

Phyl Eulogy

Phyllis, or Phyl as she later rebranded herself, was a true character – she was a very strong minded, intelligent and proud lady.

Phyl was born in Oldham; daughter of Jane & Phil Barnes, sister to Jack & Pauline, wife of Colin, mum of daughter Amanda, Grandma to David, James & Daniel and Great-Grandma to Maisie Mae (she was so thrilled to be in Florida when Maisie was born); she was also blessed with a wide extended family of in-laws, cousins and God children.

She was born in a time when education for girls was not seen as a priority – instead she had to go out to work earning money to help support the family. She often regretted not being able to go onto further education, however her strong drive meant she still managed to put her skills to good use in the business world as she was a key part of running Colin's plumbing business. When I first met her (44 years ago) I thought she was on a mission to get an entrepreneur of the year award.... Driving through Waterhead we passed the newsagents that they owned and where they lived, which was next door to the Greengrocers they used to own, which was down the hill from the Flower Shop they once owned..... and then a few years later they bought and ran the local Fish and Chip shop over the road!! She was not afraid to take on a challenge and loved nothing more than counting the money at the end of the day.

She was a very glamorous lady and appearances were important to Phyl. Sifting through hundreds of photos over the past few weeks has been a great reminder of just how immaculate and fashionable she dressed. Her wardrobes were stuffed full of clothes which she'd bought and hidden from Colin so he didn't know how much she'd spent. Actually, he probably wouldn't have worried anyway as Phyl was in charge of the accounts just like her mother and sister had always been.

Even as recently as last month she'd have her hair curlers in every day and still insisted on tottering around everywhere in high heels.

Amanda, or 'Our Mandy' was the apple of Phyl's eye and the two of them were inseparable friends and 'partners in crime' throughout life. When Mand was young Phyl spent countless hours plaiting Mand's horse for shows and attempting the impossible task of keeping Mand's white jodhpurs clean. In later life their infamous shopping trips to M & S and Garden Centers became more and more frequent and always ended in a glass of wine or two at the local bar. Life was never dull with Phyl around and she was never far from drama,,,,, whether it was falling down steps at Sandown races or attempting to ski at the ripe old age of 65, she loved her annual trips to the Hampton court festival and theatre trips. My favourite drama

moment has to be a trip to Dubai when the kids were very young. Phyl took on the task of looking after Daniel in the swimming pool, however her eyesight was not the best and as she was walking round the edge of the pool she didn't see the edge and took a large stride right into the pool..... For those of you old enough to remember it was a proper 'Freddie Starr' moment! There she was face down in the pool arms flapping around screaming Help! Help! I'm drowning. Hundreds of guests leapt off their sunbeds in alarm. Moments later a muscle-bound lifeguard bounded onto the scene, took her by the hand and calmly asked her to 'just stand-up madam'. Which she did, and much to her embarrassment she realized she was in the kiddies paddling pool that was no more than 12 inches deep!

She reveled in her role as Grandma to David, James & Daniel and as you've heard from Mand, looking after the boys when they were young was one of the highlights of her life.

She was a regular at the touchline cheering the boys on at rugby, football, cricket, hockey and tennis – and was so proud of all 3 of them.

Phyl believed in family and had a kind and generous nature. When Pauline and John had a serious car accident in 1980 in Oldham, she invited them into their home to stay and recuperate. John has always blamed her for getting him hooked on the appalling TV series DALLAS at that time. Later in life, when Pauline and John were moving house and were homeless for 3 months, she welcomed them into her home for the duration.

I've mentioned she was determined and strong willed.....

which could often stretch to being outspoken and direct, not afraid to express her views...

Tact and diplomacy were not amongst her greatest attributes....

She definitely called it the way she saw it which others could find annoying.. as I'm sure her grandsons can attest.

But, to her credit she stood up to her views and was willing to argue her point with anybody who took the bait.

Her sense of fun and humour was wonderful, and she loved a good giggle even her own expense.

One of my favourite tricks, whenever we saw a hippo or rhinoceros on the television was to say to Mand 'oh that reminds me, how is your mother?'. Phyl's response was normally a crack around my head with the words 'You cheeky big bugger'.

In later life she did have a lot of ailments and illnesses and was registered blind for many years, however you'd be forgiven for not knowing as she just got on with life, using special reading glasses which she used for her daily crosswords and sudoku. She also loved Zumba, pilates and yoga well into her 80's as recently as last year we were around the pool in Florida and she insisted on me teaching her how to do sit-ups and stomach stretches..... I asked her why? and she said she needed to firm-up her stomach muscles – Yeah, even at the grand old age of 86 she'd decided it was time to get a proper six-pack.

Phyl loved her time in Byfleet, living next door to Sarah, surrounded by wonderful neighbours and friends together with her weekly visits from Claire and Sam.

Phyl and Colin were a great team together and looked after each other throughout life, they were married for 68 years and adored each other. They loved dancing, especially jiving to rock n roll and were immune to embarrassing the boys, in fact the boys cringing just encouraged them to dance even more! Phyl was a massive Strictly Come Dancing fan and never missed an episode.

Colin in particular worshipped Phyl and the last moment they were together was as Phyl left the house to get in the ambulance, Colin gave her a big hug and a kiss saying 'I love you my darling'.....

Although her passing was unexpected it is comforting she had her daughter Mand and her sister Pauline by her side, she had just spent a lovely weekend with her Grandsons and their girlfriends and had recently had some quality time spent with Sandra and family.

She will be sorely missed by all those who she loved - and who loved her.

Rest in peace Phyl, and thanks for all the good times x x x x