

A celebration of the life of Pat Berry

5 May 1927 – 12 November 2020

10.00am Monday 23 November 2020 Hendon Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

We're here today to remember and to celebrate the life of Pat Berry, who has died at the age of 93, and that's a long, long time. In those years she saw many changes in just about everything you can think of – from food to clothes, from transport to technology. She lived through war, and she lived through peace. And through it all, she had a close, loving family that she loved dearly, and who thought the world of her.

Pat wasn't religious, and so this will be a simple Humanist ceremony, looking back over her life, thinking about some of the things she did and what she was like. There'll be music, specially chosen for her, and so we started with the *Adagio* from Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, a gentle piece of music that was also played at Simon's funeral in 2013. Jane has chosen two poems to include, and she has written an outline of Pat's life as well. So Pat is at the heart of this ceremony, and I hope that this time together, thinking about her and what she meant to you, will bring some comfort.

We are all on the same journey through life: we are born, we live, and we will die – we just don't know when. We are all at different stages on the way, and that endless circle of life keeps turning. Pat was the last of her generation, so her death marks the end of an era. At the same time, it gave her great pleasure to see her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren growing up and living their lives, and to know that there's another great-granddaughter on the way – and so life goes on.

The first reading, which sums up the value of every life, is taken from the poem 'People', by Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

*No people are uninteresting.
Their fate is like the chronicle of planets.*

*Nothing in them is not particular,
And planet dissimilar from planet.*

*And if a man lived in obscurity
making his friends in that obscurity
obscurity is not uninteresting.*

To each his world is private, and in that world one excellent minute.

*And in that world one tragic minute,
These are private.*

*In any man who dies there dies with him
his first snow and kiss and fight.
It goes with him.*

*They are left books and bridges and painted canvas and machinery.
Whose fate is to survive.
But what has gone is also not nothing:*

*By the rule of the game something has gone.
Not people die but worlds die in them.*

Let's take some time now to look back at Pat's life.

'Kind, mischievous, twinkle, strong, determined, loving' – these are some of the words people have used to describe Pat.

Born in Sunderland in 1927, Pat had a happy childhood with her sister Celia and brother Len, who were named after their parents: their mother Celia and father Leonard, who worked as a French polisher.

Living next to the sea, Pat and her family would spend many happy hours playing along the coast, walking and cycling for miles. In those days the children would just go off on their own to play for hours at a time, so there was a great sense of freedom. If she wasn't at the coast Pat could be found at the allotment with her dad, and she often talked about how she'd sit in the shed doing her homework.

Pat was exceptionally clever, and passed her 11+ with flying colours. In fact she did so well that the Director of Education visited her parents to tell them that she was so talented that she *must* take up her place, and after some sacrifice from her parents, she attended Bede grammar school. Money was tight, and they could only afford one school uniform for her, which she had to wear all through her school days. She thrived there, that is until her final week, when she was stripped of her role as head girl for playing truant to have tea with her friend! She always had an independent spirit!

She was 12 when war broke out, and she remembered that during bombing raids the family would have to go into the air raid shelters at the end of the garden. One day when Sunderland was bombed, school was closed and the children were sent home early. Pat decided she'd walk home to save the penny bus fare, and it was a long walk. By the time she got home, her family was frantic with worry about her. Their house suffered some bomb damage as well, so the uncertainty of war overshadowed her years at school.

Pat always loved sport, and she trained at Langham Tower in Sunderland to become a teacher, teaching netball, swimming, games, dance, and PE. She was also a netball referee, and had lifeguard qualifications.

It was while she was walking her class to the local swimming pool that she caught the eye of Simon Berry, who described her as a 'beautiful, vibrant woman, who stood out from the crowd'. For him, it was love at first sight, and it only took Pat a little longer to reciprocate. The two families were particularly close, because Simon's brother John married Pat's sister, Celia.

Pat and Simon courted for five years, during which time Pat's father always made sure to send Simon home at 10 o'clock! They were married in 1949, and spent 64 happy years together, Totally devoted to each other, they lived their lives to the full, and were overjoyed when Jane was born.

