



Tribute to Anne Fretwell

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow – these 3 words have major significance in Anne’s life and I will come back to the massive significance of these words.

Yesterday

– it only feels yesterday I met Anne 22 years ago coming home to Peter saying “This woman gets it”

- it only seems yesterday meeting 2 amazing dynamic women, Anne and her sister Helen.

I am sure for each of you it only feels like yesterday in your lives too:

- holding her in your arms as a baby
- playing as a child with your sister
- loving your Mum as a young adoring child
- meeting your amazing Mother-in-Law to be
- knowing her as your best friend
- valuing her as the best leader ever



Today

- today we gather to be so very thankful Anne was in our lives

Tomorrow

- tomorrow we vow to never give up on all she felt, believed and wanted for other people.

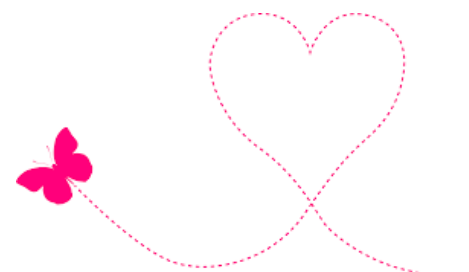
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow is massively significant. It was the title of the first National Dementia Care training DVD produced by the Alzheimer’s Society and filmed completely at Merevale House.

It was watched by over 10,000 people in the UK and beyond, thousands more followed this DVD and the work at Merevale House.

In thinking about this tribute I have focused on a number of themes of which the first was Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.

The second theme is Family

Anne was rooted in the very best Irish tradition of what being in a family meant thanks to her loving parents – the grace of Betty ran in Anne’s veins and the quiet wisdom of her Daddy was the blood running throughout her.





Anne's family meant the world to her and she talked of her siblings often to me and was so proud of them. Thanks to Anne's family she had a huge heart for what it meant to be human.

Sarah was everything to her and they became united in their love of each other making the very best family as Mother and Daughter and over the years Sarah filled with Anne with masses of pride. And then her family grew with the very best Son-in-Law she could ever have dreamt of, even in her last difficult months she said to Sarah "Well you'll never get better than him."

Her roots in family were the roots of her whole life and gave her the ease and emotional intelligence to realise whether living at Merevale, whether working at Merevale or whether visiting Merevale, giving people a feeling and sense of family was everything and the huge numbers here today were all Anne's family.

The third theme is Anne's Achievements

Merevale House has been rated as Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission where only 2% of care homes out of 20,000 receive this rating. Merevale House won many awards including Best Dementia Care Home in the UK, Best Dementia Garden in the UK to name but a few.

Merevale House is referred to in NICE Guidelines and was mentioned at Prime Minister David Cameron's G8 Summit discussion on dementia care.

And then came Anne and my collaboration to film BBC TV series 'Can Gerry Robinson Fix Dementia Care Homes' – this TV series was watched by over 8 million people and had a profound effect in the UK and worldwide on the state of the art of dementia care and the need for culture change. In addition Anne and Merevale House also became a leading National expert on the support of younger people living with a dementia.

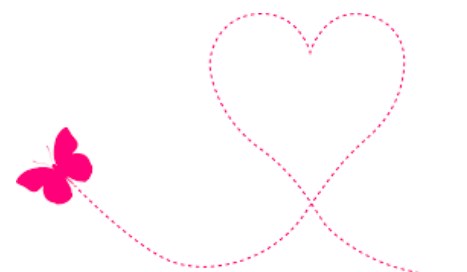
The tributes coming into Anne are worldwide and reflect her global reach examples of which are:

"I still remember her passion, kindness, spirit and generosity. Her desire to continue to improve the quality of life for people with a dementia, to understand their journey and to support her staff team was outstanding.

She will always remain a part of the ongoing work that each one of us who were touched by her continues to do, her legacy will never be erased."

Debra Keeling

RMBI



“The stories, the videos not only showed but really spoke about how genuine a person she was.

