**Eulogy for Daisy McCann**

**(Jeff Ellis, friend of the family)**

May 28, 2022

* Yesterday I got to spend some time with Robert after we had dinner with Carolyn, and after he and I took Ian, Dylan and Aiden out for a walk to Krispy Kreme.
* Robert and I were talking about the funeral and who was coming to town.
* Robert told me of the stories people had been sharing about Daisy, in particular, two of them that came from her time as an academic and researcher.
* The stories he shared were of women who had met Daisy in a university or lab setting and who Daisy mentored, helped and who ultimately became her close friends.
* I was delighted to hear these stories, which were not surprising to me, but which added new depth and perspective to how I think about Daisy, who she was, and what an impact she had on people’s lives.
* My own perspective on Daisy is quite different, at least on its face. Most of my memories of Daisy are from when Robert and I were kids, growing up in the 1970s and early 1980s, before I left Windsor.
* Robert and I met in grade two. My memories around those early days of our friendship are a little foggy, but I know that before long Robert, Daisy, Joe, Mushie, Robert’s grandmother, and Gus (his dog back then) were a big part of my life.
* Picture this: Windsor, 1974. Girls, and boys, wore their hair long and feathered back. Pants were wide legged. Andy, the cool teenager who lived across the street from us, wore black high-heeled boots, a leather jacket and listened to Aerosmith and Kiss while he worked on his muscle car.
* My father worked in real estate, and our social milieu was mainly from the business world of real estate and construction. Neither of my parents went to university.
* So, at some point in grade two I went back to Robert’s house to play. And there were Daisy and Joe, so calm and thoughtful. There were books all over the house. They listened to classical music. Our times playing outside or upstairs in Mushie’s room were punctuated by Robert’s daily violin practice. I don’t recall him listening to Aerosmith. In some ways it was like walking into another world.
* The wonderful thing about it, though, was that it wasn’t another world, but it was another way to live in the world, and it opened my eyes.
* When I think of Daisy I think of the calm way she spoke. The way she delighted in hearing Robert and I tell stories. Stories about school, about crazy ideas we had for games or things we wanted to do. She wasn’t trying to get us out of her hair. She wasn’t rushing off to something else, despite being an entrepreneur and having a career at a time when not all women did.
* For Daisy the home and the table were important. Hospitality and welcoming people were important. I’m sure many of you here today know she was a terrific cook, and a very gracious hostess. But for me, as a kid, what really hit home was the social side of meals at Daisy’s house. It was the long dinners of storytelling, laughing, talking about whatever interested us at the time, from the Lord of the Rings to Norse Mythology (among the books in Mushie’s study were D’Aulaire’s illustrated Norse and Greek myths, which I loved). It was the long brunches on the screened in patio.
* As I returned to Windsor to visit over the years and visited the house on Pentilly Lane, up until 2015 when Daisy sold it, it was like stepping back into that familiar past. Not only had the hospitality not changed, but the house and its furnishings were almost identical to what I recalled from when I was a child.
* Despite the home being so neat and ordered, meals being so good, so thoughtfully prepared, often to order, there was never a sense of rush that there seemed to be at other houses.
* With the McCann’s, with Joe too of course but with Daisy in particular, I never had the feeling that there was somewhere else I wanted to be, or that they did either. Where we were was magical, and rich, and enough. We had the whole world of culture, ideas, science and humor available to us on a Sunday morning on the porch, or a Friday evening after dinner, sitting beneath the ominous portrait of a man in a green robe that loomed over the table – another artifact from some place far away from Windsor that was mysterious yet comforting.
* At my house, and the houses of my other friends, the TV was either on at dinner or it wasn’t far off. It often felt like everybody seemed to want something more: a bigger house, a better job, a boat. Parents seemed preoccupied, sometimes harried. At Daisy’s table, we were present. What we needed was all right there. Her laughter and the twinkle in her eye as I mocked our grade four teacher or imitated our principle was genuine and engaged.
* And despite all the order and civility, well, from a kid’s perspective frankly Daisy was up for most anything. Whether we were doing science experiments in the kitchen, or flooding the McCann’s backyard with a garden house and throwing in bags of minnows to create an artificial lake, I don’t ever recall Daisy keeping us from being wild, crazy kids. She would frown and look dubious at some of the ideas, and warn us from obvious dangers, but in the end we were free to let our imaginations run wild, to explore and to create, and to know that at the end of it there would be a good meal and a chance to talk through our adventures to a rapt audience.
* One particular highlight was when Daisy allowed Robert and I to roam through the abandoned former Wayne County General Hospital wings next to the Clinical Ligand Assay Society. That one still stands out. It looked like a set from a slasher film – an insane asylum that had been ransacked. I know many parents then and now who might not have allowed that, but I think by showing she trusted us she instilled in us a greater sense of responsibility.
* Coming back to where I started, though unlike some of you Daisy was not in any way a mentor to me in terms of a career or academic work, I definitely saw in her a mentor and a model for living, thinking and caring about people. A model I have certainly not been able to live up to! But Daisy definitely not only inspired me, but also gave me confidence as a kid that my opinions mattered, that I was as capable as anyone appreciate art, to tackle a difficult problem or to tell an engaging story.
* Yesterday evening, as I spent time with Robert, Carolyn and the boys I felt like I was transported back to the house on Pentilly Lane. There were Robert and Carolyn serving dinner. There were the kids telling their stories, eagerly listening to ours, having fun, excited about the world and about their imaginations. Ian and I took turns reciting poems from the Lord of the Rings. It felt magical. It felt like Daisy was there.