

Jean Mabel Fostekew - Eulogy 27th November 2024

93!

Her father, our grandad, was a good cricketer. He would have described 93 as “a *good innings*”. And I would have to agree. She may not have thought she hit many 6's but let's review her time at the crease.

In the dressing room before the match....

A single child, she came from a humble background. She was born above a shop in Market Place, Wokingham, then moved to Earley where she grew up in a small flat on the Wokingham Road in Reading.

Once at the crease, she quickly scored her first **6**:



She excelled at school and won a scholarship to the Abbey in Reading for mathematics. The subject came easy to her and she was put into the year above, taking her exams a year early. Her school days were always spoken about with huge fondness.

Another **6**

You've heard that when she left school, she went to the Miles Aeronautical School in Woodley. In fact the hangar she trained in, is now part of the Museum of Berkshire Aviation. At that time aeronautical engineering was a very male orientated environment, so much so that when she took the entrance exam, she was one girl out of 150 boys. This fact was picked up and printed by a national newspaper.



She now scores a **4**... for being part of the design team on the Fairey Gannet, a carrier-borne aircraft designed for anti-submarine warfare.

Why does this not warrant a 6, I hear you ask? Well I'll tell you why.

My friend Russell, my son Louis (Jean's grandson) and myself went to Duxford Aircraft museum a few years ago. We were walking around and I saw a Gannet on display. I was about to tell my little party “hey look, there's the plane my Mum helped design” when a random museum visitor turned to his companion and said “oh my god, look at that ugly thing!” Hence a 4 rather than a 6 for designing such an ugly aeroplane.

Another straight bat **4**...

For being part of what has been described as “The greatest generation”. The vast majority of her generation looked at what they could do for their fellow countryman (or woman), rather than what they could do for themselves. A massive lack of “greed” flowed through those who lived through those tumultuous war years. Why

then does she only score a 4 for this rather than a six? The answer... she was a communist in everything but name. However, it was her own unique version of communism, where she believed such naive things as *"if there was no money, people would only take the food they needed from the supermarket"*. Yeah right!

A **6**... For practicality:

Getting herself and her two young sons, Andy and Martin across the Atlantic to the USA in 1957, on an old freighter called the "Nancy Likes". The crossing was not helped by the fact Martin all but cut his little finger off in a water tight door. Husband Mk 1, flew there!

Son no.3, our brother Keith, was born whilst they lived in the US and after working and living in the US for three years, they decided to return to the UK in 1960.

Another example of her pragmatic practicality...

Her father was living with them at their home in Twyford. As she did every morning, she went in to give him a cup of tea and found him dead in the bed. She said NOTHING and returned to the kitchen, made Ken his sandwiches for his lunch, got her youngest son Scott off to school and then dealt with the "dead dad". When I quizzed he about it she said *"well I didn't want those two fussing around"*.

A **4**....For... always the sports fan.

In 1971 there was an unscheduled, unlicensed bare knuckle boxing match held in the living room of our house in Maidenhead. The contestants were my brother Martin, then aged 16, versus our father aged 45.

I remember being wide mouthed as I looked on in horror as the fight started and, in fear of getting one to the face, my father managed to pin Martin's arms to his sides. I turned and looked at my mother who was laughing her head off and who was desperate for Martin to just get one clean punch in on husband no.1.

50 runs, her half century with another **6**:

At this point she had a problematic spell. The wicket became tricky to bat and she wasn't at all happy facing the tight fist, deep pocketed, short armed bowler. Luckily she weathered the storm and managed to get rid of, divorce, the bowler, our father, by dispatching him to some obscure club in Scotland.

At this point, it was time for a New Ball:



New Ball

A boundary for another **4**: Music appreciation:

It seems to be the norm for people of a generation to only enjoy music from their generation. That is especially true when new genres of music appear e.g. rock and roll, heavy metal, punk etc.. That was not the case with our mother.

When I was about 14, I was at the “rebel and shock stage”. I came home one evening to find Ken and Jean having a party. I thought, I know how I can shock them! So I took off the record they’d been playing and put on Ian Dury and the Blockheads album “New Boots and Panties”. I placed the needle at the point just before the track “Clever Trevor”... for those music aficionados amongst you, you will know this is where Ian Dury says a series of the most offensive words in the English language. Needless to say, I didn’t get the reaction I wanted... my mother jumped about the room telling everyone “*I bought him this album*”. She loved Ian Dury and the Blockheads. It’s bloody difficult to rebel, when it was quite clear she was a bigger rebel.

A Big **6** for Comedy

She loved a good laugh and rather like her music tastes, just because she was from the war generation, didn’t mean she only appreciated the likes of Tommy Trinder, Arthur Askey and Tony Hancock.

In 1982 the TV comedy series “The Young Ones” appeared on our TV’s. It was “alternative” comedy, shocking, outrageous, the sort of thing Mary Whitehouse got her knickers in a twist about. Our Mum loved it. We would watch it together and... without exaggerating, she and I would be rolling on the floor wetting ourselves, whilst Ken sat straight faced in his chair, looking as if he was watching an episode of Panorama.

