



*Vale*

## **Patricia Mary Ritchie**

Patci's eulogy was read out via zoom across Australia, New Zealand and Norfolk Island. Her eldest daughter Renae read out the following

"My mother, Patricia Mary Ritchie was born on 1st August 1956.

Mum was named Patricia Mary, Mary after her grandmother. According to her baby book however, she was originally named Pamela, this was soon corrected/changed in her baby book in the early weeks of mum's life. Mum's younger sister, Auntie Pam was born next and was then named Pamela (it must have been a name that Nana and Grandad had still kept close to them). There were a lot of objections in naming the new baby Patricia, mainly from her grandmother, who thought her name should be a Catholic name, religion was a big deal back then - but not something that was of any significance throughout mum's life. Anyway, rather than calling her Patricia, instead, her name was shortened to Patsy P.A.T.S.Y (to appease great-grandma). Mum didn't like that spelling so later changed it to P.A.T.C.I in her rebellious teenage years. Mum was renowned with her family and friends for her rebellious nature and I hope we get to hear some of those stories from our guests later today.

Growing up in a big family always had its challenges. But Nana Joan kept the family home orderly - and I mean orderly in every sense. The management of the house, children, finances and especially food! These are all traits that mum exemplified herself throughout her highly orderly and well organised life.

As you could imagine, for the Ritchie family even an outing in the car was an expedition with 8 children. No seat belts were worn in those days so the Ritchie children had to arrange themselves in the back seat, so one child sat forward, the next back, so they could all squeeze in. The best seat was always on Nana's lap though. The family had pets - Susie the dog, cats, budgies, orphan lambs (one was called Mint Sauce, the other Lamb Chop) and even guinea pigs. Mum also had pet mice which she kept in her room.

Even though mum came from a big family with one income, they always had fantastic holidays. But the best holidays were always at the house at Cherry Bay in the Marlborough Sounds. To get to Cherry Bay was an expedition in itself. It required all 10 to get from Stokes Valley to the ferry terminal, then on the interisland ferry to Picton. They then had to board a launch called

the Miss Onahau to take them to Cherry Bay. Food and clothing had to be packed sparingly as they were charged for every box or suitcase, on the Miss Onahau. And there had to be enough supplies to last a month so nana was very orderly in their packing. They had to wash in the sea, catch fish for food every day as there were no fridges. There was also no washing machine, no telephone or TV, they had to collect firewood to put in the coal range to heat or cook food. But the whole family loved going there regardless, and mum often talked to us about those family holidays.

Right from the start of mum's life, she was different. She was a trailblazer. Although she was Number Six in the family, she was married at the youngest age, the first to have a family, and the first to be a grandparent. She also liked to tell everyone she was adopted! Mum has shared with us what a fibber she was in her younger days, she said she just liked to spice up things a bit.

Mum was always a rebel. When she was quite young, maybe 7 or 8, she went off to the dairy to buy herself a treat with pocket money she had earned. Once the money was spent, Grandad asked mum what she had spent all of the money on (in disbelief of course and being as smart or if not smarter than mum was). Mum then collated a list of items she had bought, including a number of different treats along with the prices she paid for each. Funny, that there was no mention of what she actually spent her money on - there were no lollies purchased at all, instead mum had brought cigarettes at the age of 7 or 8! Mum kept this list of lies that she wrote and actually had it laminated for safe keeping. It has now been passed down to us girls - a memory that makes us laugh and helps us to feel less guilty about the grief we caused mum as children.

As children and throughout their lives Mum and Auntie Pam were like two peas in a pod, they had a very special relationship and a lot of secrets between them. I have been told that as youngsters you would see them with their mouths hidden behind hands, sniggering and laughing at something only they knew about. Their close bond was enviable. I remember a story that mum recently shared about a time on the boats where she used to find little memoirs to send to Pam. Among things she would send would be fish scales or prawn tails, but one time she could not find anything to send so she clipped her toe nails and sent them to Pam! If that doesn't explain the nature of their relationship then nothing else will.

Grandad passed away when mum was 14. Mum always spoke fondly and often about the wonderful impact he had on her life and the respect and love he had for our nana. He was a hard worker, but a great family man who obviously left a huge hole in the Ritchie family when he passed, as did Nana Joan.

As soon as mum could, she left home and moved to Palmerston North to work as a secretary. She went down there with the intention of getting married. When Nana got wind of this she went down to check up on her and tried unsuccessfully, to bring her back to Hamilton. Nana did write mum a letter expressing her anger at this decision - again, another memory that mum kept, laminated and was passed to us girls. Mum eventually did return to Hamilton (unmarried) and met our father Donald in 1975, they married six weeks later, and eleven months later I was born! 18 months after

that Roy was born in May 1978, now there were two Melgren children.

Mum and dad lived an adventurous life as young parents, not exactly enacting the 'settling down to have children' gig too well. We have recently found out that there are several court notices and newspaper clippings to prove this and mum shared them with us recently – more memories that have been passed to us. Most of these shenanigans were in our first home in Norrie Ave, Hamilton. Although our parents were adventurous, they still cared for us ensuring we were provided with all the necessities to have a grounded and fulfilling life. We then moved on to Ngaruawahia where mum and dad brought their first home on Waingarō Road. Although we only lived there for about nine years, I consider it to be our family home. Both Ruby and April were born there, now there were four Melgren children.

