

A Ceremony in Loving Memory of

**BARBARA PATRICIA
ALEXANDRA DUNFORD**

3rd January 1951 – 6th February 2013



Held at Oxford Crematorium
on Wednesday 27th February 2013
at 12 noon

Funeral Director:
Co-operative Funeralcare
Witney, OX28 5ES
Tel: 01993 706778

Humanist Celebrant:
Jacqui Dickenson
75 Burford Road
Witney, OX28 6DR
Tel: 01993 708311

Music for entry: "Wonderful Land" – the Shadows

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Good afternoon, and a huge welcome to you all as we gather here to honour the life of Barbara Patricia Alexandra Dunford: to remember her with love and affection, and also to say goodbye to her.

Barbara died from ovarian cancer on 6th February after bravely and graciously enduring various treatments and procedures for the last 21 months. She and Paul had had time to plan her funeral, and everything today will be in accordance with the wishes she expressed; all the music, readings and poems. She requested a non-religious, Humanist funeral, and specifically "no vicars"! I am not a vicar – my name is Jacqui, and I am from the British Humanist Association. I hope that whatever your personal beliefs, you will find this a fitting and warm tribute to the wonderful lady you all loved.

Barbara was special to each of you, and is completely irreplaceable in all your lives. Paul, she had been your loving partner for 31 years, and you clearly adored her. To Pat and your late husband Jack she was a beloved oldest daughter. It is not in the natural order of things to lose your own child, and our thoughts are particularly with you today. To Neil and Susan she was a much-loved sister who will be sadly missed. And of course she was sister-in-law to Sue, and Christine and Bruce, as well as aunt to Oliver, Christian and Eloise. Many of you are also friends and perhaps former colleagues.

It is therefore right that you should allow yourselves to grieve for Barbara, but it is also right that today we should celebrate her life, for she gave so much love and warmth to our world, and that can never be taken away.

Susan has written the following words about her sister Barbara:

"My sister Barbara was the best sister, attractive, kind and talented. And we grew closer over the years and communicated a lot to each other every day. We were both ill, and I miss her terribly now she is gone from us.

She was a gentle, kind person with a beautiful and loving temperament. And she will be in my heart and soul forever till we meet again."

Barbara chose a passage from Ecclesiastes 3, verses 1-8, to which, over centuries, people have turned to help them understand the cycle of life and death. Her friend Kim is going to read it for us now.

*To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under the sun.
A time to be born and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
A time to kill and a time to heal . . .
A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance . . .
A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to lose and a time to seek;
A time to rend and a time to sew;
A time to keep silent and a time to speak;
A time to love and a time to hate;
A time for war and a time for peace.*

MEMORIES OF BARBARA:

Now, I have heard and read quite a bit about Barbara and her life, and I know that she would not have wanted today to be too miserable or gloomy. She seemed to me to be one of life's wonderfully warm people –she was so kind, so caring, so loving. She was highly intelligent and creative, yet intensely modest and unassuming. She had a gentle, understated sense of humour.

Pat, you have written the following about your daughter:

Barbara was such an incredibly smiley, happy baby and girl that even the doctors and nurses would comment on it. That never seemed to leave her.

She never cared for dolls but loved horses and even as a child knew everything about them, right down to their anatomy and the names of their joints.

Her dad Jack said that you could always tell a room that Barbara had been in as you could see her 'touch' in the way everything would be arranged just so.

She saw the nicest side in everybody and was so thoughtful. Even when she was ill she would do things for myself and others if she possibly could.

Neil also has his own memories of Barbara, and I am going to read them now:

We had a very happy childhood, it being dominated by music as it was the 60s. The whole family used to listen to music regularly together, and Barb was particularly obsessed with the Hollies.

Barb was also the Boss. She always firmly made sure that Susan and I helped with the housework every Saturday morning whilst Mum and Dad were out shopping.

Being almost 10 years older than me, Barb really looked after me at times and I always felt her protective love even right up until the end

The day before Barb died, Mum, me, my wife Sue and Oliver visited her at home and even though she was very, very poorly, Barb still managed amazingly to laugh about certain things with us.

I will never forget that and how immensely brave she was throughout the last 2 years.

I cannot believe she has left us so young and I will miss her forever.

Barbara clearly loved music, and she had eclectic tastes, as we shall hear from her choices. I confess to sharing a guilty secret in being a fan of Barry Manilow. Barbara even joined his fan club – something she played down in later years – we can't think why!

As a girl she was an avid autograph hunter, and went every week to Sunday Night at the London Palladium to await the stars as they left, to ask for their signatures. And I heard that she was one of the girls screaming from the top of the Queens Building at London Airport when the Beatles returned from their sell-out tour of America. Oh, happy days!

Barbara chose an iconic song from the 60s for us all to sing to – “Waterloo Sunset” by the Kinks. It was one of her favourites, and perhaps brings back memories of her young working life which included time at St. Thomas' Hospital in Waterloo. We are going to hear it now, and let us all stand and

join in in tribute to Barbara. The words are in your leaflets. Lesley Morris from Voicebox Choir will lead the singing.

