

*One Special woman.*



In the heart of summer, on the 4th of July in 2015, my world was shattered as I said goodbye to the love of my life, Linda. She had battled a relentless brain tumour with unwavering courage and grace, but in the end, it was a battle that even her incredible spirit couldn't conquer. Her absence left a void in my life, and I found myself navigating the tumultuous seas of grief, unsure of where to anchor my emotions.

For nearly three years, I carried the weight of my loss, wrestling with memories and grappling with the reality of her absence. The pain was a constant companion, and I wondered if I would ever find a way to move forward, to heal.

Then, on a seemingly ordinary day in April 2018, everything changed. It was the 17th of the month, and I was far from home, traveling through the enchanting landscapes of Ireland. As I explored the rolling hills, ancient ruins, and vibrant cities, I stumbled upon something unexpected – a renewed sense of purpose and a connection to life

that I had long thought lost. In the serenity of those moments, I felt Linda's presence, as if she were guiding me towards a new path.

However, life had more challenges in store for all of us in the years to come. The global pandemic of 2020 and its far-reaching consequences forced me to shift my focus once more. With travel restrictions and isolation, I turned my attention to a different journey - researching my family tree. As I delved into the fascinating twists and turns of my lineage, I discovered stories of resilience, love, and triumph, as well as mysteries and surprises that both intrigued and perplexed me.

This is my story – a journey of profound loss, unexpected renewal, and the unearthing of the past. In the pages that follow, I hope to share the highs and lows of my life, the lessons I've learned, and the connections that have sustained me through it all.

The July 4, 2015, a day forever etched in my memory, the clock struck 2 am at the University Hospital of Wales. There, surrounded by my four children, I held my wife Linda's delicate left hand, knowing that the time had come for her to depart from us forever.

In that surreal moment, we watched her silently, unable to hear her gentle breaths, unsure if she had already slipped away. Then, as I clutched her hand, once soft and warm, now cold, and lifeless, I knew that my beloved Linda had lost her battle for life. Never again would we be graced by the sound of her beautiful voice.

At that moment, reality seemed elusive, and the weight of what had just occurred bore heavily upon us. We had imagined that one goes to the hospital, recovers from their illness, and eventually returns home. But when that outcome doesn't materialize, one is left adrift, unsure of what steps to take.

In the first two weeks following Linda's passing, I found myself in a state of quietude and confusion. I was grappling with a sense of uncertainty, and the grief, when it finally hit me, brought forth an overwhelming pain, unlike anything I had ever experienced. It is a pain that defies explanation, one that can only be truly understood by those who have walked the same path.

During my anguish, I found solace in the words Linda had shared with me just before her departure. She told me that I could love again but cautioned against remarriage. We exchanged smiles, and then she uttered the profound words, "You know what you must do now. Go and travel."

Two months later, my daughter, sensing my struggling state, suggested that I have a dog as a companion. And so, Lizzy, a Jug—a delightful mix of Jack Russell and Pug—entered my life. Little did I know then the profound impact she would have, forever changing my trajectory.

Initially, Lizzy and I set off without a clear destination or purpose. We roamed aimlessly, staying at different places for a night before moving on. I was trying to shield myself from the world, creating a cocoon with just me and my dog, avoiding groups and human connection.

This pattern continued until I stumbled upon a group meeting, where I finally encountered fellow travellers who shared my circumstances. It was a turning point in my journey of grief. For the longest time, whenever I spoke about Linda, a wave of tears would overcome me, rendering me unable to control my emotions. But during this gathering, a kind woman reassured me, urging me not to apologize for my tears. She encouraged me to let the pain flow, emphasizing that it was an integral part of my healing process.

Her words shifted my perspective, allowing me to embrace my grief as a necessary step toward finding inner peace. Over nearly two years, I gradually learned to navigate the waves of sorrow, acknowledging that shedding tears for my beloved Linda was not a sign of weakness, but rather a cathartic release of the pain that resided within me.

And so, my journey continued—a journey of grief, healing, and self-discovery. The memory of Linda remained a cherished part of me, and with each tear shed, I grew stronger, inching closer to the peace I sought.

"In life, there is always that special person who shapes who you are, who helps determine the person you become."

Little did I know that from that day you would be such an influence on my life.

Little did I know how you guided me to being a good man without me even knowing it.

Little did I know how big your heart was. Little did I know that I was to lose you so young.

In the year 1981, I stood at the altar, ready to embark on a journey of love and companionship with the woman who would soon become my wife. Little did I know then just how extraordinary she would turn out to be.

Over the course of many years, she weaved her way into the lives of those around her, leaving an indelible mark that would forever shape their paths. Modest and humble, she never recognized her own exceptional qualities, but to me and countless others, she was a shining star, radiating love and warmth.

