



Celebrating the Life of
Lillian O'Brien
'Lily'
'Nanny'

23rd January 1921 – 15th March 2017

Parndon Wood Crematorium
Tuesday, 4th April 2017 at 11.30 am

Conducted by
Steve Stacey - Civil Celebrant

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Celebrating the Life of

Lily

Entrance Music

My Kind Of Girl – Matt Monro

Welcome & Introduction

Welcome here today as we meet to celebrate the life of Lily, to pay our respects to her and to support each other in our loss.

She was unique, there's never been anyone like her before. If you look through the whole world you'll not find anyone like her again.

She was one of life's true characters.

She was a kind and caring woman whose family meant everything to her.

She was selfless – if she could help someone out, then she would. She put the needs of others before her own.

She was a smiley and happy person with a great sense of humour. She had a ready wit.

She was a canny lady who was always four jumps ahead of everyone else. She was very astute and no-one could pull the wool over her eyes! She was very careful with money – her attitude was always if you can't afford it, don't buy it!

She was a good confidante and offered wise counsel.

She was a bright and clever woman – very independent she knew what she wanted and could be quite stubborn at times. Once she had made up her mind, she wouldn't listen to anyone else! ... she was standing on a ladder decorating in her 80's and still driving into her nineties.

Lillian was known as 'Nanny' to her immediate family – even her son, Fred, calls her Nanny and not Mum. To others, she was Lily!

She was the lynchpin that kept the family together. She had one son, Fred, but she also regarded a family friend, Pat or Aunty Pat as being like a daughter to her.

She was instrumental in helping to raise her two granddaughters, Melanie and Nicola. Lily was also a very proud great-Nanny to great-granddaughters, Genevieve (8 years old) and Jemima (2 years old).

Her family are the legacy that she leaves behind, a living and growing memorial to her and a testament to the love of Alf and Lily.

We take a moment to remember Alf. The couple were best friends and soul mates. Alf was always in her heart and never far from her thoughts.

Our service is a celebration for her life and everything that she leaves behind. It's a time to look back to when she was fit and healthy and enjoying everything life had to offer her.

I hope that you feel that our service for her does reflect, respect and honour the Lily that you knew and loved and that it gives you the opportunity to pay your respects to her in the way you would wish.

Lily's Story

I'm indebted to Melanie for gathering together so much of Lily's story for us today.

Lillian Florence, Lily was born on 23 January 2021 in London to Thomas and Lily Dodd who lived and worked at 111 Mildmay Road, Islington. Her family were furriers and made fur coats and the like.

At some point they moved to Edmonton.

She was the eldest of 3 children. Her brother John was born when Lily was 3 years old and her sister, Joan, when Lily was 8.

Tragically, John died when he was just 13 years old.

Lily and her sister Joan were incredibly close throughout their lives. Sadly, Joan died last year. She was also extremely close to Joan's husband, her brother in law, Peter, whom she regarded as more like a brother to her.

She met her husband Alfred O'Brien at the Regal Edmonton weekly dance whilst in her teens. Whilst she called him Alf – he was known to most other people as Pat (because of the Irish surname).

Ballroom dancing was something they both adored and shared until Alf passed away in 1979. She tried in vain to teach her granddaughters to waltz and to do the foxtrot and whilst they got the basic steps – Strictly won't be calling anytime soon.

They married in 1942 when Lily was just 21. Alf was keen to get married to avoid Lily having to get too involved in the war effort. He wanted to keep her safe.

Her first job was making war samples.

When her son, Fred, was old enough, she got a job at the chemist, Timothy Whites. This was certainly the job she enjoyed the most. She talked for hours about her time there and what she got up to.

If times had been different and she had been born in a time where girls were encouraged to attend further education and get high end jobs, she may well have ended up working in this type of field - maybe as a pharmacist. Certainly, there are many of Lily's close family members who work in the medical area - Granddaughter, niece and great-niece are nurses and her nephew in law a paramedic.

As it was, she worked for Timothy Whites for quite a few years whilst also caring for Fred. She was well-respected and often sent 'uptown' (such as to Piccadilly in the West End) to attend Max Factor demonstrations and to attend to sales agents attending the shop.