Jane describes Pat as a 'fantastic, loving, and exciting' mother, full of energy, enthusiasm and imagination. She set firm boundaries, but she was always caring and supportive.

These were qualities that Pat also brought to her teaching, where she was very well respected. After teaching Secondary pupils, she decided to teach in Primary Schools, enjoying this just as much as she had Secondary. Always a bit subversive, she continued to teach phonics when it was very much out of favour with the establishment. Now it is compulsory.

Around this time, there was a growing intake of Muslim children, and Pat was made an honorary man so that she would be permitted to talk to the men about their children and their progress at school. On her 87th birthday she received a birthday card from an ex-pupil, one of those Muslim children, whom she had taught 50 years earlier, and who described her as the best teacher he had ever had, such was her impact on people.

She never lost her enthusiasm for life, taking an active part in many activities, joining the local history group, taking part in an archaeological dig, helping run the Red Cross T-bar in the local hospital, joining the wildfowl and wetlands trust. She enjoyed yoga, drawing, painting, tapestry, birdwatching, history - she could recite all the Kings a queens of England in order, as well as tell you what they did - and she made the best egg and tomato sandwiches ever!

Pat and Simon travelled all over the country, enjoying holidays in every part of the UK. Pat researched every destination and made the most of every moment. They'd visit museums, castles, National Trust properties, and she was always knowledgeable, interested and interesting about the places they saw.

Then there were the happy family holidays with Jane, Tony, Simon, Katie and James, Lyme Regis being a favourite memory, full of laughter and fun. It's a place the family have returned to regularly ever since.

Simon's unexpected death in 2013 was a difficult time, but even when she was recently widowed and deeply sad, Pat was determined to come to London and embrace a whole new range of experiences with Jane, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She joined Finchley Victoria bowling and croquet club with Jane, and made many new friends there. She and Tim could often be found watching and critiquing the bowling. She was never one to mince her words, so Jane always knew if she had played well or not.

Pat loved and adored all her family: nothing gave her more pleasure than a hug from her grandchildren, or hearing Zara and Leo laugh and play, and she could often be found crawling around the floor playing toy cars with Leo.

In Jane's words:

In short Pat was the most wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and friend, anyone could wish for. She leaves a hole in our hearts but many happy memories also.

And her final words 'it's a lovely day go, out and enjoy it'

We'll take a little time now for reflection, time for your own thoughts, and we'll have some music, the gentle and peaceful – 'A Gaelic Blessing', sung by The Cambridge Singers.



Over the last seven and a half years, Pat has lived with Jane, and though it hasn't always been easy, as Pat needed increasing care, they were both very happy, and were always good friends as well as mother and daughter. Pat loved nothing better than to have her family around her.

She enjoyed being out in the garden, and would often spend hours in the little summerhouse. During lockdown earlier this year, when we had those endless warm days, Pat and Jane spent many happy hours in the garden.

On October 10th, Pat had to go into Barnet hospital after she had a fall, and her condition deteriorated over the following weeks, following her replacement hip operation. Because of the Covid restrictions she wasn't allowed visitors, and that was very hard. The hospital staff were very kind, and one nurse, Danielle, used her own phone to allow Pat and Jane to speak by Facetime. Eventually, however, Jane was able to go in and see her, and was able to spend some time with her, and tell her how much she was loved by the whole family.

Our second reading today is taken from 'The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam', translated by Edward Fitzgerald.

*It is all a chequerboard of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:
Hither and thither moves, and mates and slays.
And one by one back in the Closet lays.*

*The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all - He knows - HE knows!*

*The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.*

Today we've remembered the life of Pat Berry. It was a long life, full of friends and family, of work and enjoyment, of kindness and a genuine interest in others. She taught so many children, and we'll never know how many of them still think about her with affection, and are grateful still for her support and concern for them. And she was a loving daughter and sister, a wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She was a friend, a neighbour, a teacher, a netball referee and a bird watcher. She loved life, she enjoyed life, and she spread that spirit of enjoyment around her. You were so lucky to know her.