Her presence will endure in our memories, and her legacy will precede her, as it rightfully should. Linda, the depths of my love for you are immeasurable. It is a love that has only grown stronger with the passing of time.

Losing someone you hold dear is an experience that unveils the true magnitude of your love for them. As the years have unfolded, I have come to understand the depths of my affection for Linda on a profound level. Her absence fuels my determination to carry on, to seek out the inner peace that eludes me.

I am resolute in my pursuit of that serene place, where one day, I will be reunited with my beloved for eternity. There isn't a single day that goes by without me missing her presence, yearning for the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand.

Love, in its truest form, reveals its strength and depth in the face of loss. As time has passed, my love for Linda has only deepened, and I know it will continue to do so. She serves as a guiding force, propelling me forward on this journey to find inner peace.

With every step I take, I am confident that I will uncover that tranquil solace I seek. And when the time is right, our souls will intertwine once more, embarking on an eternal union.

In moments like these, I find myself being too hard on myself. But the love I had for Linda was immeasurable, beyond any quantifiable measure.

I can almost hear her now, playfully telling me to "get a grip, Graham!" Her voice still echoes in my mind, bringing a smile to my face even in the toughest times.

Today, I have come to understand the profound truth that love is the most significant thing in my life. How can one possibly measure something so powerful? Love can both heal and hurt, leaving its mark on our hearts, minds, and souls.

When true love finds its way to your life, it is something to be cherished and held tightly. The chance to experience such a love may never come again. It is a treasure that must be grasped with both hands.

Sometimes in life, we embark on a journey without knowing precisely what we are seeking. Yet, it is in the act of starting that we discover the true essence of the journey itself. We may find ourselves unable to see the bigger picture, caught amidst the intricacies of the present moment. But in those times, we must have faith and believe. We must acknowledge the blessings of who we are and what we have.

Life begins with grand expectations, but it is through learning and making mistakes that we truly grow. Mistakes are the steppingstones to wisdom, and they pave the way for progress. I have made my fair share of mistakes along the way, except for one—I never faltered in loving you. Regrettably, you are no longer by my side.

As I continue this journey called life, I carry the lessons learned from my missteps and the enduring love I hold for you. Your absence is felt deeply, but your love remains a guiding light, inspiring me to persevere and make the most of each day. And while you may be far from sight, I will always seek you among the stars, shining brightly on Christmas night.

Throughout our lives, we encounter numerous individuals, each with their own unique qualities and characteristics. Among them, there are those who stand out, who possess an inexplicable aura that captivates us from the start.

These special people have a way of making us smile, filling our hearts with joy. Their absence leaves us feeling incomplete, as if a part of us is missing. We come to realize that these individuals are our soulmates, the ones we have been searching for. Finding them may happen early in life or may take a lifetime of searching, but rest assured, there is one out there who is meant for each of us.

For me, that person was Linda. She was the one who touched my soul and ignited a flame within me. Her presence brought immense happiness and a sense of completeness that I had never experienced before. Linda was my soulmate, the one I had been longing for all along.

The connection we shared was beyond words, and the love we had for each other was profound. Linda filled my life with warmth, laughter, and an overwhelming sense of belonging. Her absence is deeply felt, and the void she left behind serves as a constant reminder of the love we shared.

In this vast journey of life, it is a true blessing to find that one person who completes us. Linda was that person for me, and I will forever cherish the time we had together. She will always hold a special place in my heart, for she was not just a person I met along the way, but my soulmate, my love, and my everything.

Grief has a way of stripping away the superficial layers and revealing the core of who we truly are. It has the power to shape our perspective and redefine our understanding of home.

For Linda, the concept of home extended far beyond the physical confines of a house. It transcended the walls and the address. To her, home was wherever we

found ourselves together. Throughout our married life, we embarked on various relocations, but it was never the structure or the location that held the essence of home for us.

I can vividly recall the words she spoke to me, expressing her unwavering devotion. She said, "I don't care if we have nothing more than a humble caravan to call our own, as long as I am by your side." Her words resonated deeply within me, for they revealed the depth of her love and the true meaning of home.

Our hearts became the compass that guided us. If we were together, we felt a sense of belonging and warmth that no physical dwelling could ever replicate. It was in each other's presence that we discovered a sense of security, comfort, and true fulfilment.

Even in her absence, Linda's spirit continues to remind me of the importance of cherishing the moments we shared and the unconditional love we embraced. Home, for us, will forever reflect the love we cultivated and the bond we nurtured.

Grief may have altered our lives, but it has also illuminated the essence of our connection. It has shown me the depth of my love and the resilience of my spirit. Through the journey of grief, I have come to understand that home is not confined to a physical space but resides within the heart, forever intertwined with the love we shared.

