

Memories of Anne Harrison by Merita

We met in a café in Windsor. In 1992.

I was 21. She was retired.

I was a waitress. She was a customer – having lunch with her cousin.

I didn't speak much English and was too shy for small talk. She was friendly and chatty and could strike a conversation with anyone, anywhere.

She asked for mayonnaise, but as I had almost no English, it took me some considerable time to work out what she wanted. Instead of complaining, Anne somehow engaged me in a chat. And left me with a generous tip and her phone number. That was the beginning of a 30 year friendship that changed my life.

In those three decades of knowing Anne, I experienced plenty of turmoil and heartache, including a war in my country. Anne was always there – being a ray of hope and always sprinkling a sense of normality and joy over my troubled soul. She was there at all the key moments in my life: my graduation, my wedding, when my children were born. But we also shared so many little, but magical moments – picnics, lunches, dinners, walks, spontaneous phone calls (by the way she usually hung up on me, so she could call me back and I wouldn't have to spend money on the call).

I delighted in receiving postcards from her holidays – full of appreciation of the little things she had seen, done or discovered. And I loved getting her cards that were always so full of text, that she often ended up writing at the back of the card and vertically around the main text all around the card. I bet many people received such cards from Anne – filled with writing that got smaller and smaller, as she ran out of space.

Those cards show what Anne was like. She made time for people and made everyone feel special. And my first meeting with her on that little café, shows how Anne valued everyone the same, regardless of their status, religion, background. She talked to children and pets, like she talked to adults – with respect and kindness.

Anne was one of those rare people that light up the room, put everyone at ease and see the funny side of things.

I will miss her cheery voice and her sense of humour.

She was funny and patient.

Strong and kind.

Calm and generous.

Clever and adventurous.

Curious and compassionate.

I feel lucky and privileged to have had her in my life. I will always treasure every moment we spent together.

Merita