With her husband, she then helped to run 2 Wimpy bars in Edmonton and Chingford. It was a real family business.

Some of her granddaughter Melanie's favourite childhood memories are watching her Nanny make trays of doughnuts in her home kitchen (but which she wasn't allowed to eat!) and helping to spoon tinned strawberries and chopped nuts onto ice-cream sundaes and Knickerbocker glories!! She would sit in the corner seat opposite the till in the Wimpy bar in Chingford doing her homework and watching her Nanny expertly manage the restaurant. A perfect role-model for a young girl.

Later in life and purely so that she didn't get bored in her retirement, she took on some cleaning and ironing jobs for people who she later regarded as true friends and were very dear to her. Monica and Lorraine in particular became like family members to her and have always been so kind to her in return.

Lily had the strongest survival and work ethic of anyone we knew. She would find something and turn it into something useful. In fact, when Alf and Lily started out they were living in a single room and she told many stories of how she managed. She put all her possessions under a table and fashioned some sort of curtain to hide everything away. They really struggled and pretty much started with nothing.

Maybe it was this start in life and having to survive through WW2 that made her so thrifty.

She famously kept everything and never threw anything away.

To this day, her attic is full of bits and bobs that she thought may come in handy – and sometimes they did! From the enormous 'button box' containing hundreds of odd buttons, to the odd bits of material and endless Tupperware, she could find just what you needed. 'I'll just go look in the loft' was a phrase she used a lot and she

saved the day on so many occasions coming down the ladder with just what you needed.

Her kitchen cupboards were always stuffed. She could have lived for a year with just the contents of her cupboards and the freezer. She even bought tins with no labels on. It was like a dinner lottery – you never knew if it would be tinned peaches or steak and Kidney for tea!! She would simply open a tin and design a dinner.

She made endless jars of orange marmalade and redcurrant jelly. She was an excellent cook – her Yorkshire puddings were legendary and hit the roof of the oven they were so big.

As a fantastic gardener, she would grow enormous runner beans and huge courgettes and marrows. Everything was frozen down to keep the whole family going through the winter months. She only stopped doing this a few years before she died. It was not being able to go into her garden that caused her most upset in her last years.

She loved flowers and flower arranging. She could grow anything. Give her a patch of ground and she would turn it into a floral paradise.

She was a wiz at dress-making. The things she could make with her trusty sewing machine were legendary. She could fashion the most amazing costumes for her son's and then granddaughter's school productions.

Notably, Melanie was the most amazing bluebird decked out in a fabulous creation made entirely of crepe paper and Fred, to his eternal shame, was dressed out, also in crepe paper as Sir Walter Raleigh. We have photos to prove it.

She was an expert knitter and made wonderful jumpers and playsuits for her grandchildren and grand-children. Her great-granddaughter, Genevieve, was particularly fond of her blue bobble hat she wore to her first day at school and she and her sister, Jemima, have the best dressed dollies in the UK!

Later in her life she tackled bobbin lace making. Her lace creations are incredible.

They spent every Sunday with her as children as well as every school holiday. The long summer holidays in particular spent with Nanny are cherished memories for Melanie and Nicola. She always came up with fun and interesting things to do. Times were never dull with Nanny around.

She used to take her granddaughters to Pontins Holiday Camp in Hemsby, Norfolk every year. They had to endure endless runs of Roger Whittaker and Matt Monro on the tape player – these being the only tapes she had in the car. They always stopped at the Little Chef on the way down – a big thing for thrifty Nanny who normally took

egg sandwiches and lemon & lime squash (with her trusty Tupperware cups) on any trips out.

Her Granddaughters are so proud that she won the best Nanny competition at Pontins! They are less thrilled about the memories of the assortment of hats they were made to wear each year for the 'make a hat' competition.

From the contents of her handbag, a few paper plates and napkins and other bits pinched from the dinner table and whatever else she could find, the girls were decked out in the most outrageous hats known to man. There is recollection of one year, Nicola having to endure the ridicule of having a toilet roll sitting proudly on her hat!