In honouring Linda's memory, I carry the knowledge that home will always be wherever our hearts reside, united in a love that transcends time and space.

Have you ever experienced a moment in your life that seemed ordinary at the time, unaware of its significance? It is often in hindsight, after that person is no longer with us, that we come to understand just how precious and extraordinary that moment truly was.

During our daily routines, we may overlook the magic unfolding around us. It is when the person who played a significant role in that moment is gone forever that we grasp the magnitude of its impact. We begin to appreciate the depth of its importance and the profound effect it had on our lives.

That single moment, seemingly insignificant at first, has the power to shape our entire existence. It becomes a cherished memory, etched in our hearts for a lifetime. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have been a part of such a transformative experience when fate introduced me to a living angel.

In the presence of this extraordinary individual, I witnessed something truly remarkable. Their essence, their spirit, radiated a sense of divinity. They brought light, love, and inspiration into my life. They guided me through challenges and celebrated my triumphs. Little did I know that this encounter would forever change the course of my journey.

As time passes and the absence of this special person lingers, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude. I now understand the immense impact they had on my life, and I hold that moment dear to my heart. It serves as a reminder of the beauty and significance that can be found within the simplest of interactions.

In my eyes, this person is not merely a human being; they are a living angel. Their presence, even if fleeting, has left an indelible mark on my soul. I will forever carry the memory of that transformative moment, cherishing it as a testament to the power of connection and the profound influence one person can have on our lives.

I believe that these encounters are gifts from a higher power, reminding us of the extraordinary nature of the human experience. They serve as reminders to cherish every interaction, to embrace the present moment, and to recognize the divine in those we encounter along our journey.

As I sit here, sipping my cup of tea, my mind drifts back to the past eight years and the profound changes that have shaped my life. It all began when I made the decision to have a custom camper van built, embarking on a journey of travel and self-discovery. Little did I know that this journey would also introduce me to my beloved companion, Lizzy, a delightful Jug—a mix of Jack Russell and Pug.

Initially, I underestimated the challenges that came with owning a camper van. I quickly realized that I was clueless about camping with such a vehicle. One dilemma stood out: how on earth was I supposed to maintain and service the van's toilet? It may sound funny now, but at the time, I felt too embarrassed to ask for help. Thankfully, a quick search on YouTube provided the answers I needed, saving me from any potential mishaps.

With a "suck it and see" mentality, I embarked on my camper van adventures, learning along the way. In that first year, I discovered that I had been carrying unnecessary baggage, both physically and metaphorically. It became evident that my life lacked structure, as I wandered aimlessly from one place to another without truly immersing myself in the beauty and experiences each destination had to offer.

A turning point arrived when Lizzy and I bid farewell to Wales, setting off on a journey with no predetermined destination in mind. We simply drove, hoping that somehow the path would reveal itself. At times, I couldn't help but chastise myself,

urging the need for a plan. But the truth is, grief had cast a shadow over me, leaving me feeling lost and unsure of how to navigate my way forward. Each day became a tentative step, a "suck it and see" approach, hoping that life would unfold before me.

Grief has a way of altering our perspective and leaving us adrift within ourselves. It's a disorienting feeling, not knowing how we'll emerge from its grasp. That's why, during this phase, each day became a blank canvas, awaiting the unpredictable brushstrokes of life.

Yet, amidst the uncertainty, there was a glimmer of hope. With each passing day, I slowly discovered a newfound resilience within myself. I began to chart a course toward healing and self-discovery. Although I didn't have a concrete plan, I allowed life to unfold organically, embracing the unknown and the unexpected.

As I continue my journey, I've come to understand that sometimes the most profound transformations arise from the unplanned moments. Life's uncertainties can lead us down uncharted paths, pushing us to grow and evolve in ways we never anticipated. And so, with a cup of tea in hand and Lizzy by my side, I embrace the unpredictable, knowing that within the uncertainty lies the potential for extraordinary experiences and profound personal growth.

### The day I married an Angel.

On the 10th of October 1981, little did I know that I was about to marry an extraordinary woman—a woman who would shape my life and fill it with immense joy for the next 34 years. Looking back, I am grateful for the incredible journey we shared together.

Throughout our years together, she transformed me into the man I am today. Her love, support, and guidance moulded me into a better person, teaching me valuable lessons and helping me grow in countless ways. Together, we built a beautiful family, and under her nurturing care, our children have blossomed into exceptional individuals and loving parents themselves.

Her zest for life was boundless, and her compassion towards others was immeasurable. Those who were fortunate enough to be touched by her knew first-hand the magic she possessed. Today, as I celebrate our anniversary, I do so with profound pride and love, knowing that the pain I feel in her absence is a testament to the depth of love we shared.

