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21 August 2019

Dear Family, Friends, Neighbours, et al

JANE CHRISTINE SNODGRASS NEE HALLIDAY: RIP
21 DECEMBER 1947 – 18 AUGUST 2019
FUNERAL SERVICE AND BURIAL
ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, ELTON, DE4 2BW
FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2019 AT 1400 HOURS

Our dear Jane died on Sunday.

Jane was taken ill in late 2016. Without telling anyone, she soldiered on, hosting a very large family Christmas at our home. In February 2017 she became jaundiced and she was not able to ignore or disguise her illness any longer. A tumour had crushed her bile duct and she was diagnosed with a cancer of the pancreas which was deemed to be inoperable and terminal. She had a number of brutally painful and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to get a biopsy sample, so the cancer was never absolutely identified. She suffered a number of again brutally painful attempts to get a stent into her bile duct, rotating round a number of the Sheffield hospitals as increasingly senior surgeons tried their hand. Finally, one was successful on what she had been told would be their last attempt. She was then told to go home and get her affairs in order because she had only "months" to live.

However, being Jane, she opted to have two courses of the strongest possible experimental chemo therapy during 2017. To avoid having to stay in hospital for the duration, she came home with the chemo poison in a bottle hanging from her belt. I did the very short course (a ten minute demonstration) to become her District Nurse so that I could change her chemo bottle and the dressings on her PIC line. This was not simple for me to do even at home, but was even more challenging to do in a sterile way in our small caravan in a muddy field in Cumbria, with a wet dog assisting. However, Jane was thus able to continue to do all the important things in her life: be our loving matriarch and home maker, cook wonderful meals, bake cakes, make jams, visit friends, be Secretary of the Parochial Church Council (PCC),

and take at least one daily dog walk, sometimes two, round our wonderful hills and dales.

In late 2017 she had two courses of radio therapy, for which she needed three aiming marks, and thus acquired her first and only tattoos.

I got a gold star from the cancer hospital for my dressings. Jane should have had a VC for courage and her "grace under pressure". Jane was a "Nightingale" who had devoted her life to nursing and serving others. Therefore, at all times she knew and understood what was going on, the risks and the likely outcomes. This may have required even more courage than being ignorant.

Jane was determined that we would honour the existing holiday let bookings for The Manager's House, www.cheesefactory-cottages.co.uk, for 2017.

The chemo and radio therapies probably delayed further growth of the tumour, thus giving us 2018. We stopped taking holiday bookings, except for a small number of returners and friends. We had no 'bucket list'. We had a number of short stays on our boat, mostly on its mooring in the River Dart. We stayed in a friends' holiday lodge on the Roseland Peninsula in Cornwall. In November 2018 we had one last big 'adventure', taking the two night ferry to Northern Spain and driving the length of France from the Pyrenees to Calais, visiting friends on the way. En route we got to know the Gilets Jaunes ... who were always most welcoming, providing that we waved our yellow vests and tooted our horn.

In January 2019 the cancer grew again and squeezed Jane's duodenum so that she could not pass any food. Again a number of attempts were made to insert a stent, this time into her duodenum. This became a crisis and we said our last goodbyes. Again there was success on a 'final attempt'. Jane was then told that the stent meant that she would be on a very restricted diet, mostly of 'gloop' from a plastic bottle. Again she tackled life bravely. Jane told me in no uncertain terms to get the boat scrubbed, antifouled and back in commission. Our last modest adventure was to take part in the Brixham Heritage Sailing Regatta at the end of May. We brought the boat back to Dartmouth together and Jane helmed into the River Dart on a glorious evening.

June and July were spent quietly and very gratefully at home, with visits from the family and visits to 'Well Dressings' and open gardens in nearby villages. The attached photograph of Jane was taken near our home by her sister Anne, exactly one month before Jane died. She was climbing a seven bar metal field gate to make a detour to avoid cattle loose on a footpath. Beeley, the border collie, was somewhere 'out of shot'. Please note Jane's 'badges of office': Tilley hat, boots, rucksack, dog whistle on a lanyard and dog lead in hand, and of course her lovely, infectious smile. All these will go with her on her next big journey. The only item that

will not be Jane's much loved Hermes silk scarf (mandatory for dog walking!) which I bought for her in our first year of marriage in 1974. That will go to our daughter Hettie.

