

EULOGY FOR MARGO

It is at Margo's request that I act as the mouthpiece today for her family and for the community here at St Nicholas.

To begin with her brother Iain's words:

Margo was born in Dunfermline, Scotland on 6th May 1955. At that time we lived in Rosyth where my father, who was a pharmacist, managed a pharmacy. Even as a baby Margo was very active, once throwing a tin of Ostermilk out of her pram and hitting an uncle on the head; he carried the scar till his dying day! In 1957 we moved to a small central Scotland village called Sauchie, where my father opened his own pharmacy business. Margo attended the primary school there from 1960 until 1967, where she was a bright pupil, always near the top of the class. She could have quite a temper, once pouring a bottle of lemonade over me because I was tormenting her. After primary school she went to Lornshill Academy in Alloa, a local comprehensive school, until 1973. She was always good at sport, playing in goal for the school hockey team. She would also play football with my friends and me; despite the fact she was three years younger than us, she always gave a good account of herself. After school she attended Aberdeen University from 1973 until 1976, when she graduated.

At Aberdeen Margo met lifelong friends, Kath, Ellie and the late Mary. After graduating she moved to London to work in the Civil Service. On her first day in London she met Sue, another lifelong friend. Margo has always had a fairly extrovert personality: a year after she moved to London, my wife, Aileen, and I went down for a holiday, this would be 1977. One Saturday night we went into a local pub, where an elderly lady was playing a piano; aided by a few alcoholic beverages, Margo soon had the whole place involved in a sing song! It was while she was working in the Civil Service that she met George and they married here in 1985.

Then followed her Chiswick years which will be recalled in a moment.

To return to Iain's words: After George's death, Margo bought a holiday lodge in 2014, close to where she grew up in Scotland. She spent a lot of time there walking her beloved dogs, Sammy and Chico, travelling, and going out for meals with Aileen and me. In October 2015 she was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of stomach cancer, which proved to be inoperable. Despite a very poor prognosis, and undergoing some gruelling chemotherapy, during which she was lovingly cared for by George's niece, Mary, she was determined to live life to the full. She went on holiday to

Benidorm in June 2016 with Kath, Mary and myself. And then she and I climbed a high hill in the Ochils (a hill range close to Alloa) called Dumyat, something she had never managed before.

And so to Margo's years in Chiswick:

No sooner were Margo and George married here at St Nicholas – a joyous occasion, recalls Anne who was singing in the choir - than Margo became, alongside George, a part of the life of the parish. It was a delight to hear her voice, that warm Scottish burr, when she read at parish mass, with such clarity and care. She quickly became involved with families, meeting the children at Sunday School, where they remember fondly how she managed them brilliantly, however awkward they were, and always had a cuddle for them. For Clan McBride, among other families, she became part of their life. She was always up for taking part in events – do you remember the walk to St Paul's Cathedral for the Church Urban Fund ? Although still in full-time work she somehow managed to have plenty of energy for parish activities. Not to forget regularly out-playing Wendy at the golf clinic they went to and serving seven veg at a time for lunch ! And then there were the legendary New Year parties, at 71 Devonshire Road, never to be forgotten.

When Margo retired her energies were devoted to George, making sure that his last years were happy and fulfilled. It was at this time that their dog Billy came into their lives, and proved a great companion and comfort to both of them. Margo made sure that George was able to participate in events at St Nicholas such as reading on Remembrance Sunday, his medals resplendent on his chest, or going to parish parties when he was in a wheel chair, right up till the end of his life.

After George died, and when, not so long after, Billy shockingly died, Margo thought of having a pause to take stock. But as things turned out it wasn't many weeks before, at Father Simon's suggestion, she took on organizing pastoral care at St Nics, making sure she knew who needed a visit, whether someone was ill, for whom to keep an eye open. And then she had the vision to start the monthly community lunches which have been such a great success. This was when we realized what a superb organiser she was, with meticulous attention to detail, but making the running of the lunches such fun for all who helped her. A truly professional administrator with a heart. And she helped to run so many events, with lively meetings convened at the George and Devonshire beforehand: the Lucys recall the film nights, the Burns night, the race nights – and thereby hangs a tale: remember the first time we were handed £10 Talents to take away and grow for the church 's Development Appeal ? Well, Margo went off to the

bookies with her Talent and those of four others, placed a £50 bet that Andy Murray would win Wimbledon (what a good thing he did) and took the sizeable winnings back to underwrite a very successful fund-raising race night !

These past months Margo seized the chance of some let-up in the advance of her cancer, to go on the pilgrimage to Walsingham, an important experience for her; she even, amazingly, managed the 13 mile parish walk with Chico and Sammy from Sunbury to Chiswick, with a pause for a picnic in Richmond Park. On arrival at the Convent, she continued to think of others, sending flowers to a friend whose mother had died, issuing the Servers rotas, her last one just two or three weeks ago, and only three days before she died she was enquiring whether the choir cottas were clean !

Margo will be remembered for her smile and cheerfulness, her kindness to those who needed help and the way she would always put herself out for others; for her warmth and sense of fun; her energy, feistiness and determination – for instance that we WOULD have loos in church; her generosity of spirit as well as of her substance; her faithfulness, her dedication to St Nics , her commitment in all she did, summed up for us by Jan with her list of ‘Cs’ for Margo, winging its way over from Australia through the ether: caring, compassionate, considerate, capable, confident, community-minded and cook par excellence ! Perhaps most memorable of all will be that this open-hearted woman showed us how to live with intensity, and such courage and bravery, right to the very end, looking death straight in the face. As she received the last rites the night before she died, she could hear the bells of St Nicholas ringing out their message to her all the way across to the Convent.

We conclude with her brother Iain’s words:

This time last year Margo, Mary, my wife Aileen and I had a lovely Christmas and New Year at her Lodge. She was determined to do the same this year, but alas it wasn't to be. Her health started to decline in August and she spent a month in Charing Cross hospital, then went into St Mary's Convent and Nursing Home, where she had a lovely room overlooking the garden and excellent care from the staff until her peaceful death on Tuesday 12th December.

Margo was a guiding light among us.

Christabel Ames-Lewis