Though she may no longer be physically present, I find solace in the knowledge that her soul rests comfortably within the depths of my heart. Her memory will forever be cherished, and I carry her with me each day until the moment when we are reunited once again.



Over the past few years, I have come to understand the true meaning of love and marriage, albeit through the painful experience of losing the woman I held dear. It is a journey that begins when you meet your partner and spend those initial years building a foundation for your relationship. However, it is only when you take the step to get married that you begin to comprehend the depth of commitment and responsibility involved.

Marriage brings with it a unique set of challenges. Financial struggles often arise, and you may find yourselves starting a family when you feel ill-prepared. Yet, despite these hardships, your love for your children is immeasurable, and you strive to provide them with everything possible to ensure their happiness. Alongside this, there may be debts to face and the arduous task of keeping a roof over your family's head. But you persevere and work your way through it, united in your determination.

Marriage, undoubtedly, has its share of ups and downs. It places tremendous strain on your relationship, testing the strength of your bond. The key to survival lies in having a partner who is wholeheartedly supportive, someone who stands by your side through thick and thin, enabling both of you to reach your shared goals.

In these recent years, I have come to realize that I had the privilege of having that perfect partner. I will forever cherish her memory and the profound impact she had on my life. Her unwavering support and dedication will be etched in my heart for eternity.

So, if you are fortunate enough to have a partner with whom you work tirelessly, hand in hand, you will emerge on the other side as a formidable team. The love you share will transcend any obstacles you encounter, remaining steadfast and enduring throughout your lives.

Expressing your emotions and sharing how you feel can indeed bring happiness, especially when it involves the most beloved person in your life. It is important to openly communicate your thoughts and feelings, including the ones that may be tinged with sadness. In my perspective, this ability to share both the joys and sorrows with your loved one is a manifestation of unconditional love.

Unconditional love goes beyond mere surface-level emotions. It encompasses acceptance, understanding, and support through all circumstances. It means being able to express your genuine emotions, knowing that your loved one will be there to listen, comfort, and stand by your side.

By openly sharing your feelings, you strengthen the bond between you and your favourite person. It creates a deeper level of connection, trust, and intimacy, fostering

a relationship built on honesty and authenticity. Through these heartfelt conversations, you can find solace, reassurance, and even solutions to challenges that arise.

Remember, true unconditional love is not limited to only expressing positive emotions. It embraces the entirety of the human experience, including moments of sadness, vulnerability, and pain. Sharing these feelings with your most cherished person demonstrates a level of trust and vulnerability that can deepen your connection and bring you closer together.

So, I wholeheartedly agree that talking about your feelings, even the ones that may be difficult, is an essential aspect of experiencing unconditional love. It allows for a profound understanding and acceptance of one another, fostering a lasting and fulfilling relationship.

Life often takes unexpected turns, and sometimes we find ourselves chasing material wealth in the belief that it will bring us happiness. However, it is in moments of hardship and adversity, when we are faced with poverty or challenges, that we are given the opportunity to grow wiser and gain a deeper understanding of life.

We may ask for specific things or circumstances that we believe will change our lives, but what we are truly given is the gift of life itself. Life is a precious and remarkable experience, filled with countless opportunities for joy, love, and fulfillment. It is not always about acquiring what we ask for, but rather appreciating and enjoying the blessings that life presents us with.

In my own journey, I have come to realize that the things I value most were not necessarily what I had asked for or hoped for. They are the moments of love, connection, and cherished memories shared with those who are dear to me. These are the true treasures that shape our lives and leave a lasting impact.

No matter the circumstances or challenges we face, we have the power to shape our own lives and find joy in every moment. It is through embracing life, loving deeply, and cherishing each day that we can truly make the most of our time here.

I want you to know that I have loved you throughout your entire life, and even though I may miss you for the rest of mine, the love we shared will continue to live on in my heart. Life is a precious gift, and it is through love and meaningful connections that we find true fulfillment and purpose.

Through my journey in life, I have discovered that the greatest treasures and joys are found in the relationships we build with the people we love, the places we explore and experience, and the precious memories we create along the way.

The love and connection we share with others bring richness and meaning to our lives. The bonds we form with family, friends, and loved ones are truly invaluable. It is in their presence, support, and shared experiences that we find comfort, joy, and a sense of belonging.

Exploring new places and immersing ourselves in different cultures expands our horizons and broadens our perspectives. The beauty of nature, the wonders of the world, and the diverse landscapes awaken a sense of awe and appreciation within us. These experiences create lasting memories that we carry with us, adding depth and colour to our life's tapestry.

But perhaps most importantly, the memories we make along our journey hold a special place in our hearts. Whether it's the laughter shared with friends, the milestones celebrated with loved ones, or the moments of personal growth and triumph, these memories become cherished treasures. They shape who we are and serve as reminders of the joys, challenges, and lessons we have encountered.

