

# A celebration of life

## Lisa Jane Birks

20<sup>th</sup> August 1974 - 18<sup>th</sup> January 2020

15.40, Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Southend 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

## **The Tribute**

Lisa was born to parents John and Margaret; very sadly her mother died when Lisa was only 5 years of age. After this time John looked after Lisa, she then needed more care, so her grandparents and Auntie Doll stepped in as she got older. Lisa was a lively, chatty girl and always a great smiler. She enjoyed camping trips to Wales and Worcester but could always find a new friend to go off and play with rather than putting up tents (not her favourite activity). She was brought up in the Hullbridge and Thundersley areas and went to Deanes secondary school.

As a child she joined the Hadleigh Marching Militaire where she played clarinet and twirled the baton. John remembers a lot of weekends going to different venues with Lisa and the Militaire. She even joined them on their tour in Switzerland. She thoroughly enjoyed the band and was especially fond of twirling the baton. Apparently, she retained this skill into adult life and enjoyed showing off her skills with household utensils, pens etc.

When Lisa was 16 years of age, she stated working at The Royals food court, in a sweet shop. She became great friends with Kim, Chris's sister. Kim played cupid to Chris and Lisa and with the additional enticement of the free sweets Lisa gave him it was inevitable that they would become a couple. They fell in love quickly and such was their certainty in the relationship that Lisa had moved in with Chris within 3 days. Chris and Lisa were married for 26 years. The family was completed with the birth of their son Ryan in September 1992.

Sadly, her health started to deteriorate when Ryan was only a baby, she was unable to continue working; she had enjoyed work as a carer in a care home for the elderly.

The family were able to join in Lisa's passion for the countryside and animals. They were particularly fond of fruit picking trips to Tiptree in exchange for staying on the farm.

They also loved their annual stay in Norfolk at Rod and Judy's house; a perfect get away and chance to study nature. From the age of about eight years Ryan loved to go fishing with Chris and Lisa. This was an activity that Lisa could participate in with Chris and Ryan on an equal basis despite her physical limitations. She was not apparently the greatest fisherwoman but found the activity mindful.

Lisa loved animals and owned many pets from dogs, cats, iguanas and other reptiles. She would always want to include a trip to a local zoo or nearest farm on any holiday. She even went to Tropical Wings, at her request, on her 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Her caring and compassionate nature was obvious in the way she cared for her animals and the love they reciprocated.

She adored children and although her illness limited her ability to extend her family, she always took a keen interest in her friends' children and related well to them.

Lisa really battled with adversity with her chronic and progressive illness; she had to pace all her activities and knew that if she went out one day she would be exhausted for several days after this. She had a stubbornness and a willingness to enjoy life. She would take up any opportunity and this was best exemplified in her attitude to her treatment. She was very grateful for the treatment she received at the Royal Free Hospital and willing to try whatever they offered even if she might not directly benefit herself. She would agree to trial treatments so that others might be helped. Ryan is very grateful for their care as if it hadn't been for this, he would not have had Lisa through his childhood helping and motivating him.

No matter how much pain or discomfort she was in she would always be interested in how other people were. She didn't like to complain and always responded to any enquiry about her health with "I'm fine". She was stubborn and would not ask for help; Lisa cherished

her independence. It could be frustrating for Chris at times to be held back from helping her with things.

The difficulties that her illness presented meant she could be limited in going out socially. Lisa would make any visitor very welcome to her home and many of Ryan's friends benefitted from her kindness and hospitality. She became a "second mum" to some of them. The friends she had were "real ones" who understood her need to pace activities and manage her condition.

She enjoyed her life as much as she could. Simple things like going out for a drive, visiting family and attending family events were very important to her. A favourite was a trip to Rossi's with John, Lyn, Ryan and Chris for her favourite Lemon ice cream. This would be a chance for her to dress up and don her favourite colour purple, reflected in Chris, Ryan and family's clothes choice today. Her weekly telephone conversations with her Dad and Lyn became a great source of support to her and she looked forward to them.

Lisa loved "an event" from watching the sunrise at the millennium and very recently going to the pantomime with Beryl and meeting members of Diversity!

Lisa didn't like formality and she loved her fluffy pyjamas Chris commented that she probably had enough pairs to wear a new pair every day for several months. She found them easy to wear, comfortable and cosy; they would frequently be worn whilst holding her beloved unicorn hot water bottle.

Lisa was not expected to live as long as she did, and it is testament to her courage and defiance that she defied her life expectancy. She used the time she had well and grasped the opportunities that her illness allowed.

Chris and Ryan have chosen this poem for Lisa

**The Book - by Paul Meadows**

Go to the place we loved, our secret place.

Close your eyes and you'll see my face.

Play that tune, the tune we loved to hear.

Close your eyes and you'll see me clear

Walk on a beach or climb to the top of a hill.

Close your eyes and you'll hear me still.

Take a sip of wine, of dark red wine.

Close your eyes and you'll see me fine.

At night go out and look at the Brightest star.

Close your eyes and you'll see me near.

Take down a book that would have been my choice. Open the book.

Close your eyes. You'll hear my voice.