

Elizabeth's Eulogy

Written by Elizabeth, Fleur's daughter

Today I would like to honour Fleur Elizabeth Gamlin, my Mum.

If she had a signature colour, it was purple.

If she had a signature scent, it was lavender.

She was my biggest fan, warranted or not, and you've got to miss that.

Mum's childhood was loving but dysfunctional; it shaped her in some ways but she moved beyond it in others. She never seemed to hold resentments about that past, never seemed to give up on that family, and strived for happy relationships with them all her life.

In her early years she lived on various properties, usually involving sheep. 'The bush' and 'the land' were part of her identity all her life long, and the pastoral and agricultural life were instilled in us as a noble one.

At thirteen, she attended St Faith's Anglican school in Yeppoon as a boarding student. She was homesick, but the St Faith's girls became friends for life and they continued to meet annually until only a few years ago. After school she returned home to work as a telephonist for a couple of years. She then moved away from home to train and practice as a registered nurse and midwife in regional hospitals and in Brisbane. From this time, she fondly recounted day trips with other nurses to O'Reillys in Lamington National Park, and of saving hard for a camera and a cruise to Japan and Hong Kong. She valued education highly, and received prizes for her achievements at school and during her nursing training. She sought opportunities all through her life to learn and loved to try new things, including night classes in art, learning foreign languages from tapes, and public speaking with Forum.

One of the regional hospitals Mum worked at was in Bundaberg, where she met Dad on a blind date. They courted for several years, including by correspondence. I once asked Dad what attracted him to Mum, and he said it was because she was always 'proper'. I never once heard her swear, and I wasn't even allowed to say the word 'blast', which I would have liked because I'd picked it up from 'The Ghost and Mrs Muir' on TV.

When Mum and Dad married, they lived at Sunnydale in Moorland, where Dad was the fourth generation on this cane farm by the Kolan River. They had me and my brother John. They also had another one who did not make it to birth, and I like to think that little Victoria or little Hugh has welcomed her home now.

In childhood, John and I were blessed with stability and Mum's constancy. There were always clean clothes and a clean house. There was always food in the fridge, and a cooked meal at night and dessert. There were always bed time stories from the illustrated children's Bibles. And, wanting us to better ourselves, there were always times tables and the meanings of suffixes and prefixes to learn on the school holidays.

As an empty nester, Mum returned to nursing in aged care and enjoyed new friends and new challenges. She and Dad also shifted farms to live on Sunrise at Invicta. They were free to travel again and enjoyed adventures in their camper van, and travels and cruises overseas. Mum utterly adored time with her grandchildren, trying her best to give them a nice time in the garden, on walks, lobbying, cooking on campfires, and trying to keep up with Josh playing French cricket and soccer. At our place she read them endless books, sat by them at the computer, and played many tea parties.

Mum's life was based on her faith, and she made it a part of our lives too. When I was little, Mum used to teach Sunday School at Anglican Christ Church. In my primary years, we attended a tiny church at Gooburrum where Mum taught their Sunday School, followed up with ice creams and a swim at Moore Park. She taught religious education at Oakwood State School, and later helped out at Avondale State School. She introduced us to the beauty of the sacraments, polished brass, and



stained glass under vaulted rooves and in little weatherboard buildings. Her faith gave her comfort throughout her life, and up to the very, very end. Her favorite verse was Romans 8:28, 'all things work together for good'. Her lasting legacy is the Christian faith of her children and grandchildren.

Mum loved company and treasured her friends. Whenever I meet with her friends, I have been dazzled by the number of them who say how much they love her. The family is grateful for your kindnesses and for making her life richer.

We are grateful for the prayers and support of the clergy and lay-people of Anglican Christ Church, Good Shepherd Anglican and the Fairways Chapel. Dad has deeply appreciated these recently.

I would very much like to thank my family for their loving support of Mum, especially over the last few years. To Dad, John and Bernie, thank you for meeting Mum's escalating care needs at home, and then for your personal care, thoughtful gifts, frequent visits, many home-cooked meals and the feminine touches to Mum's home at Fairways.

To you all - if your stature was measured in kindness, then Mum and all of our family would be walking amongst giants.

Sometimes I think of life as like driving a car. Your new one works quite well and you have a great time driving it around all over the place. Over time, you get some nicks and dents, maybe some rust spots cut out, but that's just wear and tear. We ladies know what it's like to overheat from time to time. With age, some more expensive repairs are needed, perhaps some engine trouble or replacement of major parts. But when an axle breaks, that just puts the kybosh on it all and you have to get out and walk away.

In 2 Corinthians 5, it says:

'For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ²We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing... ⁴...we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life.' (New Living Translation)

Whatever car we used to have, Mum would transfer her preferences to that new one. She'd say, 'it's a

very nice little car', and pat it on the bonnet. Mum has traded up to a new model now, possibly in purple, and is driving around living her best life.

