

A celebration of life

Annette Maureen Sides

Johnson

20th October 1937 – 16th March 2022

Monday 11th April 2022 at Pontefract Crematorium



a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

Born on 20th October 1937, Annette was the first child of Minnie and Harry Higgins. She grew up at 1 Poplar View in Pontefract, with her younger brother Peter, and her uncle Ken, who was only a few years her senior and just like another brother to her. The family shared the yard with numbers 2, 3 and 4, and all the children played out together, including two of Annette's oldest friends, Rosalind and Margaret. Sadly Margaret also passed away recently, but Rosalind recalls many happy times from that shared childhood, playing in the yard and also over the road in the big garden and orchard that belonged to Annette's aunties, Arty and Joanie. As the girls got older, they would walk along to Pontefract Park on a Sunday, hopeful of taking a boat out on the lake, despite the long queue. Or they would walk to Wentbridge with their picnic of jam sandwiches and a bottle of water, picking bluebells along the way. And as teenagers they would spend Saturday nights rock'n'rolling at the Miners' Welfare Club on Halfpenny Lane.

Annette counted herself fortunate, to have her extended family nearby, and to enjoy the close-knit community around her; the homes on Poplar View often housed three generations, all supporting each other, and Annette's children and grandchildren made their own memories there.

Annette attended Love Lane School and Pontefract Girls' High, where she was a conscientious pupil, before starting work at Co-op Insurance. When she wasn't working, she liked to let her hair down at the local dances, and it was the Bagley's Christmas dance that brought Annette together with the love of her life. In her own words, she saw:

This handsome chap in army uniform and curly hair, with a large dimple in his chin, walking across the dance floor to ask me to dance. He had four weeks left of his National Service at Durran Hill Camp in Carlisle, so we wrote regularly.

Annette kept those letters all her life. The handsome chap was of course, Bill, or Willy, as Annette called him, and the two of them courted and got engaged, tying the knot on 12th May 1956 at St Giles Church. Bill came to join the family at Poplar View while the newly-weds saved for a deposit. They were already parents to Martyn, Ian and Alison when they moved into their new home at 47 South View Gardens, where they remained for over sixty years, alongside their neighbours Pat and Roy. Stuart came along a few years later to complete the family unit. And Alison wanted to say a few words about their lovely mum.

Alison's Tribute

Our Darling Mum

Mum was a strong, organised lady who dealt with motherhood and the difficulties life threw at her with a no-nonsense attitude (apparently these are traits I have inherited).

Throughout our childhood, Mum's outlook on life was always that everything would work out fine. If we fell over, she wiped us down, cleaned the injury, put a plaster on and sent us back out to play, no oohing and ahing, but it was always done with a reassuring smile and a positive attitude and we knew we would be okay, and that continued throughout our life.

Anything that needed doing was never too much trouble for Mum. She ran the home, did the household chores including the decorating. Mum arranged days out and holidays supported by my dad, her right-hand man. Between them they gave us a beautiful home that was my mum's pride and joy, a fantastic childhood and so many wonderful memories that me and my brothers have laughed and cried over these last few weeks.

In her early 40s a culmination of events caused Mum to be ill and we now know she felt guilty for the impact this had on her family, but she had no reason to. It must have been such an extremely difficult time for her just to keep going, but with the support of my beloved Dad she did just that, and continued as always, devoting her life to her children, our children and their children.

Mum didn't say the words I love you, but we knew as she showed it in everything she did. She was our guiding light; my dad was her rock and we wouldn't be the people we are today without their continued love and unquestioning support.

Mum has struggled over the last 8 years since Dad passed away and no one could ever take his place, but I want to say huge thank you to my brothers and their families and Auntie Rosalind for their support when Mum needed it the most.

Mum, we love and miss you more than we can ever say, and we will stay strong together, because of your love and family values.

Between having Alison and Stuart, Annette chose to go back to work, as a waitress at the Co-op Café. She really enjoyed the job; she liked the social side, getting on with customers and colleagues alike, and the hours fitted round the school run, so she could still be there for her children whenever they needed her. She still had plenty of time for baking, and playing games on a Sunday, board and card games, everyone usually falling out over Monopoly! She also made time for knitting, creating jumpers for the kids whether they liked them or not; Martyn even wrote on his Christmas list one year 'a bought jumper'! Bill worked long shifts, but he and Annette did manage to get a night out every month or so, going for a drink with good friends Tony and Irene, and Kath and Barry.

The three couples often holidayed together too, along with all the children, camping all over, from Great Yarmouth to the Dales. Annette said, 'We camped in all weathers, had lots of mishaps and lots of laughs.' It was Kath and Barry who introduced Annette and Bill to the delights of having a caravan at South Cliff, Bridlington, and Tony and Irene who accompanied them on their first holiday abroad, to Malta. Annette and Bill didn't stop there though, travelling several times all the way out to Australia to stay with Bill's sister Marie and brother-in-law Derek (Annette was close to all of Bill's extensive family). And in more recent years they often spent time away with their friends Rosalind and Brian and Jackie and Eric.

