

A celebration of the life of Annette Rae Maloney

30 April 1949 – 19 November 2022

11.15am, 13 December 2022, Hastings 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

Annette was the eldest child of Raymond Pennell, a structural engineer who later took over the family sewing machine business and Hilda, a librarian who later also worked in the family shop. Annette was the eldest of four, being followed by Yvonne, Ray and Don. Yvonne and Ray are with us here today. From her father she learned sewing machine maintenance, and a competence in soldering which was later to astonish the owner of an engineering works when she was on a school trip, as well as a passion for sewing. From her mother, she gained her passion for reading – she would whisk through a mound of library books in just a few days.

The Pennells were an extended family. Family members or friends would stay for periods of time and visitors could never quite work out who were the siblings and who were cousins, friends or other assorted “waifs and strays”. She was once punished at school for talking to “a boy” in town, who was in fact her uncle!

While Annette might have been inspired by her family’s occupations, she was less inspired by their politics – it was a family which had produced many Conservative mayors of Cheltenham. When she was elected as a Labour Councillor in Hastings, the local Cheltenham paper ran an article describing her as the “Red Sheep of the Family.”

Yvonne will now talk about her sister:

Annette was sister to myself, Ray and Don and she was born in Cheltenham in 1949 to Hilda and Ray. Annette was a keen book-reader and did well at both Rowanfield Junior school and Pates Grammar School and won a place at University to study Maths and Physics. In the 1960s it wasn’t automatic for girls to attend University but despite parental opposition Annette took up her place and finished her degree at the University of Sussex. Annette told me this one was one of many battles she won on our behalf.

Annette loved to travel. Always independent and intrepid Annette would go youth hostelling on her bicycle - on one occasion travelling to the Isle of Wight on her own – I remember because my father had to collect her late at night and bring her back to our guest house. Annette and Michael have together travelled all over the world, and around the whole of the UK from the Scilly Isles to John O’ Groats. Ian and I have fond memories of joint trips to Cornwall, Skye and Norfolk. More recently in 2019 she visited us in Devon and Cornwall on her own in her wheelchair organising British Rail staff to transport her between train services on route.

We both got married 6 months apart in 1978 – Annette to Michael and me to Ian. In March and September 2018 we celebrated together 40 years of marriage on our anniversaries, first in Mousehole in Cornwall and later in the year in Woolacombe in Devon. After our mother died, Annette would take the lead in organising family gatherings to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, including her 50th birthday in Cheltenham, 60th birthday in Morteohoe and her retirement party in Hastings in April 2018.

Annette was a philanthropist and became involved with the Trussell Trust and the Arts in Hastings. Annette became a Labour Councillor and later a Magistrate and Secretary to the Labour party for many years in Hastings. Annette was also a keen theatre goer and supported many local interest societies in Hastings.

Annette was very fond of cross-stitch and made many personalised cards and bookmarks from cross-stitch for us to treasure. When Annette was recovering from her accident in 2018 she managed to make time with Jessica to put together our AYRD book of family histories and photographs. The AYRD book is a precious document of wonderful memories of celebrations and family members and in particular a testament to Annette. Thank you, Annette for being my sister, for being there when I needed you and for your well lived life.

You've heard from Yvonne what a trailblazer Annette was going to Sussex. And there she also learned to drive. When she first got behind the wheel of a car, she thought, 'yes – freedom'. As she didn't drink she made a deal with a fellow student who had a posh car – she could use it as long as she was his designated driver when needed. Later she had Triumph Vitesse (which looked like a fairly standard Triumph but had the engine and acceleration of a sports car) so when she felt patronised by other (usually male) drivers, she took great delight in accelerating away with ease.

She loved being an astronomer. Watching the moon landing at Rutherford with other UK physicists, some of whom had been involved with the project, was a memory she cherished. Her first husband was also an astronomer and, following her graduation, they both worked at Herstmonceux. She was involved in early coding and always felt a little regretful about a programme she wrote which made several others redundant. When the marriage ended, Annette was already teaching but she was broke & homeless; this left her determined to never be in that position again and to always have an 'escape fund'.

She got a job at Bexhill College. She was predominantly a maths teacher, though she took over in textiles for a brief period of time to cover a staff illness. It was at Bexhill College she met fellow teacher Michael. She moved in with him in Stonehouse Drive. In March 1978 they married with only their friends David and Marilynne as witnesses, followed by a meal in Rye. They called their parents afterwards to tell them the news and returned to College the next day for the college production, as wardrobe mistress and stage manager.

That summer they did have a honeymoon/holiday. Annette had already fallen in love with the States on her visit in 1974 to the University of Austin in Texas, where she had impressed a restaurateur with her chilli-eating skills and got a free meal in return. This time they travelled around the United States (and Canada) on Greyhound buses. Detroit Greyhound Station and Times Square in New York in the late 1970s were both, well, experiences. They toured the derelict Ellis Island before it had been converted into a museum.

They visited the US many times more. Michael developed the ambition to set foot in every state in the union – leaving aside Hawaii and Alaska. This was a task they almost achieved apart from Arkansas, which somehow eluded them.

