

## GRANS EULOGY

*Daphne Frances Tilse was born in Barcaldine on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1931. The eldest child of Mico George Livingstone Spanner & Margaret Cecelia O'Toole.*

*Yes, that's right, a Spanner married an O'Toole.*

*Mum was the eldest of 9 children, 5 boys and 4 girls. Sadly, mum's youngest sister Noala, also passed away only 2 months ago. Survived by her sister Marie of Wyreema, near Toowoomba and brother Kevin of Mt Isa.*

*One of Mum's favourite things to say was "I've only come from Barcaldine, didn't come far did I, hahaha". Both sides of mum's family being pioneers of the Barcaldine Region as far back as the 1880's.*

*Mum attended school at the Sisters of Mercy Convent School in Barcaldine, with a strong focus on her Catholic faith.*

*As a youngster, mum had 'Shirley Temple' curls and developed a great aptitude for music. She loved to play the piano and her skill was excellent, beginning at 5 years of age in 1934 at the Barcaldine Convent and achieving full honours in her final Australian Music Examinations Board exams in 1944.*

*Playing piano became a lifetime occupation for Mum. At 13 years old, Mum was called on to substitute for the regular piano player in her cousin's band, the Calder's Orchestra. That was her introduction to public life as a piano player and she eagerly filled that role at balls and dances each weekend in her young life all around Barcaldine and the surrounding towns gaining a reputation as one of the best. As young adults we often wondered why Mum never tried to get into the "big time" with her musical prowess, never realising that her dedication to us, her family, was the very reason she never did.*

*One of the stories Mum was quite proud to tell was that of Victory Day at the end of World War 2, how her mother Madge was called to play piano at the Odd Fellows Hall while she simultaneously played piano for the celebration at the Barcaldine Town Hall on that same night.*

*As for most folk of that era, many families did it tough, before, during and after the war. Mum started work at Lennon's Hotel at 13 years of age. Today called the Railway Hotel in Barcaldine. With no modern conveniences in it was hard going. Scrubbing floors on her hands and knees, washing linen for the guests in a copper, making ice cream in a butter churn on Sundays, everything done manually the long way. Throughout our entire lives, Mum was certainly all too ready to remind us of this fact when we had a whinge about having to go to work or do something we weren't particularly keen on.*

*As fate would have it, the combination of Mum playing piano and working at Lennon's led her to meet our father, Monte Tilse. In Dad's own words, "I went to a dance one night and your mother was there playing the piano. I was staying at Lennon's Hotel that night and the next morning when I woke up, she was there serving breakfast. Our eyes met and as they say, the rest is history.*

*Soon after they started going together, Dad said it was difficult to find an opportunity to take Mum anywhere due to him being in the baking trade doing a lot of evening and night work. He said he often took her to the pictures on a Friday or Saturday night. Again, in his own words, "I'd take your mother to the pictures when I could get a night off, we would just get settled into the movie, and sooner or later someone would tap them on the shoulder and say, "Daphne, we are having a dance on at the hall tonight, do you want to come and play?" Of course, mum could never say no and thus the date was cut short. I don't think it ever caused any disharmony because when Mum played the music, she was able to keep a keen eye on Dad dancing with all the other women, which become an accepted norm over a lifetime of going to dances.*

*Sadly, Mum's mother Madge, passed away at the young age of 44, soon after mum was married. Mum then took on the role of mother to her younger siblings, Trevor, Lenny, and Betty. Both the boys beginning long careers at the local PMG at Alpha, as usual under mum's influence.*



Mum was in integral part of Alpha's Old Time Dance Band "Just Us". Mum on the piano of course, Pauline Gibb playing the organ and George Rogers on the drums. They were the last of the great old time dance bands. They played at everything you can think of. Rodeo Balls, Debutante Balls, Show Balls, School Fancy Dress Balls, New Year's Eve Dances and on and on. Together, they became a musical institution. Still, to this day proudly owned and claimed by the Alpha community. Their definitive style was the soundtrack to Alpha, spanning generations and bringing absolute joy to one and all at the town hall on a Saturday night. They loved to play and by the good times had on the packed-out dance floor everyone loved them.

Although she never officially retired from playing music in public, Mum and the band came together one last time to record a studio quality old time dance album and a final concert in their pride of place, the Alpha Town Hall. Mum was 80, Pauline Gibb 74 and George Rogers, 84. Luke Roberts and John Elliot encouraging the band to strike up once again, the sound engineering expertise of Peter at the recording desk, with a supporting team of acclaimed Australian music industry professionals. The album was a great success and declared state significant in the history of Queensland Arts. A wonderful achievement of longevity immortalised for generations to come. Peter says since the band is no longer, the CD's have now doubled in price and going up by the day.

