

MUMS EULOGY ... KATH'S BIT

Mum was born Patricia Mary Lindsay on June 18th 1946, becoming Patricia Mary Graham in December 1967. She died 27th November aged 64.

First thoughts

- My first thoughts were that Mum was always helping people when we were growing up, especially the most needy, of whom she felt, I think, a part. She was never comfortable with the 'rich wife', 'mistress of 131 Queens Road' role and always considered herself just the very ordinary girl from the local council estate. She saw people as people no matter what their social status, identifying as much with the concerns of the lady who cleaned our house as those of our next door neighbours who were international ambassadors! She always had people over, young women and men pouring their hearts out to her. It seemed everyone liked and trusted her. She gave rides to old people, visited teenagers at a local mental institution, and helped for many years at a centre for the homeless in Richmond where she genuinely cared for these men and women she considered friends and to whom she knew life had delivered a hard blow. She had a lot of compassion on the weakest of our society and I saw that, throughout my childhood. I learned from that. One friend of the family, upon hearing of her death, wrote to me and said 'your mum always made me feel safe and loved'. I think she speaks for many.

- Think big

Her major moment was getting her smile back. For so many years she had been unhappy - dogged by abuse in childhood (the doctor had once told Dad she was a time bomb waiting to go off). Our albums were filled with these depressing pictures of mum - dad always thought she was beautiful, it was quite funny really! But I did notice. I also noticed when she got her smile back. From then on, every photo, she was smiling. Even to the last weeks, when I was with her, she mentioned it .. I'd just done her makeup and I said could I take a photo? I did, and she smiled beautifully, and I said 'what a lovely smile' and she said 'no-one can take my smile away!'. It seems to me she always saw her smile as a gift of God - a defiant smile, if you like, one that she now owned and that could and would light up her face **NO MATTER WHAT!**

- Think small

Small things mattered to mum – like getting us kids exactly what we wanted at Christmas. She expressed herself very much in the things she bought, the things she gathered around her, and it was also very important to mum that her environment was orderly and nothing short of beautiful. She loved 'beautiful things' and would not abide ugly things in her home no matter how practical (a point of some irritation between her and Dad whose always-useful additions to the home were often, er, less than beautiful!). At one point during her last months the nurses sent a special cushion that would have relieved her considerably as she had to spend a lot of time seated, but she took one look at it's glorious green and pink swirly pattern and said 'Get it out of here.' That was the end of that. Later on, she told me the hospice people were asking her 'what would she want' if she had to go in there. They were thinking in terms of medical procedures and interventions, things like that, and mum told me she had no idea what she would want! I said, well I'd say to them 'Just make sure the picture on the opposite wall is hanging straight!' and she laughed. When I'd visited a year earlier I'd learned this. As we'd sat there, holding hands quietly one day and me feeling agonised at what huge questions she must be dealing with, she suddenly said 'you know what's really bugging me?' ... That pole holding our curtain up is wonky!'.

Think inside (yourself)

So how do I feel about her? Well I loved her, she was my mum. She was always there when I was a child and gave me the calmest, most secure and reliable childhood you could have hoped for. It's hard to think of things I did with her – apart from learning to make a cheese sauce – because she wasn't much of a doer. On our holidays away Dad would be the one who played with us while she read a book and watched us from the beach. She always seemed contented with a simple life, and Dad had enough 'do' for both of them anyway!!! I probably did more with her these last two visits than I ever have - HER kind of things, you know? Crosswords and sitting quietly just being together, occasionally talking, remembering things, thinking about what to have

for dinner etc. She had a great memory for facts and was always the one to go to if you wanted to find out the gory details of our family's history. So. Not much doing was had with mum, but a lot of BEING. She has always BEEN there. A constant, honest and unconditional presence in my life as a child and as an adult. I always knew she loved me and she knew I loved her - we used to have this game we'd play, I'd say 'I love you more than you love me' and she'd say 'No, I love you more than you love me' and I'd say 'No, I love YOU more than you love ME' and she'd throw it back at me again ... I can never remember who won ...

Think outside (others)

Dad was always the constant presence in Mum's life and he must be mentioned. His love and support of her was unwavering and has always been an inspiration to me. He always thought she was the most beautiful girl in the world and even to the last they shared the tender moments and kisses of true-love that I grew up with. He will miss her deeply, I know that. Mum also had some truly lovely friends whom she 'picked up' over the years. Other women who had been through various trials and difficulties - some similar to her own, others totally different. All of them beautiful, in my opinion, in their own way. She had good, kind, big hearted friends and that probably says a lot about her too. It comforted me enormously during these last few difficult years and especially when I could not be there, to know that she had these good women around her. They will miss her deeply too.

Think sad

She dealt with sickness and difficult times very much within herself. She would just close down and get through it, never take it out on anyone else or want to 'burden' anyone else with her needs or troubles or heartaches or questions. Not that she didn't express her feelings, she did! She always said when she didn't like things, and she didn't like a lot of things, especially sickness!, but she would tell you her feelings plainly - sometimes acerbically - but rarely with a passion. She didn't throw tantrums or go around moaning about things. In fact, I never even saw her cry. She shouldered things. That's how I would put it. Sometimes her burden would get too heavy, but even then sometimes, she would go on shouldering it. At other times, she would allow others to lift it. A nurse called 'Vashti' came to visit her in her last weeks and was so brisk and kind and efficient, and full of faith in God. She made everyone feel safe and strong and we were so glad for her. But when she left, mum looked at me wistfully and said 'I used to be like that', and I said 'What? Strong and faithful?' and she said 'Yes'. I really understood. We were quiet for a bit and then I said 'Well, there is a time to give, and a time to receive' and she looked at me again with agreement in her eyes and said 'Yes'. Another day, when I was helping her get up and into her clothes, she said wistfully again 'Funny business this looking after your mother isn't it'. She was not used to and did not like being the one everyone had to think of all the time, she would rather not have been a burden. But she was not. She was never a burden and I know that all of us, who had the privilege of taking care of her during her cancer, are grateful we even had the chance

Think happy

Mum told me that she loved being pregnant with me, so I know that was one thing that made her happy – in fact, I know that ALL of her family made her happy – Dad, Matthew, Rachel and each of her grandchildren were all absolute treasures to her. In fact, she called all her grandchildren 'treasures', Scarlet was treasure number 1, and they went all the way through in order to Asa who was treasure number 10. She used to teach them, when they were little and learning to talk, to say 'I'm gorgeous!' - She'd say it, and they'd repeat it, 'I'm gorgeous!'. She always wanted to build them up and make them feel good about themselves. But really, the person that made mum most happy was Jesus. In fact, you cannot talk about Mum without talking about Jesus. Her last words to me were – 'My life would have been a mess without Jesus'. She really and truly loved Him and from the minute she heard his call and felt His love, she was sold. She spent her life in His service as best she knew how, and beyond that as God Himself would often use her beyond her natural capabilities in the prophetic words that so many of us have also met God through. She is with Him now, face to face, and no doubt happier than we have ever seen her!