In the end, it is not the material possessions or external achievements that define a rich and fulfilling life. It is the connections we forge, the places we explore, and the memories we create that truly enrich our existence. Embrace the beauty of human connections, seek out new adventures, and cherish the moments that become the fabric of your life's story.

Over the course of eight years, I've come to realize that self-doubt is something we all experience at times. However, to progress and achieve success, it is crucial to have unwavering belief in oneself and embark on a journey of self-discovery. It is through understanding who we truly are that we can find inner peace and reignite our love for life.

When faced with challenging circumstances or the loss of a loved one, I choose not to grieve with sadness but instead approach it with a spirit of cheer. This doesn't mean disregarding or suppressing the emotions that come with grief, but rather finding ways to honour and celebrate the lives we cherish. It is in these moments of remembrance that we can find solace and embrace the joyous memories we shared.

Grief doesn't have to be solely about sorrow; it can also be an opportunity to reflect on the beauty and blessings that person brought into our lives. By focusing on the positive aspects and celebrating their presence, we can transform our grief into a celebration of their life and the impact they had on us.

In the face of doubt and grief, I have learned to embrace a mindset of resilience and optimism. Believing in oneself, understanding our identity, and choosing to grieve with cheer allows us to navigate through life's challenges and find the strength to move forward. It is through this journey of self-belief and finding inner peace that we can once again experience the fullness and love that life has to offer.

I understand that the process of healing can be challenging, especially when it comes to the pain caused by love. Love has the power to deeply touch our hearts and souls, making it one of the most significant and profound emotions we can experience. Consequently, when love is lost or goes unrequited, the healing process can be complex and lengthy.

The healing journey from a love-related hurt involves acknowledging and accepting the pain, allowing yourself to grieve and feel the emotions that come with it. It's important to give yourself the time and space needed to heal, as healing is a deeply personal and individual process.

While healing from the wounds of love may take time, it's important to remember that healing is possible. With patience, self-care, and support from loved ones, you can gradually mend the broken pieces of your heart. Surrounding yourself with positive influences, engaging in activities that bring you joy, and seeking professional help if needed can all contribute to your healing process.

Furthermore, focusing on personal growth and rediscovering your own self-worth can play a significant role in healing. Take this opportunity to learn more about yourself, your needs, and your desires. Use the experience as a catalyst for personal development and a deeper understanding of what you truly want in future relationships.

Remember, healing is a journey unique to everyone, and it may not follow a linear path. Some days may be more challenging than others, but with time, self-compassion, and the support of those around you, you can find solace and eventually open your heart to love again.

Sometimes if you're lucky someone comes into your life that will take up a place in your heart that no one else can fill someone who's tighter than a twin more with you than your own shadow who gets deeper under your skin than your own blood and bones.

*Linda was the one who came to me.*

In life, we encounter numerous individuals, some good and some bad, but there are also those who stand out as unique and extraordinary. At first, you may not understand why, but there's something about them that creates an indescribable aura. This person brings a smile to your face and leaves you feeling incomplete when

they're not around. For me, I found that person in 1979—an unassuming woman who eventually became my wife. As this time of year approaches, emotions and memories resurface with great intensity. Once again, I am reminded of the profound legacy Linda has left behind for all of us. She transformed me as a person through her selflessness and unwavering love, always placing the needs of others before her own. Throughout her life, she demonstrated limitless devotion to her family, protecting them as only a mother can. The greatest gift she bestowed upon me continues to evoke pain even after five years, but I'm grateful for it. It serves as a daily reminder of the depth of my love for her. Oh, how I miss her dearly.

There comes a time of year that defines who you are as a person and who has shaped you into that person. I thought I knew it all until I met the one person who was to change my life forever. Throughout her life, she strived to reach her true potential until the 1st of June 2015 when a simple headache turned into a nightmare, and I was left forever changed. Sadly, our family's rock, the matriarch who held us together, was taken from us on the 4th of July 2015.

In life, you will realize there is a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you; some will use you; some will love you, but the ones who are truly important are the ones who bring out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind us why it's worth it.

In our life, we will also leave a record of ourselves and show the world who we were and what we did. None of us know how long we will live, and when that time comes, all that will be left about our brief lives is the pride the children feel when they speak our names.

I hope that one day my grandchildren will read my book because I know that a couple of them didn't have the opportunity to get to know Linda well. I hope that by reading this book, they will come to understand what a truly wonderful woman she was. One of my biggest regrets is that she never had the chance to form a bond with her young grandchildren, and they were unable to experience the love of their grandmother. However, through the act of writing this book, I am certain that they will come to appreciate the incredible person she was.