The song entitled "Crazy" as sung by Patsy Cline was Mum's favourite. Incidentally, it also became Peter's most requested song. Every time he picked up his guitar, either at home or in a public venue, Mum's voice would cut through the crowd, "C'mon Peter, play crazy."

Mum's love for music was strong to the end, still playing the piano proficiently only a month ago.

No matter what the subject, Mum would always take the contrary position. If we said something was, she said it wasn't. If we said something wasn't, she said it was. One of the great mysteries of our lives, I think it was just to keep us on our toes. Mind you I think it may have been passed down to the boys in the family. Mum was always tough, but a kind mother. She was never a fan of us sleeping in. In fact, she took great joy in entering our rooms every morning when she deemed it time to get up and enthusiastically saying "Get out of bed, people die in bed!". If we didn't get up, other methods were used to rouse us, including stripping the bed from underneath us.

Mum was the disciplinarian in the house, and when we needed it, she happily gave us what for. On plenty of occasions Alan & Jenny would run away from mum out of the house, trying to dodge their penance. Come nightfall they would sneak back into the house up the front steps then climbing across the railing re-entering through a window to the right and get into bed, where mum would suddenly appear with the belt! Dad always used to say, "I'm sure your mother can hear the grass growing".

As much as we like to talk mum up, she never looked for fame or notoriety, she just did what she did. In 1985, Mum received an Australian Citizen of the year Award from the then Jericho Shire Council, and in 2001, the International Year of The Volunteer, accepted a Silver Medallion and Certificate of Appreciation from the Honourable Peter Beattie, the then Premier Of Queensland. For all her adult life Mum was a keen volunteer in many of the local groups, she also tried to foster that altruistic attitude in us, by making us go with her to lend a hand.

Mum was part of the local hospital auxiliary group until she was 80. She was involved in many fetes and fundraising activities over the years for the sole purpose of donating much needed medical equipment for the Alpha Hospital. In only very recent times Jean Williams has told us that Mum was strongly influential in the decision of purchasing the first defibrillator for the hospital. A new technology at the time. At least for Alpha. One short week later Jean and Doctor on duty got to use the defibrillator..... to save Dad's life after he endured a massive heart attack. Good decision mum, Dad managed to get another 37 years with us after that.

Mum was a proud member of the global Al-Anon family group, as was Dad of Alcoholics Anonymous. For over 50 years, Mum and Dad selflessly made their home open and welcoming to those seeking advice, comfort, and refuge on their way to recovery and sobriety. The large kitchen table which is still in use today provided the setting for countless long talks over cups of coffee as well as mum-cooked meals, and oftentimes a warm bed. Usually, Dad would disperse his own brand of wisdom first, then after he retired, Mum would grab a coffee and pull them aside for her version. It seemed a proven combination that worked, and no doubt many of you here today will attest to. If only that kitchen table could talk.

*As Jean Williams would often say to us "No one will go hungry while Daph Tilse is around!". Dad would without notice, regularly bring an unknown visitor to the kitchen table and exclaim, "Put another cup of water in the stew, Mum!".*

*For many years Mum and Dad welcomed children from the Neerkol Orphanage and those from broken homes that were wards of the state. Every school break our house became a home and family for those placed with us. A particularly fascinating young man named Jeffrey Hebbard, took a shine to us and on completion of his stay at Neerkol at age 15 became a permanent member of the Tilse family. Mum treated Jeffrey as one of her own. She was the only mother he ever knew, and she shaped his life accordingly. A young boy with a tough start in life who went on to become the happy go lucky fella that we all came to know and love in Alpha. With mum's influence Jeffrey became part of the fabric of Alpha, volunteering in many organisations, building a new home, starting a family of his own and carving out a long career in Qld Rail.*

*Mum used to tell us a story about Alan. Alan was born in the Barcaldine hospital. His appearance resembled that of a young Sylvester Stallone rather than the likeness of Chris and Marcia. In the neighbouring ward there was a woman of Greek decent who had just given birth to a baby boy. Mum admitted to us for 5 years after, that while visiting Barcaldine she would go to the Greek family's café to see if she had brought the right baby home from the hospital. Jenny being born with the same complexion confirmed that mum's doubts were unfounded.*

*Mum and dad spent 62 years of married life together until dad's passing in 2017, with their family Christopher, Marcia, Terence, Alan, Jenny, Patricia, Peter & Jeffrey, as well as all their extended family and all the countless friends welcomed into their lives.*

*Volunteer, piano player, confidant, carer, friend, wife, great grandmother, grandmother, and mother. Mum, you dedicated your life in the service of others, yet you never asked for praise or recognition. You were a giver, not a taker. You were tough and unyielding in your "get up and keep moving" spirit to the end. You taught us how to be good people. Thank you for all you have done, we love you and may you rest in peace.*