On the day of the record breaking heat, whilst I mowed the grass at home, Jane set off to the village to socialise at the church Thursday 'tea and toast', to liaise with the new Team Vicar and deal with some PCC matters, and to put up the notices for the next month. The roads in the village were closed due to yet another mains water leak, so she set off on foot to visit friends, and to deliver cards and friendship to the the aged, the sick and the recently bereaved. One of those friends said to me yesterday that she now realises that Jane was doing the rounds to say her goodbyes. Four hours later she returned and then insisted on accompanying me to the tip with the cuttings, to go shopping and then, for the last job of the day, to walk the dog round Stanton Moor which, with the heather in bloom, was looking beautiful beyond measure. In that heat it was a schedule that would have felled someone half her age and with no illness ...

The next day was her last social engagement, 'nibbles and gin' with the ladies of Gratton and Dale End, our small community.

That weekend her health collapsed, probably due to an infection. Appointments with a GP and blood tests followed. Jane was offered the chance to go to hospital but decided to stay at home. By the next weekend things were obviously critical and beyond my coping. Dialling 211 resulted in a visit by an out-of-hours doctor. This time Jane accepted the offer of hospital, much to the relief of family and the District Nurse.

Jane had a two week stay in Ridgeway Ward in Chesterfield Royal Hospital with 'Team Jane' ,ie sister Anne, daughter Hettie and me, staying with her in shifts round the clock. Jane recovered sufficiently to charm and intrigue the staff with her obvious command of her situation (no pills or injections were administered unless she knew and understood what they were!) and her tales of her training and nursing at Saint Thomas' Hospital in the 1960s. We had hoped to get her home for her last days and had arranged a 'pop up hospice' in a downstairs bedroom. However this was not to be.

The facilities and care on Ridgeway Ward were all wonderful. There were struggles on the way of course, but Jane's final end was as good as she or we could possibly have asked for. The staff treated her and her passing with competence, consideration and the utmost dignity. In due course I will write to the Directors of Nursing and of Medicine to commend them all. 'Team Jane' screwed up its collective courage and we were with her in every detail throughout her last hours. It was a privilege to serve her. We learned a lot, mostly about ourselves. As the two gentlemen porters wheeled her out of her single room, we said "Au revoir".

Soon Jane will be brought back to The Cheese Factory and will lie in the sitting room of The Manager's House for some days. On Friday 30th August the good men of Gratton and Dale End will bear her out of the house and onto transport, probably tractor or horse drawn, and we will walk the mile and a half, over the parish boundary and up the steep hill to Elton village. There we will hand her over to the safe keeping of the good people of Elton. Their men will bear her into All Saints' church for a service and then to a burial in the next available plot in Elton churchyard. I will ask for my plot to be reserved next to her for when my time comes. I hope that we all then return to The Cheese Factory for some afternoon tea, courtesy of the ladies of Gratton and Dale End. (Sorry if some of that is non PC gender stereotyped, but we are pretty old fashioned here.)

Just as we did a DIY wedding for Hettie at Elton All Saints' and at The Cheese Factory, this is to be a DIY funeral for Jane. When I registered her death at Chesterfield Town Hall, the young lady Registrar, during her questions, asked me which funeral director would we be using and I answered "None". She paused and gave me a look ... mmm. There is much to be done, but we have just over a week to do it in, and I am learning rapidly. I have discussed our peculiarly Snodgrass approach to this funeral with our vicar and he is supportive.

Jane was a most remarkable lady, loved and respected by all. I never heard her speak an unkind word about anyone. She will leave a big Jane-shaped hole in the hearts of all who knew her.

If you think that you will be attending the funeral service **would you please let us know as early as possible** so that we have some idea of numbers, and how you can best be accommodated in the church and for refreshments. In case of overflow, there will be a public address sound system into the churchyard. Please **congregate outside the church** for Jane's arrival at 2 pm. If you wish to walk behind her from Gratton to Elton, please congregate at The Cheese Factory at 1 pm. Directions are on the web site www.cheesefactory-cottages.co.uk . There will be plenty of off road parking in Gratton.

The wet weather programme is as above, plus umbrellas and wellingtons.

We will help to arrange accommodation for those travelling from afar.

We ask that any flowers of foliage be home grown only please, ie not commercial, or, subject to the usual environmental considerations, wild.

We would be pleased for your **dress to be as colourful as the flowers.**

We will offer you the chance to make a donation to the Elton All Saint's new organ fund to help 'get the project over the line'.

We will sing "Who would true valour see, let them come hither ... " which is a perfect description of Jane.

Please forward or pass on this letter. Check that your family and friends know!

Please do reply and please do come if you can.

With love

jds

Jonathan

And For: Oliver, Hettie and Anne