

A celebration of life
Janet Evelyn Rogers

6 December 1947 – 21 August 2021

9 September 2021, 2:40–3.20 pm, West Herts Crematorium

a personalised 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

Bread of Heaven – London Welsh Male Voice Choir

Janet Rogers was a much loved mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, friend – and groupie! She had no truck with religion – after all, ‘Elvis was her god’ – and what mattered to her was the here and now. Life was for living, and she did this in her own distinctive manner. She kept close to her Welsh roots – particularly through her much-loved dad, John, and her mum Enid whose dad had a grocers shop. You heard ‘Bread of Heaven’ as we entered the chapel, just as the family did for John’s funeral. After all, rugby is the game that runs in the blood of the Welsh.

Janet always loved horses, which in latter days she would go to see at the races. Gina says that while Janet was off with Tim at Sandown, she was doing all the donkey work at home. That she and Tim can laugh together about this says a lot about their family. No-one suggests life was always easy, but that shared humour is based on a robust, honest and mutual love. Janet was protective of Gina and Tim in her way, and she cared about other people too – she was kind and didn’t hesitate to offer help – she was always there for you.

Tribute to Janet: Gina Masero and Tim Phillips

Mum was born in Cardiff on St Nicholas Day 1947. She was a staunch believer in Father Christmas, fairies, and the like and was one of the only people we know to have definitely seen Santa in his sleigh crossing the sky. She always kept that magic alive.

She was very proud of her Welsh heritage and always remembered fondly her childhood there. It was always interesting in our family when Wales played Ireland in sporting events, as Tim always chose his Dad’s nationality at that point!

The family moved up to Copse Farm, Harrow Weald, where Pam and her grew up in a world of farming and ponies. We think that she turned vegetarian after stories of ‘Minty’ the lamb being served for Sunday Roast dinner!

She attended Harrow Weald Infant School, Cedars Junior School and then Harrow Weald County Grammar, and was still in touch with friends from those days.

She studied at Pitman’s Typing College and was always proud of gaining her results from there. She met and married Tony and had me at 18 years old and lived in Whetstone and Muswell Hill before returning to live with her Mum and Bob at their house in Harrow. She later met and married Gavin Phillips. I remember many a fun time with Mum and Gavin’s rugby crowd at Sudbury Rugby Club.

She had admin jobs including Hatch End Finance, Stanmore Branch of the Pony Club and latterly with the Family Planning Service, making longstanding friends throughout.

Tim came along in 1977. Mum was in hospital having Tim when we moved to School Lane and we were strictly instructed that NOTHING must be thrown away during the move. Everything was to be taken and there it stayed! During the last couple of years when we have been trying to clear some of the house, we have still found newspapers, etc. from that time! But also many forgotten childhood gems – and also foodstuffs from the 80's! Nothing was thrown away. Mum was an avid recycler but most of it stayed in the house!

Mum led a colourful life – loved a good get-together or party with family or friends and definitely loved a good 'dress up', Halloween being a particular favourite. I remember her turning up to visit a Halloween Party I held for the nannying family I worked at in full witch garb; wig, signature black lipstick and a bucket full of mouldy apples in dirty water – luckily I could get her to tone it down before she met the delicate children! Many impromptu dress-up parties were enjoyed by us all with her great friends Cip and Dig and family – 'bad taste dresses' being one that produced some hilarious photos.

She had a great sense of fun and loved her music so much, Elvis, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and live blues bands being amongst her favourites – but with a mix of classical music thrown in too. She enjoyed going to the ballet on many occasions.

Her 'Rocky Horror' 50th Birthday Party was a tribute to all things and music she loved. Tim turning up in a slightly too-short Elvis costume was definitely a hilarious highlight!

She loved following her favourite bands locally and further afield and I quite often jibed her for being the 'oldest groupie in town'!! Dan Smith has put a most lovely tribute to her on his Facebook page – the link is in the Order of Service if you get time to take a look. Even her 'last music' requests (there are many!!) includes us 'Conga'ing Out to' a song!! Not sure we are up for that, but maybe.....

