



From about 1987, when Evan and Noela lived in Brisbane so Evan could cover the Fitzgerald Inquiry into police and political corruption in Queensland, Noela took on possibly the hardest job of her life. She totally supported and championed Evan's goal of changing the legal system from an adversarial approach to a fairer inquisitorial system. She became adept at book publishing and dealing with TV and film producers.

That amazing girl on the bread bike in Murgon sure went places and I was privileged to be along for some of the ride. Thank you Mum for your love.

Eulogy for my mother Noela Mary Whitton 19/12/1929 – 9/4/2021, by Elizabeth O'Brien



Our mother was the best mother in the universe. From the moment we each came into the world, we have been nurtured and supported by mumsy to develop into being the best possible versions of ourselves. She considered us the greatest achievements of her life – her artworks: Jane a fabulous artist and cook who has created this beautiful home and our lunch, Hugh an award-winning playwright and script-writer to premiers, Claire an artist and a post-production supervisor in Hollywood, and me, a scientist who advocates for a safer and healthier world.

Noela believed that to raise children was to MAKE friends with your children: show them the warmth, compassion, interest, loyalty, good will, kindness and generosity that you'd show a friend. In Noela's written words from her book "How to Stay Friends with Your Children" [free to read or download at <http://netk.net.au/Whitton/NoelaWhitton.pdf>]:

- "Why can't a parent be more like a friend?"
- "Plan your masterpiece [your child]"
- "To air and water, add poetry and laughter"

Noela discovered the teachings of Maria Montessori years after she had developed her own home-preschool – which started punctually at 9:22am (yes, that's where Hughy gets it from!) replete with special materials used only for this purpose. The materials were "unpacked before starting and put away when we finished" and "during every waking moment of the children's lives, supplying, where appropriate, an explanation of everything they touched, smelt, tasted, heard or saw."

My earliest memories of my mother are of this wonderful preschool she created in our home in Kingaroy, where I developed my love of patterns and my love of teaching. I remember she taught us and a friend's children to read, write, add and subtract before we started school, but more than that, she taught us to love music, art, literature. When I was four and my siblings were at school, Noela



always had ABC radio on and I learned to whistle both jazz and classical music and can still whistle along to the entire 4th movement of Beethoven's 9th symphony. This led to my love of music and singing, which of course Noela came to watch each and every time I performed.

Noela's garden in Kingaroy inspired my lifelong love of plants. I remember the beautiful smell of the tomatoes she grew outside the kitchen window, the incredible green environment we had surrounded by a fruit orchard. We built cubby houses in the grape trellises and swung on the huge swing near the fig tree. From the obelia hedge she planted out the front, the pussy willow, her favourite pansies and shade from the weeping willow tree, I came to know the wonder of nature.

In later years I was always tending to my mother's balcony garden and my own gardens and farm. My last gift to Noela was baked home-grown pumpkin from our farm and my mother's continuous gift to me was being enthusiastic about looking at the hundreds of plant photos I take each year!

Evan Whitton became my stepfather when I was nine but he was universally known amongst my friends and colleagues as my "father" for the last 50 years of his life. When my three boys were all teenagers I began a tradition of visiting my parents every Saturday – like a friend would do – to enjoy their company, help around the apartment and feast on Evan's restaurant-grade cooking. These exchanges were always for me, an honour and a privilege – and they only increased in frequency in more recent years.

I feel I am the luckiest child on earth to have had a mother who was so determined and mentally strong. My mother miraculously survived massive stomach surgery when I was two, and had a world record number of gallstones removed in her fifties. She showed incredible neuroplasticity by returning – through her strength of will alone – to her exceptional emotional intelligence and brain functioning after each stroke.

When Evan lay dying in hospital in July 2018 and I was taking Noela home from a 12-hour shift bedside, she said to him "God Bless" and he asked her: "are we doing that now?" to which she replied "yes we are." Since then mumsy and I have often said "God Bless" to each other and I feel blessed by the absolute joy of spending countless hours with my mother, especially in her last six years, the Beautiful Evening of her life, her Beau Soir.

Throughout my life, "Noelakins" as Evan called her, helped me to flower into motherhood and grandmotherhood myself. I hope that my three sons, Alex, Eric and Harry, and grandchildren Riley, Phoenix and the little one on the way, will regard me as their friend in the same way as Noela became my best friend. Noela was a beacon in my life: always accepting me for who I am, always looking out for me, being interested in my interests, participating in my life and being a fabulous role model in relationships, as a parent and as a friend.



To you, my best friend, my mother, loved by Evan for 75 years, now with him again, I sing:
*Darling don't be afraid I have loved you
For a thousand years
I'll love you for a thousand more*



Farewell to our beautiful mother of seven, grandmother of seven and soon-to-be great-grandmother of seven.

Noela celebrating her 90th birthday with family.

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