Eight years have passed since that fateful day, July 4, 2015, when Linda, my beloved, departed from this world. As I turn the pages of my journal, memories cascade like a gentle river, carrying the essence of our love through the years. It's a journey filled with pain, healing, and the enduring power of love.

In the beginning, my heart was shattered, and the pain seemed insurmountable. I felt lost, adrift in a sea of sorrow, unsure of how to navigate this new reality without her by my side. But as the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, I slowly

discovered the strength within me to continue living. Linda's love had instilled in me a resilience I never knew I possessed.

Through this journal, I found solace in pouring my thoughts onto these pages. The blank canvas of each entry became a mirror to my emotions, reflecting the rawest aspects of grief. Writing allowed me to hold onto her essence, preserving cherished memories that time threatened to erase.

In moments of despair, I would seek refuge in these pages. As if she were listening, I'd recount the memories of our life together. I'd write to her as though she were still here, whispering my heart's desires and pouring out my deepest sorrows. Though she was physically gone, her spirit was alive within me, and that love, oh, that love, transcended the boundaries of life and death.

As the years passed, I learned to honour her memory in the most beautiful of ways - by embracing life fully. Linda's love was the compass that guided me through the darkness, and her memory was the beacon of light that illuminated my path.

Throughout this journey, I met others who shared similar pain, and in my writing, I found a way to offer them comfort and understanding. I reached out my hand to those who needed it, just as others had done for me. Together, we formed a community of healing hearts, bound by love, loss, and the unwavering strength to carry on.

Though Linda is no longer physically present, I know that she walks with me in every step I take. Her laughter dances in the wind, her smile lingers in the sun's warm embrace, and her touch remains etched in my heart. Time may pass, but her love is eternal.

Now, as I close this journal, I do so with both a heavy heart and a heart full of gratitude. Grateful for the love we shared, thankful for the memories that continue to shape me, and appreciative of the gift that our love was and always will be.

I will miss her always, but I will carry the essence of our love forevermore. The pages of this journal may come to an end, but our story will live on, woven into the tapestry of time.

Farewell, my dear journal, and thank you for being my confidant, my sanctuary, and my reminder that love transcends all boundaries. Though I may no longer write within your pages, the love that fills them will forever be etched into my soul.

Until we meet again, Linda, know that my love for you will endure, unwavering and eternal.

## Who was Linda?



There is so much I can say, but these are just insights into the extraordinary person she was.

After Linda's passing, an article appeared in the South Wales Evening Post, written by Chad Welch, published on Tuesday, July 28th, 2015.

The article paid tribute to Linda Emmanuel, a grandmother who dedicated her career, time, and home to improving the lives of disabled children. In tragic circumstances, Linda, a resident of Kidwelly, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and passed away just 4 weeks and 5 days later. It all began when this 52-year-old visited a doctor complaining of a headache, and scans uncovered the shocking diagnosis.

Mrs. Emmanuel was a devoted carer for Carmarthenshire's short break service, a respite care service for disabled children and their families. She opened her own home to these youngsters. Her daughter, Anna Marie Sorroll, shared, "All that we were thinking of is all the children that she had been looking after. It didn't just affect us as a family; it affected all the children that she cared for. It was tough. She went up to the Heath Hospital and didn't come back."

In a personal tribute, she added, "Mom has always been a caring person and has raised us really well. She was a perfect example in all the work she did. The people she worked with all said there was only one Linda, and she's going to be really hard to replace."

Mrs. Emmanuel's 5-year-old grandson, Harrison Haines, has autism. Because of her work with autistic children, the family has been avid supporters of "Week on the Street," a local charity for autistic children. In honour of her memory, the family decided to donate any money received at the funeral to "Week on the Street."

Harrison and his mom shared a strong bond, and they understood each other profoundly. Week on the Street founder, Tom Nesmyth Shaw, noted, "She did a lot for autism. We didn't know each other well, but we spoke now and again, and it was an absolute pleasure." Mrs. Sorrell added, "We thought it was only right to donate to Tom's charity because we knew that he works closely with people that Mom worked with. She would have wanted that, and she was a supporter of it."

When Linda was first admitted to Glangwili Hospital in Carmarthen, she shared a room with three other patients. One of those patients was elderly and had difficulty with her speech. When the food trolley arrived, the gentleman couldn't understand what the lady wanted to eat, even though she tried to communicate her preference. Linda, who was observing the situation, stepped in and conveyed the lady's request to the gentleman. He was surprised and asked how she understood the lady. Linda explained that her work with children with special needs had made her adept at deciphering speech impediments and understanding what people needed.

During our time living in Burry Port in my father's house, where we were closer to him as he was in a nursing home, Linda continued to care for the disabled children under her wing. Many of our neighbours were elderly women who took great joy in Linda's visits with the children and relished their presence.

