

A celebration of life

Joyce Pemberton

14th November 1929 – 28th November 2019

17th December 2019, Crownhill Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Joyce Pemberton (1929 - 2019) was born in Derby, on the 14th November, 1929 to Joseph and Hannah Brayshaw. They moved to Blackpool when Joyce was around three. She had a sister, Joan, who was four years older and who died about six weeks before Joyce did.

Joyce went to REVO junior school in Blackpool and then to Tyldesley Secondary School until she was fourteen. She wasn't particularly academic but she loved to read. In those days, Boots the Chemist had private libraries, all over England, and Joyce's mum got her a job in their basement library in Blackpool's town centre where she stayed for four years, taking all the Librarian exams and certificates.

When she was eighteen a young man asked her if the library had any books by a particular author. His name was Frank and he knew full well that the library did have them because he had already read them; he just wanted an excuse to talk to Joyce. He asked her on a date but she wasn't that taken and only went out with him because one of other librarians fancied him and said if Joyce didn't go then she would! Frank, however, went home and told his parents that he'd met the girl he was going to marry.

When Joyce was 22 and Frank was 28, they married at the Holy Cross Church, Blackpool, on the 16th February, exactly nine months to the date of Sue's birth!

Frank was a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals so they set up their first home on the army base at Catterick Camp, at 7 Ypres Lines, where Sue was born.

Frank was in the army for 25 years and the family lived all over the world; France, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore. This life made the family quite adaptable, and they enjoyed trying foreign foods. They were adventurous diners; Sue was regularly taken out to restaurants where she was taught table manners and encouraged to, at least, try new foods. They didn't make her try chicken's feet though; Joyce drew the line at those!

Frank and Joyce had a lovely life; they had staff but Joyce was never one of those women to lord it over them - she never took advantage of her staff and she continued to cook the family meals.

Between Frank's postings abroad, Joyce and Sue would go back to Blackpool to stay with Sue's grandparents while new quarters were allocated and made ready for them.

Frank was very protective of Joyce and took care of everything for her, although this did mean that she didn't learn how to do some of the practical necessities like writing a cheque. They were a very close unit and, through Sue, this family closeness has been passed on to their grandchildren whose family is also very close and supportive of each other to the point where Matt is still firmly in the family loop even though he lives in Australia.

Joyce loved ballroom dancing – especially in the army days. When she and Frank came back to Blackpool they took lessons together and Joyce would shout at him because he'd keep getting the steps wrong! They loved listening to big band music and classical music and Joyce loved watching Songs of Praise, Come Dancing and, more recently, Strictly Come Dancing.

Music was important to Joyce; she had piano lessons from 14 and took exams, she became quite advanced and could transpose music. She was still playing when she met Frank but, after they married and were posted all around the world, she didn't have so much opportunity to play. She did teach her twelve year old daughter, though, which continued until Sue was 15 and decided that it was uncool to have a parent for a teacher, especially one who wouldn't let her out of an evening until she had done her practice. However, Joyce did get her daughter to a point where they could play a duet together.

In the mid-eighties, Frank and Joyce retired to Heysham, just outside Morecambe. They had a lovely life there, great neighbours and great friends. They regularly enjoyed family visits from Sue and Robin and their grandchildren often went to stay.

After Frank died, Joyce remained in their home for 17 years because this was where her life was and her support system with her friends. She was not used to living by herself and not greatly equipped to do so as Frank had always done everything for her. Frank understood this and had set everything up for her; all the letters she needed to send after he died were already written out and addressed, she just had to add dates and details and her signature. Now having to cope with living by herself, Joyce exhibited a steely determination which was very much admired by her daughter. Joyce had a certain amount of pride; if she came unstuck just once, or wasn't absolutely sure she would succeed at something; she would simply refuse to do it. However, after Frank died, she found herself having to ensure the upkeep of their house which involved a certain amount of DIY and gardening. Instead of getting someone in, Joyce just rolled up her sleeves and got on with it— and revealed a truly impressive inner strength in the process.

Joyce was a formidable mum but, then again, she needed to be! Her daughter was rather a bolshie teenager and they didn't really get on at that time. Sue took a certain amount of pleasure in winding her mother up back then. Joyce could be a bit of snob at times and Sue used to rather enjoy reminding her that she started her life in a council house! However, after Frank's death, they went on to enjoy a lovely relationship and Sue really came to appreciate the rod of steel that ran quietly through her mum.

Sue has chosen a reading for her mum; it's called *Two Mothers Remembered* and it's by Joann Snow Duncanson

To Joyce's friends, she was a sociable, relatively quiet and rather feisty lady. It was they who began to notice that things weren't right with her. Sue would receive concerned phone calls from them, worried that their friend wasn't quite looking after herself as she should be; just little things at first, like going shopping but not buying anything. Then the little things became bigger, more serious things like not eating.

Then, on one of her trips down to Stony to stay with Sue and Robin, it became clear that she really shouldn't return home to live by herself. Robin suggested that she stay with them in Stony and, thankfully, Joyce replied, "yes please, I don't really want to go back!" Joyce lived with Robin and Sue for four years before it became clear that she needed additional care. A place was found for her at Highclere Nursing Home where she was very happy and where she met Eileen and Jean - they became great friends, keeping each other company every day and known affectionately as the three amigos.