During these years mum worked hard for dad's family business Melgren Transport working in the office while dad worked on the trucks. She did this until Ruby was born in 1989. When mum returned to work after having April she turned to her passion – cooking! She worked long hard hours at the Waldorf Lounge, a place that she loved to be at, doing what she loved with people who became some of her closest friends.

Mum was a very social person and our times at Ngaruawahia were testament to that. Mum and dad had lots of friends and we always had visitors popping in for a cup of tea and a smoke. Mum hosted quite a few parties, but none as famous as their New Year's Eve parties which doubled as their wedding anniversary parties. They were huge, and noisy, long and messy – I do remember helping mum to clean up the days after. Mum also belonged to the 'girls club', a group of about 6 ladies who would meet on a Thursday night to drink and smoke and talk and laugh.

Mum and dad taught us vital skills to lead successful and productive lives. Our manners were exemplary as young children (I hope you all agree) and we were generally well-liked thanks to the values our parents taught us. We were raised to be independent, capable, loyal, resilient and assertive people. Traits that have served us well throughout our lives.

Mum and dad separated in 1990 and mum moved into the Phillip Street house in Hamilton and then onto Fairfield Road. She continued to work in the catering business, even starting up her own little gig at the Riverlea Theatre for a while. In 1999 mum took another huge adventurous leap and moved to Norfolk Island with Ruby and April who were 11 and 9 respectively. There she joined Roy and Ange who were already settled there. Wow, mum found her heaven on Norfolk Island! Not only was she reunited with her beloved son, but she was also surrounded by beautiful scenery and beautiful people. Mum was able to go to the beach every day after work, and that she did!

She continued her very social life on Norfolk making many, many friends who were solid friends for the remainder of her life. On Norfolk she started out cleaning, but very quickly found she was in hot demand for her cooking skills - and did not let them go to waste! She had many jobs, of which she would work concurrently, doing a day shift at one place and night shift at another. Although she held many cooking jobs,

I just want to mention her time at Seaworld Restaurant, where my sisters and I also worked. So many happy memories were made there but the coolest one was when mum, Ruby, April and myself all worked together on the same shift. What a team we were,

Roy passed away suddenly in 2001. As you can imagine this was one of the biggest and no doubt saddest times of mum's life. Here she lost her only son, close companion and partner in crime on Norfolk. True to mum's form she grieved deeply for the loss but soldiered on, alas with a gaping hole in her heart. I don't think any of us have gotten over our loss but we are truly comforted by our belief that they are now reunited.

After spending 10 years on Norfolk Island, mum decided to embark on another adventure, this time moving to China to teach English to kindergarten age children. It always puzzled us why she would want to move there; she couldn't speak Chinese, it was cold, there were certainly no beaches anywhere near where she was and she didn't particularly like needy kids. But what she did do there was eat and cook wonderful Chinese food and she came to love her time there. She was well respected by her colleagues, students and the Chinese community. She brought some of her fave recipes back home and taught me how to cook them, and I still do cook these recipes. Nana Joan was not impressed by Mum's decision to move to China and again sent a letter to mum to share her disapproval. And again, this was a letter mum kept and laminated for our loving memories. We now know mum embarked on this China trip to help fulfil her bucket list of adventures.

Following her year or so in China mum went on another adventure – this time it was working on a Prawn Trawler in the gulf of Carpentaria. What kind of job was this for a single woman in her mid-fifties? It was physically very demanding, and the living conditions were out of this world, but she was by the sea and cooking – two of her most favourite things. She told us girls during her last days that this was her favourite job she ever had.

But it was time to find terra firma and mum moved to the Sunshine Coast in Australia. Here she lived for years with a good friend (Janet) and then later found herself a lovely apartment in Mooloolaba that she absolutely adored. She loved having her grandchildren here and took them on adventures that they will always treasure, including shouting her NZ based grandchildren a trip there when each of them turned 10. Her apartment was walking distance to the beach and the shops. Interesting I say shops because mum was never a shopper in her earlier days, but later she grew very fond of shopping and had an eye for good quality. Mum loved fine linen, china and crystal and had no shortage of these items throughout her life. Mum spent many many hours looking for bargains in the Sunshine Plaza, especially in her favourite store - Myer!. She often sported beautiful jewellery and was always on the hunt for stunning pieces at the right price. She realised her shopping had become a bit of a problem when she counted nearly 100 pairs of underwear and a ridiculous amount of good quality linen in her possession. Mum was forever buying us clothes on sale in Australia and sending them back to my kids and I. Sometimes the cost of the postage I am sure was more than the goods she purchased. To this day, my

children and I still have socks stored away that grandma brought us some 5 years back. Like I mentioned, she did love to shop

During the time mum spent in Mooloolaba, she worked as a chef in the mines in Australia. She worked for several different companies over the years and again was much sought after in the industry. Funny story, to get a job in the mines you have to be a qualified chef – which mum wasn't – so she somehow managed to find a fake one online somewhere and used that to get all of her jobs. Again, she saved this certificate and shared it with us girls recently. These positions were all fly in fly out so mum did a lot of travelling – something else she loved to do. Mum travelled extensively across the Pacific and Southeast Asia, but her most epic journey would have to be when she travelled to the UK, Scotland and Ireland for a six weeks adventure on her own. Crazy lady she was, but she really wanted to take this trip and was very happy to do so alone. As you can imagine she met some wonderful people, saw some amazing sites and ate amazing food.

