

Eulogy for Kathleen Mary Davidson 22 November 1926 – 11 October 2016

Kathleen Mary Davidson was born in Dargaville on 22 November 1926, the 3rd child of Fritz and Alice Goulding. Her childhood was spent learning how to run fast around the family property, Killiney, to avoid her older brother John who chased her with an axe! Whether this was a one off, or whether John always had an axe, I believe sister Betty had a similar experience, we don't know but the early training certainly helped Mum develop considerable athletic ability.



Due to austerity measures at the outbreak of World War 2, Mum's entire schooling was in Dargaville, unlike her older and younger siblings who enjoyed an Auckland based education at St Cuthberts College and Mt Albert Grammar. Her disappointment at missing that experience strengthened her resolve that her own children would get the education opportunity that she felt she missed out on. Nevertheless Mum excelled at sports, was a school prefect and on her matriculation the bright lights of Auckland beckoned and she took up residence in Rocklands Hall, attending Auckland Teachers Training College.

I'm not sure whether she was seeking anonymity or if she just wanted a change but, at training college, Mary became Sue, creating much confusion for years afterwards for friends from different eras in her life. She excelled at hockey and softball representing Auckland and the North Island in hockey and gained a NZ blazer in softball. I do believe Mum was also selected and named in the NZ Hockey team, a team which had the dubious distinction of never playing a game. Not dissimilar to our own experience and those of her grandchildren, photos of Mum in her training college days show her to be very happy, full of fun and enjoying the company of lots of friends and male companions. Dad was in the Air Force and often missed the last train into the city and the last transport back to base after spending time with Mum warding off the competition.

In 1947, Mum's 21st was to be a tennis party at Killiney. Jock hired a car to attend but it broke down. After spending all night on the road he finally made it the next morning. This seemed to set a precedent for important family occasions as Jock missed the birth of both Kay and Grant, not by hours but a week! This apparent lack of occasion or celebration may have contributed to Mum's fairly relaxed attitude to birthday celebrations where her "Oh God" generally meant she had forgotten your birthday and your present would arrive later.

In 1950 Jock proposed to Mum. Mum accepted but promptly announcing she was going to the UK and Europe for a year without Jock. She taught in the UK and hitchhiked her way around post war Europe extending her trip by another year. In a strange coincidence, whilst overseas, Mum met and travelled with brothers Edward and John Brooks with John later becoming her brother-in-law after marrying Lorraine, Mary's younger sister. I can't help but admire the attitude to the timing of that OE where facilities were very limited. That circumstance didn't deter her, which encapsulated her attitude to life – give everything a go, go at a fast pace and don't hold back. It also typifies the patience and love Jock displayed throughout their married life waiting, not 1, but 2 years for his bride!

Jock and Mary married in January 1953 and enjoyed a long and happy marriage. Their 3 children, 8 grandchildren and 1 great granddaughter were loved and cherished. Characteristically busy

however, Mum had little time for doting. She was a working mother, returning to teaching after I started school. I can remember having to sit quietly under her desk waiting until “Big School” finished before we could go home. Her teaching exposed her to all the local kids with whom Kay Grant and I were friends. This could have proven to be a barrier but Mum’s way of dealing with people created life-long respect and friendships reflected in many of you being here today.

I found a note from some of the local boys sent to Mary on her 60th birthday – Congratulations – The boys are glad we never made you old, but I’m sure if you had caught us more often this party would have been earlier. Your trees had the best ammo around and was only a hop, run and duck across the school fields. Loved those great holidays at Baylys. Sorry we couldn’t make it but we are all still running and ducking. Best wishes and many happy returns. Love from Ross, Dave, Derek and Geoff.

Mum was not a person to seek adulation or recognition so what was she doing entering into a Plunket Fundraising competition to find Mrs Devonport? Well she did and she won it which was no surprise to us. This required further participation, and some slight embarrassment, in the Mrs Auckland competition where she placed 3rd. I think wherever Mum thought she could help, she would get involved and give it her best shot. She was certainly restless if she wasn’t doing something.

