

An Eulogy for Margaret November 19th 2010

42 years ago I was privileged to meet a very special lady. I was a newly qualified teacher and was taking up my new teaching post at Holbrook School.

I was terrified at the daunting prospect and no confidence in myself whatsoever...and then she appeared..my Guardian Angel..Mrs. Margaret Hargreaves ,teacher and human being extraordinaire!!who immediately took me under her wing,made me feel completely at home and was the greatest mentor that I could ever have wished for!

To me Margaret was the fount of all knowledge..a walking encyclopedia...who knew about everything from Apple Pies to Zen..and if she didn't she would soon put her hand on a book that did!!She was a fantastic teacher who always gave 110% to anything she did.The children adored her as did their parents and all that I ever wanted was to be as good a teacher as she was!

Margaret was my inspiration,always ready with help and advice and she taught me how to look Adversity in the face and laugh..and there were times of adversity...many's the day when we would have to cover for one of our colleagues who would pop across the field to her house to peg the washing out....or pop back to fetch it in if it rained..Many's the time we had to run the Harvest Festival and Christmas Concert between us as our colleagues sinuses were in full flair.“It's the dust in the Arkwright Hall Helen...it plays havoc with her nostrils!“Poor Margaret was expected to play the piano at these festivities...she said “I can plonk out a tune with

2 fingers but she (the Head) thinks I'm bloomin Winifred Attwell!!".But she always rose to the occasion...never moaned..just got on with it...and I have inherited her gift for that!!

Margaret taught me everything I know especially how to teach 11 subjects to a class of 35 children whilst chasing next doors chickens out of the classroom and keeping the stove in the corner from going out by shovelling on vast quantities of Coke!!"It's like the Olympic flame Helen...you must never let it go out!"Then with your other hand Helen" she would laugh "you can help me to record Time To Move".Margaret would be the first to confess that she was no technological expert.The School's tape recorder was archaic to say the least and she would often be on the floor surrounded by 5 miles of tangled celluloid...we spent many break times hiding in a corner of the classroom trying to unravel the mess laughing like 2 naughty schoolgirls!!One one occasion in my exuberancy to keep the classroom stove alight I fuelled it to such a temperature that the revered plastic bucket melted(A hanging offence In those days)But Margaret was quick to help she picked it up took it outside and hurled it over the wall towards next door's chicken sheds and quite calmly said "Tell Mrs. T. that one of the chickens flew off with it..Iv'e got one at home and I'll bring it tomorrow"..and she did wrapped the handlebars of her trusty moped!!!

Margaret was always there at momentous stages in my life with her pearls of wisdom and support ,the melted bucket...my engagement,my marriage and after the birth of our children!When I took Ernie my future husband to

tea at the house on Duffield Road he was serenaded by little Christopher and Robert singing “Ernie the Fastest Milkman In the West”..that broke the ice straight away....another one of her gifts!My 3 sons all have fond memories of their “Aunty Margaret” and the houses on Duffield Road and subsequently on Woodlands Close were always a home from home for us all!!She made us so welcome and the boys were given free access to the Lego and books in the loft...and to the snooker table with the bowl of sweets on the side which was far emptier when we left than when we arrived!!They all say that Margaret’s Chewy Cake should go down in History...it was of the stuff that legends are made of!I tried to recreate it at home but she must have put in a secret ingredient because mine never lived up to its name as being either chewy or cake for that matter!!

Margaret made a lasting impression on all of my family...my Mum and Dad loved her and subsequently my Mum’s sister Janet who although having known for only a short time found her to a wonderful special Lady. And so she was...warm,caring and selfless ,always putting others before herself...she was a true inspiration to everyone who came into contact with her.

Margaret was unstinting of time and effort and was always there to offer care and support to those in need and to those less fortunate than herself. She really cared about her fellow human beings...she embodied the true spirit of a Christian lady.When my Mum was very ill she arranged to sit with her every day for me until I got home from school...that’s what she did!

She was also an extremely generous lady and the most touching thing she did for me was to offer to pay for my knee replacement operation so that I could go private and not have to wait...until I explained that she couldn't possibly as it would cost £9.500!! Margaret smiled coyly and whispered.."I haven't got that much"!!

That is one gesture that I will never forget.

Everytime Margaret came to visit she would never arrive empty handed...but fall in through the door carrying bags of apples,sticks of rhubarb and a whole variety of vegetation dug up from her garden that very morning...not to mention a veritable library of books from the Adventures of Noddy to The Evolution of Thermal Dynamics!!When visiting Margaret and admiring her beloved garden I had to be careful not to say that I liked a particular plant or flower or she would be out in a flash with a spade and the aforementioned specimen would be there in a Morrisons Carrier bag!!One day I said how much I admired her apple tree and off she went..."Oh No..chain saw "I thought "and it won't fit into the boot!"...but she just returned with a bag of full of apples!!We have a garden full of plants that will always remind us of our dear friend.

I always enjoyed Margarets company and sharing stories about our families.She was so proud of Chris and Rob's achievements...and she couldn't wait to show me Chris's office in Toulouse on Google Earth or the latest pictures of Rob and his lovely family in China!And my goodness how we could put the World to rights over a cup of Tea!!

Even after my retirement Margaret was still an inspiration to me.She had shocked me by retiring early.."I'm retiring early Helen...couldn't find the

Hipper Centre”!! Now as teachers we were forced to attend courses and no one ever wanted to go to The Hipper Centre.....a small Victorian school in the middle of Chesterfield!! If you missed the turning you had to circumnavigate the one way system Well Margaret missed the turning 4 times! “4 times I went round bloomin Chesterfeild and then I saw the sign to Derby so I went HOME!! At my old school in Ilkeston they still say when they hear of anyone retiring....“bet they couldn’t find The Hipper Centre”!! But Margaret launched herself into so many different things. She had become a superb Public Speaker with topics ranging from Joyce Grenfell to World War 2. I can see her now turning up at my school in Ilkeston to give a talk on the War dressed in a gymslip ankle socks and sandals with her hair in bunches with pink ribbons with a gas mask around her neck!!....the children really believed that she was an evacuee!! But that’s what Margaret did..she put everything into what she was doing!!

She then encouraged me to follow in her footsteps...assuring me that talking to a group of adults was no more daunting than facing a class of 5 year olds...oh yes Margaret??? At least with 5 year olds you can make them cross their legs and put their fingers on their lips!!

But she had faith in me and with her help and advice I succeeded and for that I owe her a great debt of gratitude. She was just that kind of person who instilled confidence in others and gave them the belief that they could achieve whatever they wanted. That will be Margaret’s legacy to me...she gave me the confidence to aspire to do things that I wouldn’t have thought possible.

The World will be a sadder and emptier place without this great lady. Myself and my family will miss her dearly but we are so grateful that she came into our lives and we will always remember her with love and affection.

I would like to close with one of my quotes which Margaret loved and which I feel is appropriate on this day to dedicate to her.

“Some people come into our lives and quickly go, others stay for a while and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never the same”

Thank you Margaret for leaving so many footprints on so many lives and God Bless.