Mum always loved doing the rounds of visiting her good friends, enjoying takeaways (all the better if there were leftovers to take home in a doggy bag for the next day's dinner!), a good game of Scrabble or a good film to watch. She loved her trips to the races with Tim. Always a special treat. A highlight being when she got to enjoy a glass of champagne in the owner's lounge when Tim's boss's horse, Lethal, won at Kempton. She loved a cup of Darjeeling tea (or many cups rather!) and a snifter of Baileys on a Friday night became one of her latest treats. She loved reading the Telegraph newspaper (and tearing out interesting articles or pictures that she thought would interest us all – Oliver got the most I reckon!), and she was always doing a crossword or word puzzle. Crushed velvet, denim, anything sparkly and/or purple were her usual attire.

It was sad when we realised that a lot of these things drifted out of her life. Many times over the years, we had all tried to make her life more comfortable, but she always insisted that she loved it just the way it was. She was stubborn and strong-willed in that way. Now going back into her house and looking at it in a sentimental way, she was surrounded by all the things she loved. It obviously gave her great comfort.

Although she drove us nuts at times, she loved us fiercely and was immensely proud of us and then her grandson, Oliver. I am sure you have seen the portfolio of photos she carried around in her handbag or heard the latest info about him!! Whilst having what she called a 'long wait' for him to come along, she also loved her friends' children as her numerous surrogate grandchildren.

It has been hard to watch her decline over the last year or so. Isolation and delays to operations that Covid brought, definitely affected her, but we can't thank her kind friends and neighbours enough, whether it be through phone calls, picking up bits of shopping, doing her washing or visiting. You know who you are and what your specific jobs were! She always had a job list for us. All this kept her going in her own home, where she wanted to be. It's definitely a cruel blow that it was only five weeks away to the 'life changing' double hip operation that she had finally agreed to have.

So, finally, whenever we spoke over the phone, at the end of the call she would always say 'lots of love to Andy, lots of love to Oliver and lots of love to you' before putting the phone down. So lots of love to you Mum and get on that broomstick and fly!

Personal reflections: Pam Thomas

We were both born in Cardiff and lived with Dad and Mum in a Grocer shop which was run by our Grandfather (Mum's dad). We went on some deliveries by horse and cart with our Dad which was exciting to us. When I was born, and we were growing up, she could be fiercely protective of me, her little sister, to the point that people didn't think I could speak for some time as she would usually answer for me!!

We moved to Copse Farm when she was 6 years old after Dad took the farming job there. We had a great life growing up with the animals and the freedom that that life afforded. We had many 'cousins' holidays where they would come to us or we would go to theirs – often eventful and great fun.

Even from an early age, though, I always knew Jan wanted more from life – there was often an inkling that something was better around the corner – so much so that from a young age she acquired the nick-name Outing Wrecker for her antics which was shortened to OW1 when another family member (no name revealed) came along a few years later who was OW2!!

She threw herself into various ventures and had many years as Secretary of Stanmore branch of the Pony Club and worked well with Judi Gold organising all their events and received the Cubitt 25-year service award commendation.

Janet made friends easily and kept up the friendships over many years. She kept in close touch with school friends and had great pleasure when meeting more at school re-unions.

The last few years have been tough, mostly from her stubbornness in not going for the hip operations and ironically a date had just come through when this sadness happened.

Rest in peace, Jan, and I hope you have found the greener grass.

Gina and Tim would never have chosen Leonard Cohen for our song, had they not found Janet's list on the back of a mechanic's bill with a note against it saying, 'think while playing'.

Take this Waltz – Leonard Cohen and Jennifer Warnes

Reading: Warning by Jenny Joseph

This is a poem Janet loved, and you can see why. I have been asked to read it from Janet's book, which I have here.

*When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.*

*You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats and things in boxes.*

*But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.*

*But maybe I ought to practice a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.*

Thanks to Gina and Pam for their wonderful words, and to Tim and Gina for putting together this lovely celebration of Janet's life. Thanks also to Pam's husband and son, Dave and Leon, for designing and printing the order of service – Janet couldn't have asked for better! This has indeed been a family affair. Tim has also made sure Janet has some accoutrements with her as she makes her final journey – a scarf, and some bits and bobs in her handbag, including lots of Darjeeling tea.

Our final music is Rainy Day Women – Janet's choice says it all. She would want to be remembered for the parties, the music, the dressing up, the rugby, the fun and laughs that you all shared.

Rainy Day Women – Bob Dylan and Tom Petty