Song: "Waterloo Sunset"

When she left school, Barbara had various commercial secretarial jobs but was interested in medical things and so trained as a medical secretary at Kings College in 1981. She subsequently worked in many specialisms including Neurology at Kings College Hospital for a Neurologist, at Atkinson Morley in Wimbledon for a Neurosurgeon, where many a happy hour was spent hunting for notes alongside the giant rats in the basement; also at St Thomas' in Gyne and Obstetrics and Rheumatology, at The Royal Marsden in CT Scanning, Surgical Pathology, Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine. Spells followed at St George's in Tooting, and finally in the Oncology Department at Northampton General. Her last years were spent working part-time as a medical summariser, updating patient notes and creating new patient records at the large Eynsham medical group.

Barbara met her first husband Rod when she was just 14, and despite eventual divorce, their marriage introduced her to foreign holidays and warmer climes.

Barbara then met Paul in December 1981 through mutual friends, who set them up on a date. Paul was immediately drawn to her, finding her interesting, intelligent, warm and gently funny. The feeling was obviously reciprocated, and ten months later they set up home together in Surbiton. They often reminisced about their first and idyllic long weekend away together in April 1982 at a hotel in Coombe Martin that had a small zoo in the grounds. It was the first of many enjoyable breaks and holidays they shared in the UK and abroad.

Barbara chose the following song by "Love Affair", probably in recognition of the enduring love between her and Paul. It is called Everlasting Love and we shall listen to it now.

Song: "Everlasting Love"

In 1998, Paul and Barbara moved to Brize Norton. Barbara fell in love with the countryside, villages and small towns around their home, and drew a lot of inspiration for what was her main hobby, crafting. This took on various forms such as patchwork, but for the last ten years or more Barbara had worked in mixed media, producing beautiful items and collages using many techniques and materials such as fabric, embroidery, sewing and painting. She'd delight in hunting out 'finds' in small markets abroad, especially in France, and enjoyed the large and varied craft shops that could be found in both America and Australia. Barbara had an internet shop where she sold craft packs and finished items as well as digital background for 'scrapbookers', and was looking forward to devoting more time to these activities when she retired. Even in her spare time, her crafting blog developed a few hundred followers. Some of these followers became online friends, and have left poignant tributes to Barbara on her blog.

She enjoyed taking pictures and exploring, and Paul will treasure the memories and photographs of them in the USA, Canada and Australia as well as European countries, especially France which they both particularly love, having holidayed there many, many times. Barbara was grateful that she lived in easy reach of so many beautiful Cotswold places and would often comment during a weekend outing to a nearby village or drive in the car on a summer's evening that "it's just like being on holiday all the time when you live here."

Perhaps in tribute to her love of the natural world and all it contains, Barbara chose a poem by Mary Elizabeth Frye, which her brother Neil and his wife Sue are going to read to you now:

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there; I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow,
I am the sun on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there: I did not die.*

Barbara was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in April 2011, just six months before she was due to retire. It is particularly poignant that she and Paul had been planning and booking a three week trip around New England for that autumn. It will always sadden Paul that she didn't achieve her long-held dream of seeing the glorious spectacle of New England in the Fall. However, they did make the most of gaps between treatments, and had several holidays in the UK, even managing to get to Brussels and to see the Olympic torch relay and an Olympic event together before Barbara became too ill.

Paul cared for Barbara devotedly at home until her last day. He has paid tribute to her by saying that he could not have wished for a kinder, more caring, more patient, more beautiful, more supportive or more loving person to share the last 31 years with, 24 of them as husband and wife. He will miss Barbara every minute of every day and he hopes that she will forgive him constantly talking to her about everything he does and asking her advice on every decision he has to make, just as he had done over those 31 years. She is leaving a hole in his life that seems impossible to fill, even if he wanted to.

Barbara loved her family and friends and went out of her way to help people when she could. Her smile, her subtle sense of humour and gentleness will be missed by all those who knew her.

The next song was chosen by Barbara, and not only does it describe her favourite time of year, but Paul feels it absolutely portrays how he feels about her. It will be sung by Lesley Morris and accompanied on the organ by Keith Harris.

Song: "Forever Autumn"

COMMITTAL:

It is a hard thing to take your leave of someone you have loved; and Barbara was loved deeply. But now we have reached the part of our ceremony where we must say goodbye, the curtains will close around her coffin and her body will be committed for cremation.

Barbara Patricia Alexandra Dunford;
We rejoice that you were part of our lives.
We thank you for the love and friendship you gave us.
We thank you for being the warm, caring, beautiful person that you were.
We thank you for the wonderful, happy memories you have left behind.
We hold those memories in our minds; we hold you in our hearts.

Now, with respect, we leave you in peace.
And with love we bid you farewell.



CLOSING WORDS:

Today has been all about Barbara, her life and the people she loved. I hope you have gained some comfort from being here today and sharing this space and this time. When you leave here and gather afterwards, and in times to come, do talk together often of Barbara, laugh together, cry together and share your memories of her.

While your on-going physical contact with Barbara is now ended, your relationship with her is not finished. That is as it was, and is part of you, and so lives on. I hope that gradually the pain of today and of her last months will fade in importance, and that older memories of fun and good times and companionship will return to their rightful place at the forefront of your minds, and will bring you warmth and pleasure.

And now, to end our ceremony, Oliver is going to read us a heartwarming poem, again chosen by Barbara herself. The words are surely what she wanted to say to you all today. Following that, we shall leave to her last choice of music: "Gypsy" by Fleetwood Mac.

*I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly down the ways,
Of happy times and laughing times and bright and sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve, to dry before the sun;
Of happy memories that I leave when life is done.*

Music to exit: "Gypsy" - Fleetwood Mac