Annette became very active in the local Labour Party – standing for the council and winning (with her fellow councillor Norman Hitchens) Wishing Tree Ward, which, at the time, was low down on the party's list of target seats.

She became a magistrate, one of the youngest at the time. She served on the bench for around 30 years, spending time in family court, regularly serving as Chair in court and also serving on the panel which appointed new magistrates.

In October 1980 Jessica was born - the birth was announced in a Council meeting under apologies. Annette was insistent throughout her pregnancy that she was having a daughter and she would be Jessica, after Jessica Mitford, and Rae, a family name. When pressed on what she would do if she had a boy, she suggested Bryce Yosemite Zion – after the US holiday they were planning but had to cancel once Annette was pregnant.

Mother and daughter were a regular sight in Wishing Tree, visiting residents and canvassing, occasionally accompanied by the family cat, Mushie, a black and white long haired Gloucestershire farm cat, who Annette and Michael had acquired as a kitten. In later years they had another cat, Keegan, a nod to Michael's Geordie background and Newcastle United.

Annette only served one term as a councillor – saying that four years was a good experience, but you would have to be mad to want to do it for longer. Michael Foster was selected to replace her in Wishing Tree. Annette and Jessica would often accompany Rosemary Foster and her son Luke in canvassing as part of “The Great Pushchair Campaign”.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s Annette served as an officer in the party. She was the Constituency Treasurer for over a decade and one of the coordinators of the successful campaign to elect Michael Foster in 1997. In the middle of the campaign, she had to rescue her father, whose kitchen had caught fire, but it didn't stop her from running off a new leaflet the second she got back from Cheltenham, or from organising the Committee Rooms on the day. Later, when Jessica worked for Michael Foster and was active in the local party, serving as Campaigns Officer around the 2005 election, she sent her Mum out with leaflets rather than the other way round.

Annette left Bexhill College in the early 80s and worked at The Grove before deciding to leave teaching. She wrote to several accountancy firms, asking if any of them wanted to take on an older than usual trainee. Raymond & Co. took her on. She qualified as an accountant in record time, a feat made more impressive by the fact that her mother had a serious stroke in 1993 and for two years the family regularly drove up to Cheltenham for the weekend. One of her specialisms was doing audits for the many churches in Hastings. She also used her accountancy skills to help with the setting up of Hastings Credit Union.

As you've heard, theatre was one of Annette's great loves. In her youth she spent a summer at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall as an assistant stage manager and she was wardrobe mistress for several Bexhill College productions. On holidays, she and Michael would always look for a show to go to – something they achieved in every country they visited apart from New Zealand. Annette's love of theatre and travel combined in a family trip to New York in 1994. The family saw several shows including 'Crazy for You' and ended up practically skipping up Broadway singing 'Nice Work if You can Get it'. More of that later.

She had National Theatre Priority Membership until her death. Highlights were the all-day three-play Stoppard marathon of his *Coast of Utopia*, the double-bill of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, and wider family outings to *War Horse* and *Coram Boy*. The play *The Pitman Painters* by Lee Hall, featured a discussion about whether one of the characters could sell his painting, painted under the auspices of the WEA. It was suggested they could vote on it. At which point, another character declared “Listen, this is a democratic organisation. Nobody is voting on anything in here”. The Maloney family came dangerously close to falling off their chairs with laughter. Annette and Jessica particularly loved Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*. The combination of word play, story and mathematics meant that the play was an instant favourite and remained so.

She was also skilled at several crafts, particularly sewing. She took over the family sewing quite young, leaving the knitting mainly to her mother. The house is filled with her amazing embroidery. In later years she did more knitting, taking over Hilda's collection of knitting needles, and tried lacemaking, beading and even Lego, all of which she did brilliantly.

Upon approaching retirement from Raymond & Co, Annette decided to retire from the Bench too saying that she would much prefer to be missed than to have people say, “poor old dear, she used to be very good, you know” and she stepped back from being an active member of the Labour Party though, albeit with a slight pause, she remained a party member.

She wound down her accountancy hours, helping with the transition of the firm from Raymond & Co to become part of Manningtons. She and Michael travelled more, to Scotland, the United States of course, and mainland Europe and also to Australia and New Zealand where they toured around North and South Island and then spent a few days with their friends Sue and Jeremy in New Plymouth.

Her 68th birthday was a joint retirement/birthday weekend, and she was looking forward to more travel, theatre and sewing. However, in retirement, her mobility became increasingly poor. Her dislike of the medical profession and her fear of needles delayed a diagnosis, until the wonderful Nurse Fran intervened and persuaded her to have a blood test, and she died at home, unexpectedly, on 19th November.

A few years ago, Annette wrote some notes about what she would want for her funeral, and all the music you’re hearing today is based on these requests. She also asked that the poem, *Adlestrop*, should be read, so Jessica will read it to you now.

Adlestrop by Edward Thomas

*Yes. I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.*

*The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name*

*And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.*

*And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.*