

## **Julia Margaret Doe**

**9 June 1925 – 23 August 2016**

### **Eulogy**

It is a great privilege to be the one to speak for the family today. Looking back on this remarkable life of just over 91 years, we will all have shared a different bit of it, so the Doe boys and girls have embroidered a story to describe our esteemed mother (mama), and grandma: Julia Doe. Norman has written most of this, with input and memories from all the family – Martin, Heather, grandchildren Rachel, Elizabeth and Edward, and Julia's many friends from her long and rich life - including Arnold who sits here now with Val.

1925 is a momentous year. New York becomes the largest city in the world. Mussolini embarks on his dictatorship in Italy. Hitler publishes the first volume of Mein Kampf. Alfred Hitchcock makes his first film. The first television pictures are transmitted from London. Plaid Cymru is founded. The American newspaper magnate Randolph Hearst buys St Donat's Castle in the Vale of Glamorgan. And in Glamorgan's greatest valley, the Rhondda, Julia Margaret Hooper is born – the same year as Richard Burton, Margaret Thatcher and my dad. So the drama unfolds: the Five Ages of Mama. All dominated by one abiding theme - home.

The first age: Julia's mother and father were Edith and Dai Hooper – dama and dampy to the boys. They lived at "Bronwaun", 74 Cemetery Road, Porth – beneath the sweep of Troed-y-Rhiw Mountain and overlooking Dinas, where Walter Coffin sunk the first Rhondda pit in 1812. Edith is petite, perspicacious, and patrician; David Giles Francis Hooper, a stand-up comedian, draper, and local character. You see how life will develop. In childhood to adolescence: from dama, Julia learns etiquette; from dampy, the power of imagination; and from both, the wonder of community. Her eyes open to the enchanted world of Maggie Edwards Walters Pigs, Mrs Jones Pound Note, and Idwal No Socks. Auntie Annie (dama's sister) is now a widow and comes to live at 74; she has an iron leg, and Julia dotes on her. Holidays in Devon at Hallsands: staying with Uncle Jim and Auntie Henrietta at their coastguard's cottage on a cliff top with their dog Bounce; fishing in Uncle Jim's boat - and Brixham Harbour is where Julia acquires her love of the sea and her taste for shrimps and crab. Julia has singing lessons: 'a voice to fill the Albert Hall', says her teacher.

At school, she makes friends to last for life: Eirwen Pugh, Muriel Crowdie, Olive Hughes, Eirlys Morgan, Ruthie Riggs. And a Dutch pen-pal, Adriana Krittenberg, who writes to her even while under Nazi occupation. But the pick of them all is Freda Hutchings, wife of Bert and mother of Arnold (here). Freda is Julia's best friend, her inspiration - and a Jewess. Forever after, Julia has a fascination with Jews who, for her, really were the chosen people - Julia's uncle spoke Yiddish. With Freda's guidance, and Bert's help, Julia becomes a Clerical Officer at the Ministry of Labour in Tonypandy. Outcome: Julia is a party girl.

The second age: Pengarth, the age of glamour. Pengarth is a bungalow in Trealaw; in a beautiful half-acre garden, the first post-war bungalow in the Rhondda, it was built by Jim Doe - a teacher at Tonypany Grammar School. Also in Trealaw is All Saints Church. Julia is church secretary - and now a dead ringer for actress Vivien Leigh. One day Julia comes to Pengarth to collect for the Welsh Church Appeal. And so Julia meets Jim. They marry: 1954. Chalk and cheese, really, but a happy alliance; church and chapel; believer and agnostic; party girl and near recluse. They have Martin and Norman. This quartet now dominates Julia's being. Her goal is to make Pengarth a rustic idyll. She succeeds, brilliantly. Jim is in his element building a summer house, planting exotic grasses, harvesting pears and plums - and helped by Julia's uncles, Ivor and Fred digging as they had on the Western Front (one had been bayoneted, the other a prisoner at Merseburg). There are long summer evenings with Jim's sisters and their families; day-trips with dama and dampy to chase butterflies at Rest Bay Porthcawl; Julia's embroidery: all roses and cottages. Enid Blyton books feature in Pengarth - as if mama wanted to bring them to life there, especially Mrs Tiggy Winkle.

But Martin finds his legs, and Norman his laziness. Mama is exercised by Martin's tendency to scare the neighbours with 40 foot tree-climbs, leaping over coal heaps, and careering downhill on his scooter - sometimes ending in hospital. For Norman's make-believe world of the Apache, she makes a Geronimo outfit and countless equivalents, and teaches him to draw. One day dama fell in the pond: mama turns it into a tale for telling. Auntie Katie and Uncle Will were dear friends: their front door never locked; Julia enters with a 'yoo-hoo'; Katie is arthritic and can't go to see; and Will is blind and can't see to go. So, Julia introduces Dada to her circle of friends; he simply didn't get it: once, he was in the same room as Mama, Dama, Minnie Jarman, and Raddy Lloyd James; they were all, he said, 'gassing simultaneously: it was chaos'. Pengarth: Julia becomes a little patrician herself.

The third age. In 1965 dampy passes away - looked after so wonderfully by Mr and Mrs Cronin next door. The Does move to live with dama back at 74, to be near Porth County Grammar School - hoping the boys pass the 11+ to go there. It is, for mama, the age of reason, discipline and policing. The boys are having the time of their lives - with their blood-brothers next door: John, Michael, Edward and Andrew Cronin. It's the most extraordinary of times. The Doe and Cronin boys run wild: up the mountain; up the farm; on their bikes; in tree houses; on the County School roof; inside the school: naughty; ironic too as the six *were* the Cemetery Road Police Force. They are out all hours. Julia uses a sturdy hand-bell to get them home from the mountain - and once from Porth Baths a mile away. One ring: they'd all come. Mama tries to foster a sense of responsible fun. But it's time for some civilising: violin for Martin; piano for Norman; and, to lead by example, mama too learns the piano.

