

Eulogy for Evelyn Thompson

29/5/2015

I knew Evelyn over the past 30 years as mother-in-law, friend and grandmother to our children. She was a loving mother to my wife Stephanie, and Stephanie's brother and sister, Colin and Angie. She was a superb grandmother, always eager to make the journey down to London to look after the kids as they grew up and we are grateful for her love and the impact she had on them. She died a great-grandmother as her great-grandson, our grandson, was born two weeks before her death.

In addition to her London grandchildren, Paolo, Giselle, and Mia she is remembered by Colin's son Zeek in the USA and Angie's five children in Australia: Nathaniel, David, Sam, Sarah and Rebecca. After each of their births, she made the long trip to Australia to visit and help out.

Children were the focus of her life during a long career teaching primary school. Evelyn taught for 22 years at Roxbourne School in Rayners Lane, west London. She became deputy head and was much loved by students and parents there. She had a particular affinity with the immigrants in the community, stemming, in part, from her own background.

Because at age two she left her native London and spent her formative years in India. She spent time on a tea plantation with her uncles and attended a boarding school in the Himalayas – at Nainital, a village by a mountain lake that gained mythical status every time she told stories from her time there.

There she trained as a teacher and met her future husband, Patrick. The first meeting was when they both acted in a student production of an English comedy called 'The Housemaster'; starring Patrick as the bachelor housemaster at a public school and Evelyn as one of his rebellious foster daughters, leading his students astray and causing mayhem at the school. All somehow hard to imagine now, but I did check the plot synopsis.

She claimed she was a hopeless student of the local language Gujarati, but was later able to relate with her Gujarati-speaking students and their families in England. She understood how strange some aspects of everyday English life could seem to a newcomer. She had returned alone to England, age 18, by ship from Calcutta. One of her first experiences here was missing her stop on

the Tube before discovering how the train doors operated— later this served as a cautionary tale for Stephanie on her first solo journey on the Underground.

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After retiring in 1990, Evelyn moved here to Hertford where she led a happy and active retirement. Many of these activities were charitable. She worked and ran the Oxfam bookshop in Hertford. She was involved with the Co-op society and Christian Aid, serving as treasurer for both.

She loved music and the Hertford Music club – attending many concerts and recitals, often taking an older, less spritely friend with her. And in her later years, she herself, was taken by good friends, particularly Hilary and Joan.

Evelyn was a girl guide in India and was excited to join the Trefoil guild here in England. Barbara from the Guild will soon have a few words to say about that.

Always willing to help a good cause, Evelyn collected for poppy day, the lifeboats, guide dogs, the RSPCA and was usually one of the first to volunteer for tasks in her various organisations.

Evelyn was a lifelong, devout Christian and throughout her time in Hertford was an active member of this church.

Finally, celebrating her well lived, fulfilled life we should consider the values that Evelyn would want us to bear in mind. Namely, the importance of the young and their education and a compassion for others, especially the less well off in the community.