

Grace Elizabeth Owston

2nd August 1936 – 8th October 2020



North East Surrey Crematorium
Monday 26th October 2020 at 3.20pm

Service conducted by Mr Phil Walder

ENTRY MUSIC

Moon River - Andy Williams

WELCOME

THOUGHTS ON LIFE

TRIBUTES TO GRACE

PERIOD OF REFLECTION

Reflection Music

In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning - Frank Sinatra

FAREWELL TO GRACE

CLOSING WORDS

CLOSING MUSIC

Y Viva España – Sylvia

POEM

Those we love remain with us
For love itself lives on.
And cherished memories never fade,
Because a loved one's gone.

Those we love will never be
More than a thought apart.
For as long as there is memory,
They'll live on in the heart.

G IS FOR GRACE

by Anna

G is for Grace, by name and sometimes nature,
It's for generous, with gifts, charity, kindness and love,
For glamorous, gregarious, gallant and gutsy,
Good-humoured, good-natured, good-hearted, good-looking!
G is for Grandma, who loved and was loved, who will be missed and remembered.
G is for Goodbye.
G is for Grace.

MUM IN NUMBERS

By Kathleen

Millions of birthday cards sent to relatives, friends,
neighbours and all their children over the years,
Thousands of pounds raised for charities,
Hundreds of people who knew her and remember her so fondly,
Tens of holidays away with their special friends June and Ken,
Only Thirty people allowed to attend her funeral due to Covid restrictions, and
Half that many, now only Fifteen allowed at the wake....
Mum would have said "How nonsensical!" She loved big parties.
Ten fingers, but she only ever bit one of them when angry,
Five siblings who grew up together for just a few years before Grace flew the nest,
Four grandchildren who she loved so much and supported as they grew up,
Three daughters who she raised, was proud of, and was friends with,
Two great-grandchildren who she would have loved to have known better,
One husband who she loved 'til the end, and was still asking where he was, and when
he'd be back, for several years after his death.

ALL ABOUT GRACE

Grace was born in Plean, Stirlingshire, in 1936 to parents Beth and Bill McVicar. Because her father was an engineer engaged in sensitive war-related works such as building secret underground oil tanks, she moved many times in her early years, living briefly in Glasgow, Invergordon, the island of Hoy in the Orkneys, Edinburgh and Sheffield. By the age of 13 she was the oldest of five children, having three younger brothers - Billy, Ewan and Peter, and a new-born baby sister, Fiona. They moved to Dingwall in the north of Scotland, which she later always regarded as her childhood home.



She attended Dingwall academy, where she apparently became very

popular. Her brother Ewan says that, to this day, elderly gents in Dingwall quietly enquire of him whether he is Grace's brother! She was often left in charge of her younger siblings while her mother became involved in various town social action groups. She coped with caring attention, though was occasionally driven to bite her knuckle in anger – a habit that stayed with her in moments of duress for the rest of her life.

She became a keen supporter of local football club Ross County and volunteered to take money on the turnstile. She embroidered the names of all of the first team members on her scarf, and was a particular fan of the goalkeeper, Benny Sutherland.

In 1953, at the age of just 17, she was put on a train at Inverness by her father and travelled south to Surbiton, where she joined the Civil Service, living in the YWCA hostel and starting work in the Surtax Office at Hinchley Wood. The office employed many young, single people and provided social opportunities for them such as the badminton and ballroom dancing clubs, in both of which Grace enthusiastically participated. She met her future husband, Eric, at an office dance. She later used to joke that she left her previous boyfriend for Eric because he had a car, whereas his predecessor only had a motorbike, and the trips to Brighton as a pillion passenger had been very frightening! Together they made many good friends during these early years at the Surtax Office, such as Mary and David Hugo, Mary and Norman Leppard and June and Len

Manns, with whom they remained friends for the rest of their lives. It was also through the Surtax Office that they originally met June and Ken Benson, with whom they shared many happy holidays in later years.



In 1955, Grace and Eric called her parents from a public phone box to announce their engagement. Her parents were somewhat surprised as they had never met Eric and were disappointed that he was not Scots but a Yorkshireman. Eric attempted to win his future mother in law round by telling her that she must be a wonderful woman to have such a wonderful daughter, which caused much family amusement.

They married in August 1956, two days after Grace's 20th birthday, from the McVicar family home in Glasgow, and Eric's reserved and quiet Yorkshire parents were said to be alarmed by the high spirits exhibited by the McVicar clan in full fun cry!