Mary and Jock were foundation members at the new North Shore Golf Club, just down the road from here, where they played and participated as committee members and club captains. They both threw considerable efforts into the beautification of the gardens around the clubhouse and course for which Mum was awarded a Life Membership. There are legendary tales of the exploits of the Big 8 golfing crew who toured NZ golf courses together for 21 years; The Davidsons, The Tophams, the Perrys and the Jones enjoyed an incredible friendship competing for the big prize of the double bed wherever they were staying. As I understand it, but stand to be corrected, Mary and Jock had a bit of a mortgage on the double bed.

We were all active sportsmen and women but the one game Mum refused to watch was rugby. She considered rugby a dangerous sport and worried we would get hurt. After her grandson Christopher took up professional rugby Meme would always ask him “Have you stopped playing that silly game yet?” Fortunately Mum goes to her grave having been told by Chris, just last week, that “Yes I have stopped playing that silly game.” She acknowledged that with a “Good, its about time!”

Just as Mum was eyeing up freedom from children and teaching in 1978, Jock’s mother went blind and, in a typically selfless way, Mum invited Gran to live with them. For the next 10 years Mary, and Grant’s abandoned dog Jake, became Gran’s minders. Mum resigned from teaching, learnt how to use a braille machine and transcribed books into braille. Mum was all about offering a helping hand but did not tolerate dependency so taught Gran skills in living with blindness. She cajoled and encouraged Gran which ensured she was independent for the last years of her life, an incredibly enriching and rewarding experience for all of us.

At various stages Kay and Rob, Grant and Brenda and Nicky and I lived and worked overseas. Mum loved organising trips to visit us and share some of our regular day to day lives and also experiencing new places with us. These shared experiences in foreign places, following long absences, forged even closer bonds between Mum and her children.

Of course when grandchildren came along Mum threw herself into her role as grandmother or “Meme” as she came to be known. The family bach at Baylys became the centre for extended family holidays and Davidson Christmases. Mum would often take all the grandchildren up to the beach where she taught them games, how to cope with the wild west coast waves, spotting toheroa holes,

climbing cliffs, jumping waves and walking for miles on the beach with no end in sight and no grumbling was allowed. She loved them all fiercely and wanted each of them to have their own special place in her heart.

At Baylys Mum would often get pretty frustrated with Jock's interpretation of a beach holiday being more a "lie on the sofa listening to cricket and reading or doing the crossword" rather than being a "fisher gatherer". She became an adept "seagull" in her efforts to latch onto whoever was netting for fish, often volunteering Grant and me for gutting and cleaning the fish or dragging the net, just so she could get some of the catch. Due to restrictions on taking toheroas, Mum devised a stealthy concealment by sewing pockets into a towel which she could hang around her neck and the folds of the towel would easily conceal her illegal catch. So if you ever passed her on the beach and thought she looked a bit weighed down by life – she was – toheroa life!

When Jock was considering whether he should take up his birthright as the Chief of Clan Davidson, Mum was his staunchest supporter. She felt very proud of the way Jock took on his role and provided leadership to the Clan worldwide. I know Mum also had enormous pride in seeing Grant step into Jock's shoes and continue this legacy. Chief Grant and the Lady Brenda are following in Jock and Mary's footsteps having travelled to Australia earlier this year and will travel to Kentucky in the USA in 2017 to lead Clan gatherings.

The last few years have not been easy for Mum. Accepting her loss of mobility after such an active life was frustrating but she never grumbled and continued to get out and about as often as she could. The need to move away from Jock and independent living to hospital care was gut wrenching but they made that work and were constant companions. The passing of their beloved daughter Kay in 2013 was a body blow but the birth of their first great granddaughter to Kay's daughter Kimberley in February 2014 was cause for celebration. The death of Jock at the end of 2014 and more recently her friend and brother John Goulding were significant losses for us all. Whilst these years and events have not been easy they do not diminish the vibrant, exciting and fulfilled life Mum had.

Mum was selfless and generous with her time and love. She was a lot of fun, a great cook (very important to Grant and I), a wonderful Mother and grandmother and a kind and thoughtful friend to many. She leaves a great legacy which will live on in her grandchildren. After a busy, successful and rewarding life Mum, you are entitled to rest peacefully, together again with Jock and Kay. We love you Mum.