A cover drive **4** for her travelling prowess:

Some of you will know about her epic solo journeys.

On her own across Ireland. She travelled across Ireland during the troubles... brave or stupid, you decide.

On her own from east to west of Canada. When arriving in some god forsaken places in the middle of the night, she admitted she did feel stupid walking along “whistling”... as the advice was to whistle, because the bears didn’t like being surprised.

On one particularly dark night, she got off the bus and walked straight into the side of a Moose.

She did some crazy walks across England and Wales - inc one with Ian Botham in 1985. She said.. “*Oh my god, he walks quickly*”.

My favourite though was when she'd been looking at an old map from the 17 or 1800's and it showed a right of way from Newbury down to Chichester. She compared it to a current OS map and noted the old route was missing! Only 250 or so years had passed, so there was no time to lose! Knowing that her son Martin and his wife live near Chichester... she immediately wrote a note to Ken, packed a spare pair of knickers in her handbag, got a train to Newbury and tried to see if she could follow the route to Chichester. A few days later she arrived in Chichester and then walked to Martin and Diane's house. They weren't in!

Now a rather a controversial **6**. Controversial because it was due to a clothing malfunction,.... but her inclusivity makes it a worthy 6:

In her late 70's, she was attending a house party. She was wearing a full length dress and had been chatting to some of the guests in the kitchen. As she walked out of the kitchen, there was a step down into the living room where all the other guests were gathered. Her foot caught the front inside seam of her dress, pulling it down and... out popped both tits. The men from the kitchen came running out, complaining they'd missed it. She rolled her eyes, grabbed the top of the bodice and pulled it down, to expose them for the second time.... Much to the appreciation and merriment of the old boys.

A selfless **6**

Selfless. I don't remember her ever asking for anything. And that included things like expecting to be invited at Christmas. No matter what you asked, the answer would always be YES. For example, if you asked her to babysit, she would never tell you she was busy, it was always a YES.

Getting us a TV:

Husband no.1 hated, detested, despised television "*we're never getting one of those*" and to be fair to him... he never did. However, in 1964 the BBC announced they were launching BBC 2. Now unlike these dreadful entertainment channels, BBC 2 was going to be dedicated to the arts. Our Mum saw an opportunity! She worked to convince "him" that if we got a TV for the family it would be "for the arts".

Remembering "he" wasn't renowned for opening his wallet, she told him her friend "Peter Blomfield" (who was a bit of a boffin), could provide us with an all but home made "full of valves" TV for next to nothing. It worked, we got a TV and I could watch Thunder Birds. That TV was recently described by Jean's oldest son Andy as "*it was from John Logie Baird's original blueprint*".

A **6** for sport:

Her own sporting career was, I think I'm right in saying, more of an enthusiastic competitor than a serious contender. Later when she became a spectator, she would love to come and watch her grandchildren at any sporting event. She attended all of my kids sports days, a lot of their football games and a few of the more recent rugby games.

She came to Twickenham with me on multiple occasions to watch England. This would often be together with my father-in-law John Mottram. He'll tell you her sporting appreciation and knowledge was extensive and her ability to read the game made her a very good sporting companion.

In 2013 she came to the Palmer Park stadium to watch my daughter Hannah, then aged 10, compete in the schools district sports. The three of us were sitting in a row and I turned to Hannah and said, "*This is the stadium where I ran my first athletics event*". Mum turned to us and said "*Oh and I ran here in 1948... I didn't win though*".

A **6** for being an author:

She was a published author: Her published works included the hugely entertaining and critically acclaimed "Blossom", about Blossom Miles, an early adopter and advocate of equal rights for women. Copies of the book simply flew off the shelves (forgive the pun). For those who haven't yet read the "unput downable, page turner", you'll be glad to hear it's still available on Amazon for the bargain price of £13.38 and it has an Amazon rating of 4.3 out of 5

A HUGE **6** for this one. She hit the ball out of the ground, the ball went over the crowd and landed in the car park of... The Museum of Berkshire Aviation.

The foundation of the museum was her dream which she helped make into a reality. She dedicated so much of her later life and energy into its success. What a great legacy. Harks back to that "Greatest generation", doing something for others but in doing so, getting so much self satisfaction. She must have been proud of her achievement, not that she ever showed it.

A tidy **4** for reproduction:

Doing her bit to keep the planet populated, she had 5 boys, who in turn produced 11 grandchildren, and they... so far have produced 5 great grandchildren.

Now for those of you who, like our Mum are good at maths, you'll have realised that you can't get to 93 without at least one single run.

That was her 2nd husband, Ken, he was the one. Her one, the one she chose.

And that gets us to 93... she got bowled a googly and... she's OUT.



It's time for her to go back to the dressing room.... and for us to go to the pub and talk about what an amazing innings.