These women were deeply saddened when they learned that Linda was hospitalized and diagnosed with a brain tumour. When I visited Linda in the hospital, she conveyed her concern about their welfare and asked me to share this note with each one of them.



Hello, my lovely ladies x I hear you have all been asking about me and I don't want you to worry x I remember when Gwyneth was ill how much it upset you. Just be reassured that I am in safe expert hands and fussing over lovely ladies just like yourselves actually they are watching out for me too x if ever you have to stay in Steffan ward the staff are very caring, compassionate, gentle, and we brighten up their day when they come to work. Try not to worry about graham because he has lots of support from family and friends x my lovely little children are all being cared for by their lovely families, so I am rested myself xi hope this brings you comfort. xx God Bless my dear friends ❤️❤️

Kindest regards

Linda Emmanuel

In 2013, Linda worked at a Fire Protection company in Swansea, where she served as the office manager. During her tenure, she conducted an interview for a position within the office. While interviewing a young man, she noticed his lack of confidence in his communication. However, despite this initial impression, she chose to provide him with an opportunity to demonstrate his capabilities.

In August 2013, Linda decided to leave the company to focus on her work with Barnardo's, where she provided respite care to disabled children.

The young man she had interviewed was Jared Fry, a 30-year-old office worker. He wished to express his gratitude to Linda for the impact she had on his life. He sent her a text message with the following content:

"Hi Linda, I never had the chance to say a proper goodbye, but I wanted to let you know how profoundly grateful I am for everything you've done for me. It means more to me than you can imagine.

I realize that we might have had our disagreements at times, but when I initially accepted the job, I didn't believe in my abilities. I simply pretended to be confident,

as I had very little self-assurance. However, for some reason, you had faith in my potential.

The truth is, if the Fire Safety company were to, close tomorrow, I could confidently seek employment in an office setting. This newfound confidence is thanks to you, and it holds great significance for the rest of my life.

Once again, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude. You are a special person in my life, Linda, and you have made a significant difference. Thank you."

### One in a Million

During her tenure at Carmarthenshire Short Break Service, she consistently made herself available to assist with recruitment and authored a blog to illustrate the nature of her work.

Looking back on the 8 years as a Short Break Carer today, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with, is the praise I received from my husband Graham (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of children that I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on. Its lovely to hear that people appreciate/admire the work that I do, some call me a special person, some have mentioned therapeutic carer but for me, it's embarrassing!! Writing it down is even harder!

I always remind my work colleagues that I will always say yes to anything because that is my nature, so that's why I am writing this blog. Must learn to say no!!

The first paragraph was the hardest to write but I wanted to show the respect that I have gained being a Short Break Carer. I suppose that if I didn't have these comments then I would probably think that I wasn't doing a good enough job! So, in that respect I thank and appreciate every one of them.

Being a Mum of 4 children and a grandmother of 7 children I suppose I have had plenty of practice of looking after children but not with children additional needs, until recently. My grandson, Harrison has been diagnosed with Autism within the last year.

My role began 8 years ago when my daughter wanted to work with children with additional needs. My husband noticed an advert in the Llanelli Star advertising for volunteers to provide respite to help support families locally, with Barnardo's. I fancied helping out, so Kay and I became carers. We are attending training, had the background checks done and became approved in June 2006. In time, Kay moved back to Newport, South Wales and I carried on as a single carer. In April last year Carmarthen Council took us in-house and I now work for the Short Break Service.

A little bit about the children I support.... They broke me in gently, so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started caring for children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome. I now care confidently for children with more complex disabilities that include, Multi-Sensory Impairments, OCD and special awareness issues, Dietary needs, Acid Reflux problems and tackling the social and emotional needs of the child and, in some cases, the parents.

To enable me to care for a child more effectively I request support from the professionals! I have had amazing support from my Team (Short Break Service), Speech and Language Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Dieticians, Social Workers, Welfare Officers etc. I attend Annual Reviews at Schools, Meetings with GP's, Children in Need Meetings, and any meetings that I can, that will enable me to help support the child.

A typical visit could be a child arrives on school bus to me. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and then work from there. Parents arrived with other sibling which gives me a chance to check on any issues such as, change of medication, update on what the child has eaten etc.

Once the parents have left and the children are comfortable and relaxed then the fun begins....if it's a nice day we may put a blanket out on the grass, collect some toys that the child may enjoy interacting with and at the same time seeing to the needs of their sibling, which may be very different from the other child, such as wanting a bounce on the trampoline, fun in the sand pit or just chilling watching Peppa Pig.

After tea, then bath time for the children and their favourite story time before bed. Once one child is settled to sleep then medication for the other child and supper then their bedtime. Tidy up time for me, including washing clothes for children before settling down to start my recordings before my early night!

