

A celebration of life Joan Louise Luffman

20 February 1927 – 20 August 2017

2.30 pm, 05 September 2017, Croesyceiliog Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Tribute

Joan was born at 12 Ambleside, Tal y Wain, Pontypool on the 20th of February 1927, one of identical twin girls, to Arthur and Celia Meacham. Her sister Norma and she had three elder brothers; Bill, Tom and Des and later had a younger brother Randolph and a sister Delcie. Joan was the last surviving sibling, Norma having died only two months ago.

When they were born Joan and Norma were the first twins born locally for some years and they became local celebrities with lots of people calling to see them. In their early years, they used their great similarity to their advantage, each claiming they were the other, whenever they were in trouble. They were very close as you'd expect and went about together. They often told how they went to dances in their teenage years and would draw lines on the back of each other's legs, so it looked like they were wearing seamed stockings.

In July 1945 Joan joined the Land Army. She worked on farms in the local area and spoke of her time in the Land Army with fondness. In 2010 her service along with that of all the other Land Army Girls was finally recognised and she was awarded a campaign medal, the citation of which read, "Land Army Girls kept Britain out of the reach of famine when the Nazi war machine began to attack food imports."

One weekend she met the love of her life Alf in a pub, he was on leave from the Parachute Regiment. They kept in touch, seeing each other whenever he was home on leave and they got engaged on one of his weekends at home. When the war finished Joan left the Land Army and they were married on the 17th July 1946 and exactly nine months later Joan gave birth to Carol.

At first Joan and Alf lived in a large house with Joan's parents, all her siblings and some of their spouses. But they wanted their own place and moved into 4 Pen y Wain Cottages. It was a small house, with no running water, no inside toilet and all the cooking had to be done on a coal fire. This form of cooking meant that they couldn't roast anything, so on their first Christmas Joan was making rabbit stew when a large pile of soot fell down the chimney, covering them and the entire room. It took them hours to clean themselves and the room using water they had to bring in from outside.

They moved from there as soon as they could, living in Pontypool when Ray was born and moving again to Caerwent Road, where Philip was born and the family settled. This was where their children grew up and Joan thought it a palace after the cottage, having three bedrooms, and all the things that we take for granted today like water on tap in the house and an inside toilet.

The three children had a wonderful childhood and it was in no small part down to Joan, who saw her role in life as looking after the family, a role she was very good at. Alf was the disciplinarian and she was the one who spoiled and protected them whenever she could. When Roy was once caught scrumping apples and sent home by the local bobby to tell his father. Joan told him not to say anything to Alf and that she would take care of it.

She was a wonderful cook and her cakes are remembered very fondly, particularly her apple pies and bakestones. She would spend an entire day baking so that there was always something in the cupboard for the children when they got home from school. She was also very thoughtful to her friends and would often send the children on errands to get shopping for elderly neighbours.

In about 1967 Carol moved up to the London area to live and work. Three years later when Alf had a chance to move to a better job, Joan, he and Philip moved to Potters Bar, Ray having just joined the police stayed behind.

Potters Bar was home for forty-six years. Joan and Alf made very good friends and neighbours had a great social life and travelled extensively, often taking Norma with them. They travelled all over the UK and Europe as well as visiting New Zealand, St Lucia, the Middle East, Yugoslavia and Canada where they visited Joan's brother Des. Their motto in life was "Do it while you can."

They were always in touch with their family in Wales and regular trips were made in both directions by all the family. But it seemed that Joan and Norma couldn't go long without seeing each other and Joan would often travel down to visit Norma.

In 2004 Alf died after fifty-eight years of marriage, and at first, Joan seemed to cope well, but slowly she became reluctant to go far from home and preferred the comfort of her own house. In 2012, she was diagnosed with dementia which progressed until in 2015 Carol and Ted moved in with Joan to look after her. They managed to cope with this for fifteen months until it became apparent that this wasn't sustainable long-term. Carol looked for somewhere nearby, that could look after Joan in a manner that she deserved, but was unable to find anything. Ray began looking in South Wales and found Rowan House in Griffithstown.

Joan moved in 2016 and was very happy in Rowan House. She enjoyed the company of the staff and would often stay up until 11.30 chatting with them. The loving care that the staff gave Joan made her last months a joy for her and her children. Knowing that their mother was so well looked after gave them peace of mind and literally allowed them to sleep at night, where they had not been able to do so before. They have asked me to thank the staff of Rowan House for the care they gave Joan and the welcome they gave to her family whenever they visited.