Lily took few other holidays but did have a couple of trips to Thailand. In particular, the whole family - Lily, Fred, Melanie, Nicola and Pat enjoyed a fabulous holiday in Thailand to celebrate her 80th birthday.

She lived her later life in Hertfordshire and Essex. With her husband, she lived most happily at 'High Trees', a bungalow that she and Alf had renovated in Great Amwell near Ware. The house was far too big for her to cope with (and the memories of her late husband too heart breaking) for her to continue to live in so she moved in the early 80s to Nazeing.

She continued to drive up until just a couple of years before her death.

Until a fall, which damaged her neck, she was so active and lived a life like someone 20 years younger than her. She cooked herself a meal every day – a proper feast with at least 5 different vegetables on her plate. She attended Whist drives and went on trips with some local elderly groups. It was not being able to continue to be this active that made her mind up – sitting around simply was not her style.

She was frustrating! She never listened and even if she did hear you, she would do the complete opposite. But that was Nanny – she was her own woman!

Lily lived for a long time and would have lived longer had she not decided that enough was enough and that it was time to join her beloved husband.

She was so loved and has left a huge void in her family's lives that cannot be filled. But the memories they have and the stories they can tell, will continue indefinitely. She made her family laugh, made them cry with frustration but most of all, she made them feel loved.

God bless Nanny!

Quiet Reflection

Lily passed on the 15th March.

I hope that you can take comfort in the fact that she did have a good life and a long life. She was able to spend so much of it with the man that she loved. She does leave behind that wonderful legacy of family and beautiful memories of a very special person.

During the next few moments, think about the things that you've heard today. Think about your own memories of her - they will be every bit as special and unique as she was. They will be special, unique to you and her and no two of you will have exactly the same ones.

Think about why it was good to have had Lily as part of your life - the impact that she had on you.

If you have faith, you might like to use the time to say your own private prayer for her.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen

The Committal

Sadly, Lily has reached the end of her journey here with us. She is at total peace.

Lily...

To everything there is a season
A time to be born and a time to die.
We are glad that we shared our lives with you.
We will cherish all of the good things that you brought into our lives.
We will remember your character and your personality,
We will treasure the love and the laughter.
We will recall the things that you did with us
And the happy times we shared together.
We commit the memory of you
To our hearts and minds.
With love and tenderness we leave you in peace.,
And take comfort that you are now reunited with your darling Alf.

Closing Words

It has been said that a person is not dead while their name is still being spoken. That we are only truly gone when we disappear from the memories of those who loved us.

Lily will be held safe in your hearts and minds forever, as you tell the stories and laugh about the things she did and said and you recall what she meant to you. While you remember Lily, she will live on.

We never lose the people we love. Be thankful that Lily was and still is a part of your life.

She now lives on in her family and in the hearts and minds of all those who knew and loved her.

When we finish here, you are all invited to Nanny's house. Enjoy talking about her; laugh at stories of things she got up to, things that she said.

Remember the good times, remember the happiness that you shared with her and the lessons that she taught you - and know that she is with you always.

Lily, Nanny had a good sense of humour and would appreciate our final words today. Perhaps they are what she'd want to say?

As Mum Would Say

I hope this box was clean
Before you put me in.
Make sure it's thoroughly dusted
Before you shut the lid.

Make sure it's got some air holes
Because you know how hot I get,
And give me an umbrella
I don't want my hair getting wet.

Put the bags of recycling
Just outside in the bins
Check my lottery tickets
Just in case I've had a win.

Oh remember, don't forget
My plants will need a drink
You'll find the spray in the kitchen.
It's over by the sink.

And last but not least

Get some cake and take a sweet
Throw the rest out to the birds
Cause I don't think it will keep.

Oh and when you come to visit
Any flowers will do,
I like all varieties
And I'm sure Dad does too.

Thank you for being here today for Lily and for each other.

Thank you to Lily for being the very special lady you were.

Exit Music

Empty Chairs, Empty Tables – Michael Ball