Mum facilitated a lot of travel for our family as well. We spent a lot of time on the beaches in the north of New Zealand, especially Manghuwai and Matapouri Bay. In 1998 mum took Ruby and April on an epic four week holiday around the south island. What a huge feat for a woman travelling alone with young children. Later we took three big family holidays together, grandchildren, partners and all, all of which mum planned and facilitated for us. We had an amazing week on Norfolk Island for Ruby's wedding, we took a week-long cruise from Brisbane, and then we had an impressive 10 days in Thailand staying in a wonderful mini resort like place that we had all to ourselves. Many memories were made there - ones that we all hold dear forever.

Mum was a proud grandma. She loved spending time with her grandchildren, mostly in smaller doses and also surprised us with the special bond she formed with Ruby's little dog Dozer, when she had never warmed to small fluffy dogs in her life. When Grandma was around, no one else mattered to Dozer. And he could do no wrong in mum's eyes!

Mum loved sharing the cheeky antics of her eldest grandson Luke, and proudly admired all of my kids sporting achievements and abilities. Ayvah and Aria, Ruby's children were angels who could also never do wrong in mum's eyes. They would spend hours on the beach together, especially on the Sunshine Coast. In more recent years, mum played a big part in caring for April's children Amber and Georgia including helping with school pickups and drop offs and unsuccessfully trying to homeschool Amber during one of the earlier lockdowns! Each grandchild had their own unique special bond with their grandma, and grandma spoilt every one of them.

Mum's final years were a little unsettled as she was trying to decide where she wanted to be. She was torn by her love of Australia and its beaches and the love that her friends and family would provide should she move back to NZ. She chose the latter, but after spending time in New Zealand she decided that Australia was where she wanted to be so packed up again and moved to Gayndah, a small rural town 4 hours inland from Brisbane. Here she lived with April and Michael until she bought her first house in Australia. What a cute little place it was too. She was very happy there, she settled in

well and made her home a beautiful place to be.

Shortly after settling in Gayndah in March 2021 mum started to experience some issues with her health. Eventually on the 23rd December mum was told that she had secondary cancer of the pancreas. She took the news all in her stride and had a very positive and stoic attitude towards her future. She had ticked just about all that she wanted to do off her bucket list. One thing that was left was to do yoga on a paddle board which was one of very few items left unticked.

It seemed so unfair that mum's life was cut so short, she worked hard to keep as healthy as possible including drinking her daily green tea, enjoying frequent yoga and walking as much as she could. She worked in many physically demanding jobs, even giving men a run for their money. She loved being out in her garden, even pushing through pain and discomfort in her last few weeks to keep her gardens looking beautiful.

Something very amazing happened to mum while she was sick. As I am sure you all will be aware, mum was a huge music fan, but in particular she was the biggest fan ever of Crowded House/Split Enz and Neil Finn and had been for about 50 years. She was a very active member of the fan club and went to many concerts, had the merch, CD's and books to go with it. Well Neil Finn, sent her a personally recorded message and song sung just for her, live and acoustically. We just cried and cried over that but it was just so special at the same time. We will be forever grateful to Neil for providing mum some pleasure during this sad time. You will hear this message being played soon.

To mum's final days. Mum left us peacefully in her home, surrounded by her three girls, her eldest granddaughter, son-in-law and dear friend. Although her battle was short, in true mum fashion, she was strong and graceful right through to the end.

Using the resilience that mum instilled into us, Ruby, April and I were able to fulfil mum's wish and nursed her at home for 12 days in her own bed until the very end – something we will be eternally grateful for. We will be forever grateful for April being a Registered Nurse as she was able to administer mum's medication at mum's will. We all had our roles during this time, April being lead carer, Ruby sorting mum's finances and admin-type things while I kept mum's house and gardens just as she had left them. Dozer the dog, mum's most special friend spent every day by mum's side right until the end. We were also joined by mum's wonderful friend Polly who came to stay and took over the running of the house and the meals while Ruby and April's partners Michael and Scott were our awesome kid wranglers and put up with all of our stuff. The whole experience of coming together as a family and drawing on our strengths made the whole experience just so wonderfully special for us all, including mum. We were honoured to be able to support her. As she had done for us her whole life and to fulfil her last wishes of being at home. Mum passed away peacefully with us all by her side at 1.54pm Wednesday 23rd February 2022. The pain and suffering was over and now mum was at rest. And that is the story of mum's life. Rest in peace mum and please say hi to all our loved ones up there who we know will be continuing to have a right royal party and more adventures up there.

Rest in peace Patci, our beloved friend, and may we meet again one day, on that beautiful shore