And she introduces the boys to the delights of the world of a close-knit community - Jones BBC, Evans the Garage, Mrs Davies 88, Mrs Davies North Road, and Auntie Cassie Bopa Tassie. Glowing firesides in winter; tea-sets at twilight; elderberry cordial in summer; Auntie Polly's ice-cream and Uncle Edgar's wit; picking mint from the garden for lunch and a walk

up the mountain after church on Sunday; shopping in Porth and dragging her trolley laden with fruit up the hill from Jones the Fruiterer - incredibly fit - and quietly proud of her biceps. Outcome: Julia resumes a life of companionability - strong in mind and body.

The fourth age: Mafeking Road in Penylan - around the corner from here. It's 1972: the age of changes and chances. Dada nears retirement - and they both decide to move to Cardiff, where Martin and Norman must study law - it's been ordained. Home is at Number 15. Jim travels to school in Tonypany. The boys go to Howardian High School, and then university. Mama and Dama keep house. A formative period. For Mama, the warm network of Porth has gone. It is time to bring a little of the Rhondda to Penylan. The neighbours and the boys' pals' parents are her new friends: Mrs Rowlands, Mrs Hayes, Mrs Bartlett, and Mrs Keir. You can't enter the lives of others and come and go as you please. Mama exults when Martin establishes the Howardian Nature Reserve, sympathises when he almost gets the Cambrian Way re-routed through the Rhondda, and rejoices when he qualifies as a solicitor. She indulges Norman in outrageous bouts of truancy from school and his study of medieval law - and she comes to this church with Dama when he starts playing the organ in 1977.

Mama sews with needle and thread a ground-sheet into a 6 by 8 foot tent for the boys to go camping with their new friends: Martin Davies, Richard Bartlett, Donald Keir, Eddie Curran, David Sansom - it's a sign of *their* alliance. It also reflects her basic frugality and life-long love of darning - everything! Being made was more important than being broken. But if something was broken, she mends it. Mafeking is a town in South Africa: site of a siege in the Boer War; the name is from 'Mefikeng', a Setswana word meaning 'place of stones'. Mama brings life to these stones. Dada sets the goals and the route to achieve them: careers in law, hard work. Mama instils the reason - the imagination. She thought that the intellect could create - but it's vision that puts power into a thing. She often cited her uncle Daniel Llufer Thomas, a judge who founded the Dafydd ap Gwilym Society at Oxford, and advocated the use of Welsh in courts of law. Outcome: mama is a bridge between the spirit of two worlds - the Rhondda and Cardiff, process and goal. Dama passes away in 1984; so:

The fifth age: Melrose Avenue - the home straight. It's 1987, and a little way into Dada's 38-year retirement. It's time for new horizons: for day trips to Paris, Rome, Prague and other European capitals; for concerts, reading (especially Agatha Christie), and films (especially Hollywood romances); for local tours on the top deck of Martin's 1960s Rhondda bus; for baby-sitting Rachel, Liz and Edward; for Latin lessons from Jim; and for entertaining George Carey the Archbishop of Canterbury - very hard of hearing, her interruption of his grace at supper to enquire about Ed's rugby exploits became legendary. Julia and Jim were devoted to their grandchildren; so interested in their hopes, fears, and achievements; so involved in family events - especially Sunday lunch with everyone round the table in Margaret & Eric's.

Mama's love for food is well-known. She was perhaps the greatest ever patroness of the Jaffa Cake industry - though she might not admit this: she had her dignity to think of. After Eric's passing in 2005, and Jim's in 2011, Sunday lunch was the main social event of the

week - chatting and story-telling with Win Fletcher and Fr John Owen. Then, in 2013, a fitness kick at the age of 88, losing 3 stone in 6 months. But a lymphoma, two spells in hospital in the last year, and resultant immobility, dampened but did not extinguish her spirit, revitalised at home again to enjoy visits from Jim's nephew Clive, and Andrew and Becky's new baby Alys. With Martin's tireless support, and her carers' from Five Star, she was as inquisitive as ever; scoring on average 20 out of 22 on the crossword and memory test almost every day till 2 weeks ago; and the evening before she died at home in the front room - just after enjoying a laugh with Rach, Liz and Ed - her last words, in a strong voice, as if not quite getting the final crossword clue, were: 'Oh, I give up'.

Julia *didn't* like: bad tempers, rows, uncertainty, rugby, and smoked salmon - though she herself could be passive aggressive and a little unforgiving at times - she had a long memory. She *did* like: people, solid handshakes, transmitting memories - mustard, water cress - hedge rows, trees, meadows - elegant crockery, lace tablecloths, making lavender posies - fireside story-telling at twilight, murder mysteries, cool churches - and quiet faith in God. Mama was always aware of some beauty beyond herself. All these wonderful things rose within her being like the waters of peace. She was heartened greatly by the wonderment of her youth, dogged service in her middle years, and contentment and pride in her old age.

Above all she was an indomitable spirit for whom the love of her family was the greatest blessing life could afford. Mama would, we think, be very pleased to have her character summed up in the one Hebrew word: 'chutzpah' - she had it in abundance.

So: thank you mama, grandma, for 91 years of loyalty, laughter and love.