working at the local school as dinner lady and caretaker.

Margaret and Albert were instrumental in establishing the Millennium Green in Carbrooke in the year 2000. It covers 10 acres, and is full of wildlife, trees, and wildflowers. It has a maze, wildlife pond, amphitheatre, and children's play area, as well as walks and trails across the site. It is used by people from within the village and beyond. And that is quite a legacy to leave behind.

Margaret welcomed people into her home, where there would always be people popping in for a chat and knowing that there would be an offer of cake or biscuits. She was a prolific baker, making cakes for village hall events, cycling events, everybody and anybody. Her generosity was not just for those closest to her, but was for her extended family, who she regarded as her own, and for all those around her.

Margaret was a fun person to have in the family, and wasn't scared of laughing at herself. She would have impromptu music sessions with the grandchildren, with a cocoa tin filled with beans for maracas, a Fray Bentos tin and saucepans used as a drum kit, and Margaret playing the comb and paper. Once on a family walk in Yorkshire they were all trekking across a field to the local pub. Margaret got her leg stuck whilst trying to climb over a gate, fell backwards laughing, and continued to laugh even though she had landed hard on her head. She didn't even mind that family song that was made up with the title "Granny got her leg stuck, oh yeah!"

Cycling was a large part of family life. Albert was already a keen cyclist when they met, and Margaret soon embraced this hobby. She did this in spite of an almost fatal accident when she and Albert were cycling in the Yorkshire Dales. Margaret hit a corner too hard, came off her bike, and was seriously injured. Undeterred, they continued with this love of cycling for many years. At one point, Albert had a triplet bike, with him at the front, Don and Janet on the back, and Ann in a side car.

As time went by, Margaret and Albert became involved in the organising side of the sport. They were committee members of the Road Time Trials Council for the Eastern District, and ran the events, being responsible for monitoring entrants and everything else that went along with it. Cyclists would often stop off at Margaret's home, knowing that there would be a piece of cake waiting for them.

Following the death of Albert in 2008, Margaret continued to live in Thatched Cottage, with support from her family. She remained strong and active, often walking her dog across the fen, and spending time sketching. Her body did not let her down. Even after fracturing a hip and being at the point of death several times, Margaret always rallied. Sadly it was her mind that failed her. It became clear that Margaret needed constant care, and so moved to live in Dorrington House for the last five years of her life. Those of you with knowledge of dementia will know how cruel this condition is, both for the person themselves and for their family, who experience the slow loss of the person they have known, and who actually lose them twice. Because of that Margaret's death was a release. It was her time. She was tired, and she and her family were ready. Margaret died peacefully in her sleep on 10th November 2019.