



Memorial Service – Final Eulogy – 12 minutes – Dorchester 2016

Dorothy Joan Davis

18th May 1920 – 2nd June 2016



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Memorial Service – July 2016

Firstly, may I welcome you to this special memorial to celebrate the life of an exceptional lady.

My name is Bob Noble and I feel it a honour to be entrusted by the Davis family to undertake this ceremony to honour the life of Dorothy Joan Davis.

Dorothy, or Dot, as she was known, was born in Capel, Surrey on the 3rd of July, 1921 to Ethel and George Davis. They went on to have twins, a brother and sister for Dorothy, called Bert and Mary.

Living in a small village just after World War 1, Dot only received a basic rural education, but went on to train as a nurse – beginning a career and calling that would shape not only the rest of her life, but also have a lasting impact on the lives of thousands of others.

Although she was involved across a whole spectrum of nursing duties her highly respected skills led her finally into a love for midwifery which I shall return to later.

Today we should give special thanks to Dot's niece Sarah and nephew Peter. Peter's wife Connie and her great nieces and nephews Phil, Jack, Helen and Becky for arranging this service to help us all share stories and memories of Dot and celebrate the part she played in all your lives.

It seems a crime to have to use the titles 'nieces and nephews' as you will find out, it is evident Dot's professional 'mothering' skills didn't end when she left her hospital surroundings – in spite of never having had a single child of her own she was like a second mother to all she knew and loved.

Her list of close personal friends is, sadly, far too long to read through so I hope you accept my apology for not mentioning you by name but individually you will know in your hearts who you are. One exception to this is Joan – it would be impossible not to mention her, Dot's closest friend and supporter throughout life.

Dot and Joan were life long friends to such an extent that they together bought and shared at least two properties in their lifetimes.

This arrangement worked superbly well for the housemates, as both of them, particularly Joan, spent a great deal of time away on foreign tours. The two of them would eventually invest in a large house in Donhead St Andrew – a small village in Wiltshire.

Set in half an acre of land, the two ladies set about adapting the property so that they both had their own separate wings – with separate bedrooms, bathrooms, and dressing rooms – but at the heart of the house, adjoining both wings was the all important dining room.

A dining room that became the very beating heart of not only the lives of the families and friends of both ladies, but also the beating heart of the village.

When I spoke with Sarah I could physical feel the warmth of love and remembrance fill the room as her mind rushed back over years with memories of happy times and events in that dining room. Events that were highly organised celebrations when Dot would provide the main courses and Joan would provide the desserts.

It was with open arms and open hearts that Dot and Joan would welcome everyone – and I do mean everyone into their home. Even a family of local badgers were welcomed into the garden with Dot's blessing.

Although Dot enjoyed the home comforts of England, she was not a 'stay at home bird'. Not by any means. She performed her nursing duties afar a field as Canada, Belfast, and South Africa as well as in London.

In Belfast, in the late sixties, at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Dot's midwifery skills were put to the test on many occasions but none more so than on the premature birth of one particular baby girl!

Fearing the worst the medical staff prepared the parents (and themselves) for the inevitable.

When born, the baby weighed no more than 1lb. She stood very little chance of surviving but a few hours. Dot, of course, had other ideas – in true stoic fashion, she nursed and cared for this precious gift of life.

Little Penny – *named after her tiny size* – survived and for many year's following, Dot would receive letters

from her – the young lady never forgetting the midwife that gave her that precious chance at life.

Dot would go on to help bring into the world thousands, and I do mean thousands of babies, being there at the moment when she would be the first person to see, touch and hold a new unblemished life.

In her professional career, she was highly respected, loved and always considered a fair boss!

In the days when Matrons and Ward Sisters ruled and ran their wards, many revered her. However, there were a small number who equally feared young Dot.

When she finally returned to London in 1970, she took charge of the maternity unit that was just about to be built as part of the new Northwick Park Hospital – the completed design of which Dot was none to happy with.

Evidently it's eminent architect, had not spent as much time delivery babies as Dot had, and she made it perfectly clear that the plans HAD to be changed, whatever the expense.

Dot had the whole maternity wing redesigned for the benefit of small babies and their mothers and not for the planners or accountants.

Through Dot's determination it became one of the first hospitals ever to have a large glass window where parents could look in on special care babies and see their young infants develop and grow without the risk of infection.

Modern day midwifery owes a huge debt of gratitude to Dorothy Joan Davis.

This would have come as a shock to Ethel and George, by then her deceased parents. Early on, young Dotty appeared to be no Mother Teresa in the making. Confronted with the cries of one of the twins, in a fit of peak, she 'bit' the poor child! Forever after Dot was teased relentlessly by the family with cries of 'Dotty bit the baby in the pram!'

Eventually, Dot was forgiven for this one misdemeanour and became the true matriarch of the family. Her name now appears in many books and through these, and our memories, she will live on forever. Dot's dedication, skills and radical ways of thinking have made an immeasurable difference to our world.

In her latter years, she began to lose her sight through macular degeneration but in true stoic fashion she still learned to touch type and use a computer. Even when she was mugged in Salisbury, she was not daunted and returned defiantly to the city to continue her computer training.

She was a brilliant seamstress, could upholster a chair with the finest stitches.

When I asked Sarah what did she think would be the one word that summed up her Aunt Dot she said 'wonderful'. When I asked her what she thought she would be most missed for ... she quietly smiled and just said 'her presence'.

Of course a dot ... like her namesake ... may signify the end of a sentence, the end of a story, the end of lifetime. But you'd be wrong, so wrong... that ISN'T and never has been Dot's way!

Surely a minor issue such as dying couldn't stop the indomitable Dot from doing what she does best – changing the course of the future of medicine. And, believe it or not, it hasn't.

Even now, as I speak, she is working away, her mortal remains assisting the brightest brains in the medical department of Southampton University.

Although she can't speak to us, hug us or be with us any more ... she's there beavering away helping others ... as she did in life ... so does she in death.

So, with all the love in your hearts, feel free to say your goodbyes to her today, but, next time you drive past Southampton University – don't forget to give her a wave and sweetly whisper to yourself a quiet 'hello Dot'.

