

# A celebration of life

## Marilyn Dorothy

## Mounstephens

26 January 1950 – 22 September 2019

10.30 am, 14 October 2019, Taunton Deane Crematorium

*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

Humanists UK is a registered charity no. 285987 and limited company no. 228781 in England and Wales. Humanists UK, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V8BB, 020 7324 3060

---

# **Marilyn Dorothy Mountstephens**

**26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019**

## **Tributes to Marilyn**

Marilyn was the heart of her large and loving family, someone to turn to for advice and a good person to share good news with – she delighted in the happiness and success of others. She was a warm home builder, literally and metaphorically and welcomed relatives and friends with joy and generosity: a safe port in a storm and good company.

Here is Lily-Mae with her own poem for her grandmother.

### **A Poem for Grandma**

By Lily-Mae Mountstephens

My dearest grandma,  
You encouraged my creativity,  
Acknowledged my ability,  
Gave me the courage and strength to succeed.

You were always doing good deeds  
In times of need.  
I cherish your phrases,  
Funny sayings and silly faces.

You mended my wounds  
Through love and laughter.  
Here you will stay in my heart,  
Happily ever after.

Marilyn was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, to parents Cathy and Dennis, and was the third in a family of four sisters. Dennis came from Bridgwater and met Cathy in South Africa when stationed there, with the RAF, during World War II. Marilyn was a bit of a tomboy as a child and this developed into a sense of adventure in adulthood. As a young woman she left South Africa for England on the final voyage of The Southern Cross from Australia via Capetown, to Southampton. Legend has it that Marilyn stood on deck, crying and waving

goodbye to her parents, until a large Australian put his arm around her and suggested they go and have a drink – she was alright after that.

In England Marilyn headed for her uncle's pub in Merriott and worked there for a while before moving on to secretarial work at Westland. Significantly, Westland wasn't far from the Yeovilton Royal Navy Air Station where there were frequent parties in the Officers' Mess, which Marilyn and her friend Jeanette made the most of. Jeanette – famous for her version of the five skin-divers joke – I'm sure she'll tell you more, later on.

In 1973 Terry stopped to fuel up his works van and was served by a petrol attendant in thigh high white lace-up boots and suede hotpants. I expect he barely noticed, but he did recognise her when they met again, a little while later, in Taunton's Winchester Arms. He asked if she was Swedish, to which she replied that she was a 'Joey Chick'. Terry asked her for a date, only to learn that she was about to head off to America to marry her fiancé. Happily for him and not long afterwards, she rang him to say she was back and asked if they could meet up. That was 46 years ago, during which time they have enjoyed a long, loving and happy marriage, had three children and seven grand-children.

This is an active, sporting and outdoorsy family that enjoys camping, water and snow-skiing, white water rafting, canoeing, caving and more. All this was new to Marilyn in the early days of her relationship with Terry. The first time he took her water skiing he had only a short-sleeved wetsuit to lend her and says it took five hours to warm her up afterwards. The family enjoyed many holidays in France, including caravan holidays in Saumur on the Loire where excellent sparkling wine is made. Marilyn was very fond of sparkling wine – apparently she drank a lot of it at Christmas.

Christmas was the highlight of the year for Marilyn. She was brilliant at organising family occasions, including her children's weddings, loved everything about Christmas and always had a colour-co-ordinated Christmas tree.

A skilled and creative seamstress, knitter and craftswoman, Marilyn made her children's clothes, their costumes for school events, fancy dress party costumes for herself and Terry, and their home is full of the beautiful things she made. Marilyn met regularly with Steph, Joan and Kate, her crafting friends. Her family say she couldn't sit still and always had a project on the go.

Here is friend Tony – aka the bandit – to share his memories of Marilyn.

## **Tony Taylor**

Good Morning.

We all have lots of friends and acquaintances. But I believe we all could probably count on one hand the number of really true dear friends that we have in our lifetime.

Marilyn fell into that category for Sadie and myself.

Marilyn did not suffer fools easily and always spoke her mind. She always called a spade a spade and sometimes she called a spade a shovel. That was probably when the South African blood began to boil.

Marilyn had a wonderful gift for the arts and crafts and many of her beautiful creations can be seen in and around her home, her use of colour reflecting her love of nature. She was a keen gardener and gleaned great enjoyment from being creative.

She was full of fun, generous, with a great sense of humour. Her smile was warm her character colourful.

All that aside, her family was everything to her. She loved her children as much as any mother could and she adored all of her grandchildren in exactly the same way.

We had some great times out and some really good fun holidays together. During those many trips abroad, the girls would spend as much time shopping as they did sight-seeing. Which would result in Terry and I being dragged kicking and screaming and forced to sit in a bar drinking vast amounts of beer and wine whilst waiting for them to finish in the shops.

I once said to Terry that Sadie had A levels in shopping, he replied well Marilyn must have a degree.

Marilyn will be sadly missed by all those whose life she touched especially by Sadie and myself.



Terry said to me that he wants you all to know what an exciting person Marilyn was, that she was so full of life, love and fun, and what a great sense of humour she had. Get him to tell you later about when Marilyn dared him to streak across a campsite with her, and how she hid under the caravan while he had to streak back to the car for the caravan keys. Natalie will tell you about Marilyn being the only person to get kicked out of the Glastonbury Magic Wand shop.

