

John's Eulogy for Mum

[Introduction]

Kenda has given us the path of mum's life. The rainbow, start to finish, born out of light, and some dark clouds.

I want to add a little bit about what I think was important to mum, in life's journey.

[People]

Firstly people. All of us here, and those who can't be here today. Mum found friends in all sorts of places.

One friend of 50 years met Mum when the wheel fell off my pram in the street in Saxilby. Apparently dad hadn't attached it properly.

Another friend helped us when our first Christmas in Saxilby was ruined by a chimney fire (dad again). That friend hosted us for Christmas for the next 18 years.

I realise Dad is starting to sound like Frank Spencer in this. That's far from the truth. For those of you who were here three years ago at his funeral, you'll know that I referred to him as a superhero. Hold that image in your mind.

Back to mum. She met another good friend in a homeless hostel in London. More of that later.

Other friends have come along more recently, but were no-less important to her.

Many of her close friends and family cannot be here today, through illness or distance or commitments or indeed death, including her sister Betty who died just one month before Mum.

Children, of course, played a large role in her life. Naturally, as our mum. But also professionally as the school doctor and running baby clinics; often we would pass somebody in the street and mum would say to us "she's one of my mum's".

When she was in her twenties, her sister had her first child. Holding baby Cousin David for the first time started mum's desire to have her own children. That wasn't an easy process, and I know she was very proud of us, her children, and also her grand children.

One very good friend of hers said to me, "you will always carry a bit of your mum with you wherever you go." I think that's true of all of you who knew her. You will all take a piece away, like a bit of cake from a wedding.

We are **all** her legacy.

[Garden]

Her gardens were incredibly important to her. A source of expression, fulfilment, comfort and pleasure.

Our childhood home had a third of an acre and a beautiful garden, which she developed from scratch. But when mum injured her back trying to get a rocking horse up the stairs, downsizing the garden became inevitable. So we moved to a smaller house with a smaller garden, and the new garden was manageable and again beautiful. She died when her garden was at its most magnificent.

We have brought some of her plants to the church hall to show you, and some of ours too. A love of Gardening is another legacy.

And cats. She loved her cats. John (yes, I'm named after a cat), Tats, Jamie, Sugar, Boris, George and Katkin.

[Faith]

Mum's Christian faith was fundamental to her life.

She took the ministry training course, joined the movement for the ordination of women, joined in Bible study groups, mentored people working towards ordination, questioned, prayed and believed. She ran Sunday school and cleaned the brass here at St. Botolphs. As Kenda said, she came to church right into 2021 even as her health was failing.

[Helping People]

Since her death, I've had time to think about what she has done for me and others. I know many of you here have your own stories of how mum helped you. It's been lovely to hear them. We look forward to hearing more in the church hall afterwards.

As a child I remember mum helping people. As well as the church participation, and her work as a school doctor, I remember those other things that Kenda mentioned: arranging parties for women with learning difficulties. We called them the Glenmont Ladies. And the coffee mornings to collect for Muscular Dystrophy.

As part of her ministry training course, mum spent time at a homeless shelter in London. There, she met someone who helped her understand a little of the life of the homeless. They kept in touch, and over time she helped him move from homelessness in London, to setting up a home in Peterborough and then Leicester, and eventually to be reconciled with his family. This was a hard road, with many setbacks, but they both persevered and he became a regular visitor to Saxilby and good friends with dad.

And her children: Kenda and me: What does a mother do for her children? Anything and everything. They teach us so much, they get us through the hard times in life, when we need them. And give us cuddles and love unconditionally.

[Goodbyes]

I didn't get to say goodbye to mum before she died; thankfully Kenda was there in the final few hours.

I **did** actually get a chance to say goodbye to mum once before, a long time ago. She was at the wheel of the family Austin Allegro, facing towards a precipice and unable to engage reverse. I remember her getting us out of the car, bidding us an anguished farewell, and attempting to reverse the car alone. Every attempt moved her closer to disaster, but true-to-form she eventually found reverse and saved the day (and the car).

When she died, she was still making plans for the future: rooms rearranged, a new comfy chair for the greenhouse, seeds collected, plants purchased (so many plants). There was still so much to do. The world became an increasingly confusing and forbidding place to her. But Mum was not afraid of Death, and definitely hadn't given up on Life, despite its increasing challenges.

[Things you might not know about mum]

Let me finish with this: Mum was a free spirit, dedicated to helping other, who very much knew her own mind. Here are some examples:

- She saved a barn full of cows from a fire
- She gave Kenda and me cigarettes as children, and smoked with us. It's not as bad as it sounds - it was an attempt to discourage us. And it worked. Mostly.
- She would travel the country alone, not planning where she would stay more than a day ahead, and travelled abroad including the holy land
- She took me to Glastonbury Tor at sunrise - a magical time that I will always cherish
- She flew over Victoria Falls
- She played cards in a shop window when she was younger - something considered outrageous in its day
- Just after the war, as a young teenager, she went off by herself in rural France and met Picasso (I've checked this out and we're pretty sure it happened, given his time in Southern France)
- And she had a tattoo. Design and location unknown, at least to me.

We all knew a different side of Peggy. She was like one of the crystals that hangs in her window, catching the sunlight: Multifaceted, Multicoloured, shining and beautiful.

Thank you. And now it's time for a song.