Annette and Bill had always taken Minnie and Harry away with them on the family holiday to Filey or Blackpool, and when they became grandparents themselves they again enjoyed going away with all the generations. Annette enjoyed a loving relationship with her daughters-in-law Gillian and Christine, and was a delighted Nanna/Gran/Granny (depending on who you ask!) to Glen, Debbie, Gail, Michelle, Hannah, William, Carl, Lucy and Oliver, and she loved every minute they spent together, be it at home or on holiday at the caravan or in warmer climes. Annette also welcomed the time spent with her extended family Sam, Joe, Kim, Laura and Marie. All the grandchildren have so many fond memories of her, and Hannah has put some of hers together for today.

Hannah's Tribute

I have had the pleasure of knowing my gran for thirty-one years. Although many of you here will have known her for much longer than that and have many memories of her from over her 84 years, I want to share with you a small part of my experience of her as a grandparent, as this was a role she cherished.

For the most part, I remember Gran as one half of a pair, with neither her nor my grandad being very far from the other. As grandparents, they were both very active people. They both loved being outdoors in the fresh air, either weeding and pruning in the garden, digging (and no doubt getting backache) up at the allotment, or out striding through the countryside at her usual 50mph pace. It was of being outdoors, roller skating, cycling and walking Blackie that I have some of the fondest memories.

Despite having lost the confidence to go out by herself, this didn't stop her from seeing the world. She loved to travel and explore new places with my grandad and their friends, Rosalind and Brian and Jackie and Eric. China, Chile, Peru and Scotland were just some of her favourite places. She was curious about other cultures, cuisines, architecture and history, and I am blessed that she

encouraged me to go see and learn as much as I could, reminding me that she would write to me to keep in touch regardless of how painful her arthritis was. I don't know anyone who had a more well-travelled gran to share stories with, and those stories were obviously much more enjoyable over copious amounts of tea and biscuits.

It's safe to say that she didn't expect to pass, as she had already started packing for her next holiday with Auntie Rosalind.

One thing that struck me about Gran, as I look back as an adult, is how she managed to balance her ability to care for everyone with her "get on with it" attitude. We knew she would help us in any way she could, no matter the problem, and always had the expectation that everything would be ok. The fact that she lived through a war and a pandemic and still managed to live such a fulfilling life is testament to her resolve and determination to make the most of everything, and I like to think she has instilled the same kind of attitude in all of us down the generations.

As head of the family, or "the Boss" as Grandad used to call her, she took great pride in all of our achievements and would update each member of the family on what the others were up to, keeping us all together as one. It's clear how much she loved us, even though she spent plenty of time moaning about us as well as singing our praises. From all of us as grandchildren, I want to thank her for enriching our lives with stories, adventures, fresh air, plenty of cake and unwavering love. We miss you already and will love you always.

Annette and Bill really did come as a pair; they were a team, always together, especially once they retired. They liked to walk, covering miles of local footpaths; Annette was a proud Yorkshire lass and knew all there was to know about her roots and heritage. They also spent hours in their allotment, growing and tending to their plants, their crop rotation system rigorously worked out, as you would expect from Annette's organisational skills. She would find time to enjoy the garden as well, sitting on her bench with a cigarette, watching the birds. But most of all she enjoyed spending time with her family; Annette was a prolific photo taker, cataloguing not just the big events but the everyday moments of the people she loved. Ian said, 'It is only now, when we have [been through] all the photo albums, that we realise what a treasure trove of memories she has provided for us; I am tearful and so grateful for all her efforts.'

It was really hard for Annette when Bill passed away eight years ago, but she did her best to keep busy, and her family did all they could to support her. And of course being a great-grandma ten times over was a wonderful diversion. She loved Darcey, Martin, Lee, Joshua, Summer, Alex, Emeli, Saxon, Angus and Skye to pieces, and Darcey has something she wanted to say about her gran.

Darcey's Tribute

When someone we love falls asleep for the last time they take a piece of you with them, you feel sad and alone, your heart aches to see that person again.

We were lucky to have such a wonderful person in our lives who was our Gran.

We have our memories when we think of you: the bike rides down the lanes, the hours playing in your garden, your cupboard full of games.

We see your smile and hear your laughter and we cherish the days we spent together.

We look back on the love and support you gave us to follow our dreams.

Even though we can't pop round for a chat or bring you homemade cakes, we can't share holidays with you, it feels though our hearts are breaking but we know you're pain free and at peace looking down on us.

We might have a piece of our heart missing but we know yours is whole again because you're up in heaven with Grandad, your one true love.

We love you Granny

Rest easy until we meet again xx

Everyone rallied round to look after Annette in her last years; she had home-cooked meals provided by various members of the family most evenings, so her weekly shopping consisted mostly of cakes, buns and biscuits for herself and her visitors, treats for the dogs and goodies for the children (much to the dismay of Martyn and Ian!). Friday evenings she would walk round to Martyn's to have her dinner with him and Christine, and always brought something for Christine's grandchildren, Josh and Harriet. Stuart would frequently call in for a cuppa and half a packet of biscuits when out with his dogs, and Annette always loved to see him, and them – she had grown up with dogs, and had her own beloved pets, Sally and Blackie, in later life.

She enjoyed a trip out just a few days before she passed away, Glen taking her to the auction house where he works, showing her behind the scenes and letting her have a spin on his office chair!

Rosalind was an absolute star; they went out shopping together every week, and took coach trips, even visiting Alison down in Torquay, and Rosalind was always there for Annette, and a truly wonderful friend.