Up early next day, before children, to get ready myself then waking children to give them breakfast, wash and brush their teeth and getting dressed ready for school. After they leave then its tidy up time and maybe changeover of bedding for different child arriving at 3.15pm.

Memorable times.....numerous amount of times, over and over again... Standing at a gate watching some animals grazing in a field, standing on a bridge waiting for a train to go underneath, watching a child running towards me for a cwtsh, a child repeating a repetitive tune back to me, watching the response from a child who doesn't communicate in the usual ways but by poking out their tongue as a response to your efforts, watching a child learn to work a block puzzle and requesting praise in their own little way by clapping their hands, watching a very unstable child learning to walk with shoulders, arms and hands in control, taking a memorable photo of a child or recording a memorable video to see progress a child is making....I could go on...I have learnt so much from these children and from my role as a Short Break Carer.

Yes, Linda you were a very Special Person and a true Professional.

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# TRAGIC MUM DEVOTED LIFE TO HELPING KIDS

**Chad Welch**

TRIBUTES have been paid to a grandmother who devoted her life to improving the lives of disabled children.

Linda Emmanouel, of Kidwelly, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and passed away just four weeks later.

Full story: page 11



Victim offered to call burglar an ambulance

PAGE 22

Southwales evening post.co.uk/news



PAGE 20

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# Linda's Story

Looking back on 8 years as a Short Break Carer, the most embarrassing thing to come to terms with is the praise I receive from my husband (my biggest fan), my family & friends, parents of the children I support, professionals, fellow carers and so on.

My role began 8 years ago when my daughter wanted to work with children with additional needs. I fancied helping out so Kay and I became Short Break Carers. We attended training, had the background checks done and became approved in June 2006.

#### A little about the children I support

They broke me in gently so my first child was a child who was a carer themselves, for their parent. This gave the child a chance to do normal things that a child of their age would do. As time went by, and training continued, I started looking after children with Autism, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome. I

now care confidently for children with more complex disabilities that include Multi-Sensory Impairments, OCD, and spacial awareness issues, dietary needs, acid reflux problems and tackling the social and emotional needs of the child and, in some cases, the parents.

To enable me to care for a child more effectively I request support from the professionals! I have had amazing support from my team (Short Breaks Service), Speech and Language Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Teachers, Physiotherapists, Dieticians, Social Workers, Welfare Officers etc. I attend annual reviews at schools, meetings with GP's, children in need meetings and any meetings I can that will enable me to help support the child.

#### A typical visit

A child arrives on the school bus. I assess the child for their first need such as a drink, nappy change, change of clothes, hunger and

then work from there. Once the child is comfortable then the fun can begin. If it's a nice day we may take a blanket and some toys out to the garden, bounce on the trampoline, play in the sand pit or just chill out watching Peppa Pig. After tea and bath time it's time for their favourite story before bed.

Tidy up time for me, including washing the child's clothes before settling down to start my recording before my early night! Up early the next day to get myself ready then wake the child for breakfast, wash and brush teeth and get dressed for school. After they leave it's tidy up time and maybe a changeover of bedding for a different child arriving at 3.15pm.

There have been so many memorable times from standing at a gate watching animals graze to watching a child run over for a cwts. I could go on and on... I have learnt so much from these children and my role as a Short Break Carer.



In memory of Linda Emmanuel, Short Break Carer

Could you care for a child with a learning or physical disability? Do you like a challenge?

If you have time, energy, patience and a sense of fun; if you can relate to, respect, communicate and listen to children, please contact Carmarthenshire County Council to hear more about Fostering and Short Breaks. Tel 0800 0933699 or visit [www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/fostering)



maethu foster

Does it seem each day you're a carer? or there room in your life for a child?



Carmarthenshire



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Do you enjoy the company of children?  
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If you think you could make a difference to a child's life-please contact Carmarthenshire County Council. We are looking for short break and foster carers to work with children and young people with learning and physical disabilities

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These stories are just a few I could go on, but my greatest joy was to receive an award for her work with the Carmarthenshire Council Care Services a beautiful Pottery Jug with the inscription “One in a Million” and “Linda Loved and Remembered Always”.





In a heartfelt tribute, Linda consistently embodied compassion in everything she did. Those who had the privilege of working alongside her unanimously declared, "There was only one Linda, and she's going to be incredibly challenging to replace."

To me, Linda was not only my soulmate but also an extraordinary mother and grandmother. Her nurturing spirit extended beyond our family, making her a living angel to many. The warmth of her kindness and the depth of her care left an indelible mark on everyone fortunate enough to have crossed paths with her. Linda's legacy is a testament to the immeasurable impact one caring soul can have on the lives of others.

Linda Jane Elizabeth Emmanuel 26/4/1963 – 4/7/2015