

# A celebration of life Kathleen McGowan

6<sup>th</sup> April 1942 – 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022

at D.J. Screen's Chapel of Rest and Edgerton Cemetery



*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

*Kathy was born on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1942, part of a large family growing up with her parents, Daniel and Elizabeth O'Neill, on a smallholding in Kilkenny, southern Ireland. At school she was a remarkably bright student, so much so that she flew through the classes so fast they had to invent extra academic levels for her to work towards! Though she was not able to go on to further studies past fourteen, she always retained that astuteness of intellect. She also demonstrated a love of music, playing the accordion while the family sang; one of her favourites was Danny Boy, which played us in today. And she loved Irish dancing, winning medals for it as a lass.*

*Her strength and determination were evident from an early age too; she was still only a teenager when she left Ireland and travelled to England to join her sister Maura and look for work. Kathy lived with Maura in Huddersfield, finding work first at the Co-op laundry and then as a Laboratory Technician at ICI, a job she enjoyed.*

*She was introduced by a mutual connection to a gentleman by the name of Joe, also Irish, though from Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, and also from farming heritage. They fell in love, and married on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1963 at St Patrick's Church, before honeymooning in Blackpool. Joe, having sold his dairy farm back home, was able to buy their first house as newly-weds, on Leeds Road, and that remained their family home for their entire married life.*

*Kathy unbegrudgingly gave up work to raise that family, as they welcomed their three boys, Paul, Joe and Terry, to the world. Though Terry sadly died in 2005, Paul and Joe told me how their mum was always there for them, providing for their and their dad's every need; Kathy was a giver, and a feeder, especially of all the traditional favourites like Irish stew. She also baked a great soda bread, which Maura's boys used to love when they came to visit. Kathy relished her role as home-maker and did a very good job of it. And though she didn't have much time for games, she would play the accordion for them all on an evening, just as she had back home in Ireland.*

*Family was the most precious thing to Kathy, and there were plenty of visits as the boys grew up to see their auntie Maura, and their uncle Marty, as well as with Joe's sister Mary, who became like a second mother to Paul, Joe and Terry. Kathy and Joe took the boys over to Ireland occasionally and Kathy delighted in bringing them to meet all their extensive family over there, and showing them the sights of Kilkenny, including the house she grew up in.*

*When the boys started at secondary school, Kathy went back to work, as a home help. The flexible hours meant she was still there for Paul, Joe and Terry, though their school run would sometimes start early so she could pop in on one or more of her clients. Kathy was such a caring soul, and many of her visits were outside her actual working hours, because she wanted to make sure her charges were ok. And though her allocated visiting time was intended for the basics of care – washing, dressing, feeding – she would often be found cleaning windows or doing the shopping as well! As well as going above and beyond for those she looked after, Kathy also found the job very rewarding, and she continued with it for eighteen years or so.*

*Joe worked night shifts for most of his career, but he and Kathy did get the chance to relax together sometimes. They might nip to the pub, the White Cross at Cooper Bridge, or The Peacock on Leeds Road; or they would go and see the turn at Batley Variety Club; and nearly every weekend they would meet up with friends at the ICI Club. Kathy actually ended up working at The Peacock for a while, after Joe's niece Faber took it on. She ran the kitchen alongside Sylvia, who became a great friend, and the two of them had a lot of fun in the process, happily fielding the banter from the factory workers who came in. They also became bingo buddies, both sharing good luck with the numbers.*

*Kathy and Joe were dedicated to each other, even if their equally stubborn natures clashed at times. Kathy could be somewhat fiery, and was certainly happy to speak her mind, but at least that meant you knew where you stood with her! Neither of them were big on fancy holidays, but Kathy always spoke about their trips down to London, especially the time they were invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen, when Joseph received an award for his army service.*

*Kathy was delighted to become a grandma, to Caitlin, Sam and Matt. Caitlin lived the nearest, and when she was little Kathy would babysit her, along with the many children Paul and his wife Julie fostered; in the end she was temporary grandma to over twenty kids, and she would play with them and act silly, able to relax in a way she had never had the time to when her own children were small. Sam and Matt were still young when Joe emigrated with them to Australia, and of course Kathy missed them all. But in 2008 Paul flew out to Perth with her to go and visit them, and having seen the lifestyle they enjoyed over there she could appreciate why they had made that choice. That trip was an incredible highlight for Kathy and gave her many special memories.*

*Sadly she was a widow by then, Joe having died in 1999, and she also had to cope with the loss of Terry in 2005. Kathy chose to downsize from the family home to a smaller place in Paddock, but she continued to keep up with old friends, and made new ones amongst her neighbours, especially Kerry. She liked to come to Paul and Julie's, for Sunday dinners, birthdays and celebrations, but she remained very independent. Even after her diagnosis last November, she refused outside help for as long as she could, though would accept Paul and Julie's care, which was given freely and lovingly.*

*She did eventually accede to assistance from the Kirkwood, who arranged for Marie Curie nurses to come in, and they were all brilliant with her. Kathy was pragmatic about her condition, dealing with it the way she chose, and she demonstrated her usual tenacity and strength of will by holding on and on while Joe and his partner Elizabeth moved mountains to get back from Australia in time. And she was waiting for him; she visibly relaxed once he had arrived, and within an hour had passed away, with Paul and Joe by her side.*

*That was always where Kathy was happiest; with her family around her. They were central to her being, and where she drew her strength from, just as they drew their strength from her.*