

I know there were times of sorrow in Mum's life - Stephen dying, Dad dying, the loss of friends and siblings outlived, the too quiet times between loved ones coming to stay or visit.

However she never lost her extraordinary gift for happiness. She loved life and so much that it contained. Not even Alzheimers could take that away. In that, she was lucky, and we were lucky. If anything her capacity for joy increased with her years. And she was not afraid of dying.

As Paul has said, she loved the river, watching the changing tides and life of the river, watching the people walking past. She loved to sit in her chair on the porch to enjoy the sun and the view. In summer she'd pull her trousers up above her knees to have the sun on her legs. One time she was even found sitting there in just her shirt and knickers when trousers proved too much! Hardly a day went past that she didn't say "Oh I'm so lucky to have all this".

She was a rare person in being able to get such genuine and total pleasure out of other people's achievements and happiness. "I'll think of you going there" she would say before my trips abroad. She loved to hear what we'd been doing, seeing the photos, hearing the funny anecdotes. It was so easy to make her proud.

She was even glad for people she didn't know. On a sunny Sunday walking slowly on the Green, or on a fine bank holiday she would say "Isn't it wonderful to think of so many people enjoying this lovely weather!"

She passionately loved spending time on the canals. She was a water gypsy at heart, and still loved her canal trips with Brigitte and Antonia, Adrian, John, and Brigitte's friends. Before each trip - months and months in advance - she would make exhaustive lists of everything to be taken. Anticipation was such a pleasure! She would be happy to know that she is still going on the canals this year - that before we sprinkle her ashes on the Thames to be with Dad's, they will be taken on the Llangollen trip she was so looking forward to in June.

She had a wonderful sense of humour, sense of fun, and sense of the ridiculous. She never took herself too seriously, and once asked everyone coming to her party to wear a silly hat. While we've planned her funeral and flowers with a boat theme we have felt her laughing. She - would - have - loved - it!!

She loved her games of scrabble and chess, or watching 'Brideshead Revisited' and 'Out of Africa' for the nth time - she knew all the words!

She loved her Dover Sole from Char most Fridays, and Brigitte and Martha's excellent cooking always. "Food is such a pleasure!" she would say, and she had a total weakness for butter!

She loved hearing what Mel was doing and seeing her grand children, Jake, Alex and Sebi grow.

She loved to sing and would often burst into song unexpectedly. She always had a beautiful voice. I have to admit as children this could be embarrassing when in public, but it was wonderful to still hear in later years - a true soaring of spirit. She'd sing sitting in her reclining chair, or in the kitchen waiting to eat. She even sang at the hairdressers, which, I should add, they thoroughly enjoyed. Most frequently it was "This is my Lovely Day" from grandpa's Bless the Bride, or Daisy Daisy give me your aunt's ado. I can hear her now.

Music was her life blood – Bach, Mozart, and particularly opera. She loved Pucini and never failed to mention that Boheme was grandpa's favourite too. She could still tell you the composer and signature of most pieces. She would sit transfixed, mouth open, eyes closed, focusing on every note of a favourite aria, absolutely transported. I am so grateful to her carers for taking her music when she went into hospital on that last day. Although unconscious, her face apparently relaxed with the music, and she became very calm and serene. She was surely aware of it. She died peacefully to the Brandenburg Concerto turned down low.

From the bottom of my heart I want to thank Martha, Brigitte, Antonia, and most recently Solveig – the L Team as they are known – for their priceless care of mum over the last few years. No one could have done more, and they made it possible – as carers and lodgers - for her to stay in the home that she loved. Their love and creativity gave her a safety that never smothered, but instead was a huge measure of her happiness and joy. I can't thank you enough for being there to the end with Paul and other family members when I couldn't be there.

I want to read you one of Mum's poems. She prized her solitude as well as loving company, and with the Alzheimers she started to write poetry. She didn't always remember to tell visitors about her poems. But they are so 'her' – charming, funny, sometimes sad, communicating something that was important to her or suddenly triggered by something she saw or heard. She would be delighted to think of us including them here, and we have put a number of them in a small booklet for you to take away in memory.

She wrote this poem after her great friend Ursula died:

A friend

A friend has been and now is gone –
It leaves me feeling rather wan.
Although the sun is shining bright
I have no energy to fight –
I am at peace, but rather sad
There are some things I wish I had –
A golden age, a lasting youth,
The means to love, and that's the truth.