

# Beryl Mullender – A Family Tribute

Firstly, on behalf of the family I would like to recognise and thank those numerous people who kindly dropped us a card or email sharing their condolences and recollections of Beryl. Thank you also to you all for coming here today, to share with us in celebrating her life.

Beryl was born and initially lived in Portsmouth but moved with her parents and two brothers to Sherborne St. John, Basingstoke in 1951. She was working at the MoD establishment in Aldermaston aged 17 when she met our father through the Boundary Players Amateur Dramatic society. The music you heard at the start of today's service was played before each performance. Not very long after that, Mum was persuaded to join my father and their friends, Jean and Peter Beaver, in running a (Wolf) cub pack in 1956. Thereby began her extensive Scout and Guiding contributions which you heard much about earlier. Along with other voluntary roles with groups such as the WRVS and the Royal Society of St George, our mother gave a lifetime of service to the local community and truly earned the 'Basingstoke's Unsung Hero' award she was pleased to be nominated for along with my father.

Mum and Dad were engaged when she was 19 but they didn't marry until she was 21. This was an early example of her strong will; my mother was determined not to have to ask her father to sign a piece of paper giving his permission, which was a requirement in those days.

My parents were together as a couple for over 60 years. After their marriage they lived initially in Newbury, then rented an MoD property in Tadley, and finally bought what became our long term family home in Old Basing. It was clear that Mum missed Dad, 'her soulmate', terribly after his death five years ago and we appreciate and thank all those people who gathered around afterwards to help her cope with her new life.

As a mother, Mum was always there to help my two brothers and I through any personal challenges, whatever they were. Regardless of the problem, there was belief that Mother would have a solution. Although, as our Dad would have said, and Mum would have agreed, perhaps not if it came around to explaining nuclear fission!

Mum was always prepared to learn new things; she went on a special weekend course just to learn how to make a specific and spectacular type of sugar paste flower for my brother Philip's wedding cake. She developed an interest in Formula 1 racing and made a special effort to have her picture taken on the victory podium at the Dubai racing circuit because she knew Philip and Fiona would love it.

As a mother-in-law, I know Beryl enjoyed the female companionship with our respective partners (despite having had the benefit of three sons!). She was keen not to be seen as 'interfering'. In fact, once we had left home, Mum wanted us to find our own way in life, but we knew that she would always be there to support us in whatever we chose.

We have received many kind words from people who worked with my mother at Brighton Hill School. She started there when it first opened in 1975 and went on to become the school's Administrative Officer five years later. Over the 17 years she was there she acquired the respect, perhaps even awe, from the people around her. She was rightly proud of what was achieved while she was at the school.

There are many words that leap out from the feedback we received about Beryl as a colleague, friend or relative:

Commitment, Service, Kindness, Generosity, Integrity and Compassion are some.

Other words reflect her effectiveness as an individual:

Decisive, Determined, Efficient and...perhaps most aptly, Formidable!

More than one person has admitted to finding Mum 'initially scary' before going on to talk about her kindness and generosity. She also had a mischievous side, and an envious ability to strike up and maintain a conversation with anyone. About the only things that Mum found intimidating were Spiders, and she decided a liberal supply of conkers placed around the house was the way to sort them out!

We have been through an unusual period in the last year or so and my mother's sudden but peaceful departure did make me wonder whether, in peak COVID times, St Peter had a need for a very skilled administrator and just sent out the call. If so, I am sure the efficiency scores for the gates of heaven took an upward turn in March!

As I draw to a close, there is one piece of advice Beryl left for her Grandchildren that I'd like to share with you. She said: "Be committed to whatever you do and value love, friendship and family."

Someone famous also said: "(On earth) you only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough." I think we can say, with certainty, that Beryl did all of that.

A life truly well lived. Thanks Mum!