Grace and Eric started their married life in a flat in Kingston, but, with the arrival of Gillian, nearly two months earlier than expected, decided to move to their first house, in Evelyn Crescent, Sunbury on Thames. In those early days, Grace volunteered as a Brown Owl and became active in the Townswomens Guild. She and Eric made good friends with neighbours Joy and John White, who, like Grace and Eric, went on to have three daughters. Both houses were always full of noisy little girls!

Gillian and Kathleen were bright and bonny children. Grace was a stay-at-home mum, which she enjoyed, taking them to play with friends and to the park, but always home in time to listen to the Archers on the radio. When Johanna was born, things changed a lot. Johanna had a difficult birth resulting in her suffering brain damage. Grace and Eric spent the next 50 years being responsible for Johanna and campaigning and raising money for children with learning disabilities.



The family moved to live at 17, The Byeways, which remained their family home for over 50 years. Grace was kept very busy with her young family. She joined the Townswomen's Guild and starred in some roles in their drama group. She volunteered to help at the local Family Planning Clinic and started a part time job as a doctor's receptionist in 1969. She always went the extra mile, personally delivering prescriptions to older folk and staying extra hours.

Throughout her forties and fifties, and indeed for most of her life, Grace was an exceptionally sociable person, the centre of a huge network of friends. Once she became your friend, you were a friend for life. She had a knack of persuading her friends to help her support her charitable causes, especially the Home Farm Trust, setting up a local branch of the charity in Kingston and Surbiton, and being the driving force behind the opening of a new home for learning disabled adults in the area. The Byeways became a very special little community, in which Grace knew the residents of practically every house. Neighbours would call in daily for a chat and a cup of coffee. She was a truly good friend to many – kind, considerate and always ready to help out in a crisis. She enjoyed hosting parties, sometimes spontaneously, and her annual Hogmanay parties were legendary. She was flamboyant and outgoing, and renowned for a while for the enthusiastic way that she danced to Y Viva Espana with a rose between her teeth!

Grace loved to travel and enjoy new experiences. She went on many trips to European capitals and further afield with her mother, with whom she was very close, her sister Fiona and a group of lady friends who, by all accounts, had a riotous time. She once listed the exciting experiences she had enjoyed on her many holidays as part of a talk she gave to the Townswomen's Guild about her 65th birthday trip in a hot air balloon. Amongst the highlights she listed: flying around the Statue of Liberty in a helicopter, taking off from a Norwegian fjord in a seaplane to travel over a glacier, flying over Victoria Falls in a helicopter, going down in a submarine in Italy, sailing in a catamaran between the islands in Bali and cruising up to the North Cape to see the midnight sun.

Grace and Eric regularly went on holidays with their special friends June and Ken Benson, whom they had first met back in the 1950s. They had many happy trips abroad and closer to home. The four of them especially liked to take Ken's boat along the Thames to Oxford, and spend weeks in Malta. They were all four excellent ballroom dancers, and loved to go to dinner dances, where their skills were widely admired.

Grace had a strong personality. She was a natural leader. However, she had a good sense of humour and was very supportive to Gillian and Kathleen and Johanna and very proud of their achievements. She was a very loving grandmother to her four grandchildren, Kate, Jack, David and Anna. She enabled Gillian to train as a teacher in 1990 by looking after Kate and Jack after school for a year and was always ready to



look after David and Anna, even if it meant driving to Sussex at short notice.

In later years, Grace continued to spend a lot of time with her friends and she enjoyed going to the theatre, sometimes several times a week. Eric spent more and more time in his garden, but things began slowing down quite a bit.



Sadly, Eric died in November 2017 of a sudden heart attack. This is the last photo taken of the five members of the family all together:

Grace moved to live at Linwood after Christmas in 2017 as she had been dependent on Eric for care for some time,

though in typical independent style, had managed to conceal this from many of her friends and family members. She lived there for nearly three years, and, as would be expected, was the life and soul of the party! She liked to join in all the activities, especially if they involved singing songs by Frank Sinatra, and starred at the annual Burns Night celebrations, where she would read the Ode to a Haggis and also recite a poem she knew by heart from her childhood. She enjoyed many visitors, including Gillian and Kathleen, her grandchildren, her baby great granddaughter Alba, her brother Bill, sister Fiona, sister-in-law Annette, June and Ken, neighbours from The Byeways, old and much-loved friends like Joy White and their grown up offspring like Jenny Brown and Carole Speirs. She loved to see photos and videos of her new great grandson, Fran.

Her passing was peaceful and just as she would have planned it, listening to the crooning of her beloved Frank Sinatra. She was a small lady with a huge personality and a true gift of friendship.





Donations in memory of Grace to Linwood Care Home
Cheques made to
“Anchor Trust Linwood Welfare – Mini Bus Fund”
and sent to Linwood Care Home,
9 Mercer Close,
Thames Ditton
KT7 0BS

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