Anne Kavanagh

'Every life makes a difference. And so it is my intention to live every day grateful and accepting, to live life with joy and love'. Anne wrote these words as the final ones in a family history booklet that she compiled during the recent lockdown.

She had retraced her story from a very happy childhood in Cabra Villa on the Old Cabra Road. She recalls with glee the gallivanting days of her youth as the Capital's theatres, cinemas and shops became her favourite haunts. Anne attended the Convent school in Eccles St., today the site of the Mater Hospital.

Theirs was a crowded busy household with six boys and two girls. Their big house was surrounded by a paddock, a greenhouse and a vegetable garden, sheepdogs and a yard. Anne's father was a cattle dealer. His was one of 3 cattle yards on the Old Cabra Road at the time. The cattle market was on the North Circular Road and every Wednesday after the market, drovers would guide the cattle through the roads to the North Wall.

The family had a pony and trap and of a Sunday the pony would be yoked up and the younger children taken out for a trip to North Country Dublin, occasionally to Portmarnock.

And it was to Portmarnock that Anne would move when she eventually left the family home. She loved her house on Martello Court, as she began to draw onto herself many friends, acquaintances and clients.

Anne first job was in a Travel Agency and her lifelong love of travel was born. She moved on to a successful career with Wiggins Teape. By this stage she had developed an interest in the quest for equality in the workplace and in society generally.

In 1972 she joined Soroptimist International, and when they celebrated their Centenary in 2021, our Anne was chosen, with others, for special mention, in recognition of her professional and personal commitment to helping to transform the lives of women and girls. She had been selected as President and in this capacity was invited to the European Parliament.

When the Employment Equality Agency was set up in 1977 the Minister for Labour invited Anne be a member. In this role she was a guest of the Soviet Women's Committee and visited Russia and Ukraine to compare and contrast the role of women. Some of these meetings were chaired by one Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman Cosmonaut in space.

It was during her time in NCSW that Anne began training as a Gestalt Phychotherapist. Many years later she embraced the ideas of Bert Hellinger and thus began what she describes as the most fulfilling and wonderful experience of her working life and her most important lesson - the root of all suffering is wanting others to be different, when in fact we can only change ourselves.

Some weeks ago, as part of the National Women's Council's 50th celebrations, Anne was invited to Áras an Uachtaráin by Sabina Higgins, the two ladies had crossed paths often. It clashed however, with Anne's treatment that day, ever the pragmatist, she was first customer at the Mater that morning, then to the hairdressers, and off with her then to meet her old friends at the Park.

Anne  was a powerful gentle force of nature, a noble woman who always took the conciliatory path. Those who attended the annual Memorial Services that she ran in our club often left there in a more reflective, nuanced space. She served on the Council as Social Secretary, and assembled her crew. She  was a firm believer in getting good help! She was a  most effective member of the Nominations Committee too, as she cajoled and charmed reluctant future club officials to serve.

She loved the social side of our club and was always the first to sign up for functions. She was an astute competitive player and enthusiastic keeper of the Bridgemate when playing North. Woe betide anyone who offered her 'help'. She just loved when she won but there was no victory sweeter than her last Wednesday Competition when she and Betty, her dearest friend and bridge partner of fifteen years, scored 72%. The now laminated result had pride of place during her final weeks.

Anne liked to mark nature's milestones with friends gathered and candles lit, she would embrace Spring, or thank the old year. She loved sunshine and chased it around the world on her many many holidays and cruises. Fitting perhaps that she would leave here on the Summer Solstice. She had no fear of dying but thought it a shame that her life had to be over.

She was fond of this quote by Meister Eckhart- 'if the only prayer we say in our whole life was Thank You, that would suffice'. Anne adds 'this I now say to all who touched my life'.

Those of us who were her friends were privileged. Ní bheidh a leitheid arís ann.

Bernie Connors