

A celebration of life

Leah Everitt

14th December 1932 – 20th February 2020

Cromer Crematorium, Wednesday, 11th March 2020

Murrell Cork Funeral Directors, North Walsham

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Many things have happened since 1932. By coincidence, just like 2020, 1932 was also a leap year. It was the year that Johnny Cash was born. The Sydney Harbour Bridge opened in Australia. Cromer and District Hospital opened in the suburb of Suffield Park, and a baby called Leah was born there, to George and Leah Nash. Leah was an only child, whose Dad was a plumbing engineer, and whose Mum was a housekeeper at Colne House Hotel.

Leah was Cromer born and bred. Most of her life was spent in and around the town, and, as a result, she was known to many people, and was related to many of them, too. She left Cromer School at fourteen, and trained to become a shorthand typist, subsequently working at the local Allan's garage, where she was in charge of administration and office accounts.

Leah and Philip Jack Everitt (who was better known as Rocky) had known each other since they were children, and they were married in 1952. The couple had four children: Sandra, Philip, Mitzi-Jane, and Steven. Leah's two remaining children, Sandra and Steve, are here today to say goodbye to their Mum.

She also had eleven grandchildren, and many, many great grandchildren. And this means that the ripples from Leah's life will continue through these generations, in generations to come, and why, if you continue to talk about her, Leah will never be forgotten.

Leah was just about four feet eleven inches tall, but she was certainly in charge and she packed all of life into her tiny frame. She knew how to work, and she knew how to play. Even when the children were young, she worked hard at jobs on a local mushroom farm, she cleaned at Cromer High School, and had probably, at one time or another, worked in most bars and hotels within a ten mile radius of the centre of town.

Leah was a grafter. But the money she earned, whilst being needed and welcome, was also for extras, such as going out dancing. Every Saturday night, Leah and Rocky would go out somewhere, often a dinner dance, where they would spend the evening dancing Rock and Roll. Leah was well known for taking her time to get ready. How she looked was very important. Lipstick was always applied before she would even consider answering the front door. Rocky often told how he wore a groove in the hall carpet as he paced up and down waiting for Leah to appear for a night out. She would eventually emerge looking just lovely. They would head off to various places including The Alex, where Leah would dance the night away with the odd break for a glass of sherry or a snowball or a Cherry B or, maybe, a Guinness. Or two...

Leah was good at roller-skating, and regularly went to the rink in Garden Street until it closed down. Her small frame made her a popular partner for being thrown around the rink. Even having children didn't stop Leah from getting out and about – she just took them with her. Leah was good fun, people liked her, but, although she enjoyed a laugh, she didn't really "get" jokes, and preferred the slap-stick comedy of the Carry On films.

Although the family never had their own dog, Leah seemed to be determined to look after other people's dogs. If dogs like Remo or Satan had to be left at their home, even for an hour, Leah would find an excuse to go and get them; to walk them, to give them treats, or just to enjoy their company. And, of course, she had a special place in her heart for Steven's dog, Suzi, who could often be found at Leah's house, even if Steven had just "popped out".

Sandra and Steve remember their Mum as being full of energy. She cooked their favourite chocolate cakes covered in hundreds and thousands. Her beef and onion pies were just delicious.

Whole summers were spent on Cromer beach. Leah knew how lucky she was to live in Cromer, and made every day count. Why would you want to go on holiday somewhere else when you lived in Cromer? Each day she would head there to her beach hut, get it ready for everybody and anybody, and having set up the wind-shields would soon be joined by family, friends, and neighbours. People like Maud, Joan from Watford, and Mrs Swain with her children all shared these times. Good weather was spent outside, and if bad weather arrived they would all head into the beach hut. Food was eaten, games were played, laughter was loud, and memories were made.

In later years, Leah was forced to slow down a little when Rocky's health became poor. She swapped her knitting needles for a typewriter. He often joked that he had exchanged the sound of clacking knitting needles for the clacking of a typewriter instead. Leah didn't stick with a typewriter though. She moved onto a word processor, and then onto a computer, and was completely undaunted by technology, sending e-mails when she was in her eighties. This slower pace of life meant that Leah could start to explore her gift for writing. One of the challenges for her family was to choose one of her poems for today's ceremony from the many that she wrote.

But slowing down did not mean stopping for Leah. She and Rocky would head into town, him on his mobility scooter and her jogging along by his side. Her life obviously changed following the death of her husband, but Leah continued to get out and about, sometimes to the local social club and sometimes pushed in a wheelchair by Sandra on a Friday to meet with friends for a chat and for a coffee (with brandy, of course).

Leah Everitt did not get tired of life. It remained her ambition to win the lottery, and we can only imagine what adventures might have happened if she had hit the jackpot.

Leah's world was small; Cromer was her universe. Leah herself was small. But Leah's life was big. She packed so many experiences and memories into her eighty-seven years. I think we could all learn a lot from Leah Everitt.

It would appear that Leah's daughter, Sandra, inherited some of her Mum's talent for writing. Sandra wrote the next poem for Leah, and gave it to her for her eightieth birthday. She then changed it slightly after Leah had died, so that we could listen to it today.

POEM: Mum by Sandra Paice

She used to go roller skating, until the rink closed down,
No-one could skate as good as her, as she'd twist and turn around.
She knitted and she crocheted, scarves and jumpers, cardis too.
With patterns and with pictures, lovely colours she used too.
She used to go out dancing, and dance the night away,
She never, ever did believe life should be all work; no play.
Poor Rocky, she looked after when his health was getting bad.
She wouldn't accept outside help; no wonder her back was bad.
She wrote a lot of poems, and books; wrote two or three,
But never got them printed. She tried so hard you see.
Mum liked going to the shops, her friends she often saw.
Then popping into the social club; for a coffee and sometimes more (Brandy)

She hadn't been too good herself, but Suzy kept her company.
She liked to get her little treats; Mum loved the dog you see.
Mum was getting much more poorly as the years they went along.
She didn't walk too far, her heart just wasn't strong.
She went into the hospital, once, twice things were quite bad.
They moved her to a nursing home; the most care she's ever had.
She'd never wanted help like that; at Halvergate they were so kind.
They treated her so very well, in the end she didn't mind.

We have heard about Leah's talent for poetry and her love of Cromer. This next poem was written by Leah in 1973, when she was about fifty-three years' old.

POEM: Ode To A Beach Hut by Leah Everitt

My beach hut was a canvas one,
Hired yearly from Shrimp the fisherman.
I was born in Cromer by the Sea,
And was always so happy and felt so free.
I sunbathed avidly to get a tan,
And cooked loads of sausages in a pan.
Made pots and pots of piping hot tea
And of course this was all for free.
For all my friends and visitors who
Came every year hoping to share
The fun and games and laughter too.
Early in the morning I went down to the beach,
To put up my windshields nice and neat.
Locked up the hut then went into town,
To do some shopping and walk the Hound.
Back down on the beach I'd have a quiet swim
Before all my friends came to make a din.
Us locals put all of our windshields together
In a nice large circle with deck chairs and tables.
Ever so smart, people came by and stared in surprise

At thirty two people all sitting together
Knitting, playing cards, whatever the weather.
From early morning till late at night
Our small community shared much delight.
We told many yarns and lots of jokes
Sometimes we even got sore throats.
When it turned cold and the chill wind blew
Or the rain came down in a sudden squall;
We got into the hut, it was lovely and cosy
We sat on chairs and closed the door.
Packed in tight til there was no more room
We were warm and smug and very snug.
Oh how popular you are when you live by the sea
With a beach hut you'll always have company.