Here is Natalie to pay tribute to her Mum. She is followed by Heather, with her poem of goodbye for her sister.

## **Natalie**

From 'Fahrenheit 451', by Ray Bradbury

'Everyone must leave something behind when he dies, my grandfather said. A child or a book or a painting or a house or a wall built or a pair of shoes made. Or a garden planted. Something your hand touched some way so your soul has somewhere to go when you die, and when people look at that tree or that flower you planted, you're there. It doesn't matter what you do, he said, as long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that's like you after you take your hand away.'

My funny, generous, warm-hearted mum, you definitely did this. You made an impact on everyone that met you. If I walk into any room in my home or the home you shared with dad I can touch something that your hands have touched. Every room adorned with your beautiful creations, crafted with love.

You taught us to explore our creativity and have left your life's work and crafting collection to be enjoyed by your children and grandchildren. You taught us to love nature and being outdoors, creating beautiful gardens and happy memories of holidays spent camping. But most of all you have taught us to be kind and compassionate towards others and that the only thing that really matters is love. The love you radiated was felt in every corner of our lives.

Mum you touched the hearts of everyone who knew you. You have left a lasting legacy for all of us. You taught us to be individuals, creative free spirits, and to give and receive love that crosses time and space. Our bond cannot be broken, even in death. As Albert Einstein said, “Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only be changed from one form to another.”

To us you have not died but simply transformed. Laura wanted to add that it’s because of this love she is not heartbroken, despite her sadness. In fact her heart is bigger now to allow space for you to reside. To be heartbroken would now be reckless.



## **Totsiens** **(Africaans for goodbye)**

by Heather

Goodbye my beautiful creative sister.  
Embellish the wings that you now wear.  
Sew on the bling with beads and tassels,  
Colour the tips with glitter and dazzle.  
Sparkle the skies with butterfly eyes.  
Thread up a shawl with cobweb silk.  
Wear acorn crowns and a lavender gown,  
Braid your hair in autumn hues,  
Berries and teasles and harebells blue.  
Goodbye my beautiful creative sister.



Marilyn's love for her family was unconditional. She would probably understand their terrible sadness but would not want those she loved to be in pain. She will be sorely, sorely missed. Here is grandson James with a reading which gives expression to that sentiment.

### **From 'No Matter What', by Debi Gliori**

Read by James

"Does love wear out?" said Small, "Does it break or bend? Can you fix it, stick it, does it mend?"

"Oh help", said Large. "I'm not that clever. I just know I'll love you forever."

Small said: "But what about when you're dead and gone – would you love me then, does love go on?"

"Small, look at the stars – how they shine and glow. Yet some of those stars dies a long time ago. Still they shine in the evening skies...love, like starlight, never dies."



### **Andrew**

On behalf of Mum I would just like to say thank you to her family and friends who have been a massive support since Mum received her diagnosis. Mum had so many people reach out to her, sending their best wishes, catching up with her on social media, sending flowers and thoughtful gifts. Many people visited Mum at home and during her time at St Margaret's. At times there was a constant stream of people, crafting, chatting, laughing and smiling and reminiscing. All of these little gestures of kindness meant a huge amount to Mum. Thank you to you all for making her feel so loved.

It is difficult to put into words just how thankful we are for the care and support offered by the wonderful staff at St Margaret's Hospice. You made her laugh and always had time to chat and you held her hand when she was frightened and unable to sleep during some of her most difficult days. There are too many to thank individually but I offer you our sincerest gratitude for the work you do; we are very lucky to have a facility like this in Taunton.

A final and particular thanks must go to mum's niece Heidi, her husband Daryll and their son Anthony who run Somerset Willow for a wonderful job on the coffin. Mum had a very specific set of instructions and you have done an amazing job. Thank you in particular to Daryll for volunteering your skill in hand making the coffin.

Mum died knowing that she was loved and was surrounded by people that were very dear to her. For me that is the greatest gift you can give and its of huge comfort that I could be there for her in what has been the hardest year of my life.

Golden butterfly I can but wonder  
Where you've been since last we met  
Once you fluttered by my shoulder  
Swift about your careful craft.

I think back to those hazy summers  
When you kept us close and safe  
Spellbound by your smiling laughter  
The sun was out, the cold could wait.

The hours were always ours to squander  
Caught up in our clever games  
A love that's constant fosters courage  
You gave us that and so much more.

We did not feel the seasons change  
Your fragile wings the fates had touched  
Bound to head towards the sunlight  
South to chase the shifting sun.

Too soon they came and swept you from us  
I feel your touch around me still  
we'll look for you upon the morning  
and feel you in the gentle breeze.

To finish I would just like to read a small extract from the last letter I wrote to Mum when she was staying at St Margaret's.

Felicity recently told me that you were always the fearless one of the family as a young girl in South Africa and that is how I will always think of you. Running around wild on the koppie, with one sock up and one sock down, bossing the local boys around, picking up stray cats to bring home and firing catapults and air guns with reckless abandon.

“My mum is magic and I know because she made Lego men come out of my ear.”

Thank you for the memories Mummo

You are, and will always be, the best mother I could have wished for.