Lou and Paul visited their Nan often to make sure she was being looked after. Sue and Robin kept in regular in touch with her carers and also visited her often. Sue made a life-book for her mum, full of photographs from all through her life with captions to remind her of the details. Joyce turned ninety this year and Sue came down to celebrate with her and the photos and cards of that occasion were the final entries in Joyce's book.

Two weeks after her birthday, Joyce developed a chest infection and things moved very quickly. Sue was informed on Tuesday the 26th and then told, the next day, that Joyce would be put on antibiotics. Lou went to see her Nan that evening, read her poetry and heard her sing. On Thursday, it was clear that Joyce was not going to respond to treatment and Sue received the call to make the journey to Milton Keynes. Unfortunately, traffic was terrible and Joyce died before she and Robin got there. Joyce didn't know her family weren't there though and she was not alone; Violetta sat with her to hold her hand and pay witness to her last breaths. Sue and her family are very grateful for the kindness and caring attention of the staff at Highclere.

Joyce's grandsons, Matt and Paul have each written some words in memory of their Nan.

Matt's Tribute

I've been thinking about what I'd like said. I don't think reciting a few memories really explains how I feel, as they are just snapshots rather than lengthy occasions. I don't know; this is like writing an epitaph - it's the full stop at the end of a long life, with all the struggles, joys and experiences that go with it, the closing of a book, and everything I've thought of today seems trite or insignificant in the face of that enormity. How do I describe what nan (and grandad) meant to me without a month of introspection? To try and knock up a paragraph in the space of a day to sum up a person and their life seems somehow insulting to her efforts over all those years but I'll give it some thought.

I remember sitting at the table in Heysham for dinner, the tableware and the manners she taught us, the blue stool in the kitchen in Blackpool which she used to stand on to get the blue and white biscuit tin down, the Lego she and grandad bought for me one time, playing an arcade game called 1942 at Blackpool pleasure beach with Nan feeding me 10p's out of her purse, building sandcastles and being handed little paper flags to put on it - it's all little bits and pieces which, individually, don't mean much but, collectively, put together significant a part of my life which, with her passing, is now irrevocably gone. While she was with us, the door was still open, but it is now closed for good. I miss it and wish I could go back to those times with the knowledge I have now and savour it in a way which I didn't then.

You know, grandad used to wear Brut 88 aftershave, I have a bottle of it in the bathroom cabinet and smell it whenever I'm feeling a bit emotional or twitchy as it calms me down - I don't wear it 'cos Tam hates it, but it's little things like that, the way in which the people they were and the things they did intertwine with my life and echo on through the years after they've gone - how do I explain all that?

Paul's Tribute

My early memories of us together are fond, fun filled ones: playing at a park on a ride that had a dragon's head; feeding apples to the horses - you showing me it was safe to place them on my palm without the horse biting my fingers off; coming to visit you in that holiday home that actually was your home - as a kid I thought it was cool but as I got older it didn't seem as appealing. Walking around the power stations was always fun, it had a small sense of danger to it - both myself and Matt itching to throw stones in there. I remember coming up to stay with you and grandad and you presented me with an entire tub of Gino Ginelli ice cream, and informed me that it was all mine, to my excitement until I realised I didn't like the flavour and felt gutted for the rest of the week.

One of my strongest memories of you would be in the form of Oscar the Giraffe who was always standing tall upon his stand by the fireplace. Mum would always tell me the same story, and I took great pleasure in watching her bore the girls with it, about how when you moved her job would be to carry Oscar under her arm...

As I got older and found my own way in life, our relationship changed; I loved you but I didn't like you. Whenever you came down you were like the annoying old woman who was just out to cause trouble and stir things up with your wooden spoon. The story of my school trousers being found is a prime example of this...

The classic memory I have of you and grandad is in the form of a picture of you both dancing together looking radiant and happy with your lovely hair but for the last twenty years of your life you had that stupid quiff which we all hated.

Two of my fondest memories of you were introducing both of my daughters to you; watching the silent passing of knowledge from one generation to another.

The later part of our life was a quieter affair with the slow progression of dementia bringing about frustration, anger and pain. From the slow shuffle of your walker to the main room where you liked to sit with your two friends, whose names I can't remember, to you quiet and comfy lying in your bed.

I always wondered why you never grew your hair as from that previous photo I mentioned it looked lovely. Several months ago, I popped into see you and there it was, the longest hair I'd ever seen on you, and I knew it would make you look so much more lady like.

Our last meeting was late at night, I was working and I was at Highclere on a job. As I always did, I popped in to see you but on this occasion you were fast asleep. I gave you a gentle hug and a kiss on the forehead; for me, the perfect goodbye. Thank you Nan, for passing down the values and morals that mum chose to pass onto me.

I will always remember you as being very gentle and the only woman in the world to claim she has never been drunk!

Joyce Pemberton died at one o'clock on the 28th of November, 2019, at the age of ninety, having lived a great life full of love for, and from, her family; daughter Sue, grandchildren James, Andrea, Matt and Paul, and great-grandchildren Erin, Libby-Rose, Isaac and Evie-Lou.