People living with a dementia would have said she was fearless and I think she was when it came to dementia care; she would fight like a wild animal to prove how it should be.

I will make sure Anne’s determination for better care is not forgotten.”

Arlene Huhn

**Alzheimer Society, Alberta
Canada**

“Anne is most loved for believing in the change of care for persons with dementia. The love of humanity shown by her courage to consistently strive to make the cultural change in dementia care is growing globally.

As Albertans, we are grateful and pleased Anne left the world a better place than she found it.”

Renate Sainsbury

**Lifestyle Options, Alberta
Canada**

“I remember myself watching Anne on the Gerry Robinson documentaries when they first aired and thinking just Wow!

To inspire people you never met is quite a legacy.”

Rachel West

N.E Lincs Council

“Anne was such a truly amazing and kind lady who I met in Dublin. The depth of her compassion really raised the bar in how we care for people living with a dementia in Ireland.”

Samuela Nic William

Ireland

“What a legacy to leave. Be the love you are looking for.”

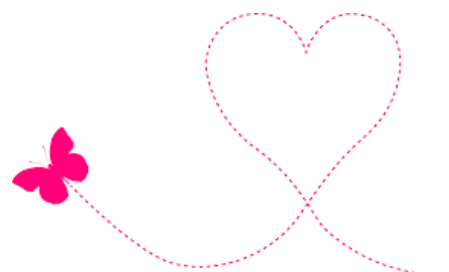
Viv Allanson CEO

Maroba Aged Care Australia

“Hello dear friends – Anne began her great contribution in the ‘Let’s try’ at the beginning – the trial and error of developing true feelings based care – woven through all the best teachings.”

Ann Ditchburn

Florida, USA





The fourth theme is about the Power of Vulnerability and the way in which Anne harnessed this

In thinking about vulnerability I believe these are the words that Anne would have said:

“I was not a little snowflake
My feelings weren’t fragile
My heart wasn’t bleeding
I was a badass believer in human rights
My toughness was my tenderness
My strength was in the service of others
There is nothing more fierce than formidable unconditional love
There is nothing more courageous than compassion
With my belief in equity, empathy, goodness and love indeed made me or people like me snowflakes then you should know winter is coming, the world needs covering in snowflakes”



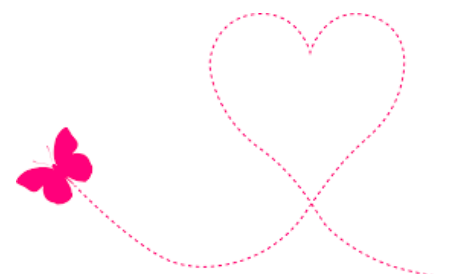
My fifth theme is about the Anne I knew and loved

Above all it was her unconditional love and total acceptance of me as the person I am. I will always remember in the first year of meeting her all the clothes and all the dresses - Boy did she love clothes and glamour. I have memories of her sat on the front of a speed boat in the South of France as we raced in to the bay of Nice. She too raced on a train to be with Peter and I the day I had my heart attack in central London. She had a phenomenal sense of humour, arriving at the hospital saying to Pete “It’s tough I have no knickers with me.” She so loved fabulous meals out in restaurants and although I am in a church and I apologise I have to say she was an unbelievable fag hag – boy did she love gay men and they utterly loved her! We didn’t always agree on things and I never won the argument with her about her smoking. I will remember her sat in Deia, Majorca with us with so many lovely times, she was the only person who could tease me ferociously with Peter. I will so miss her sending me music tracks to listen to and other than Peter I have never had and will so miss the many phone calls from her telling me she loved me.

My sixth theme I felt needed to be Anne’s own words and last night I listened and watched her in one of our DVD’s which was about leading through passion and modelling

These are Anne’s words:

“ There’s days through personal struggles and illness I hit the wall but something happens at work and off we go, we can do more, we can push this further, something keeps you driven, something keeps you passionate. But there are other days it’s hard but people would pull you up. People living there pull you up.





What matters is people to be real, genuine, emotional, authentic and free, people to be themselves, to be loved and valued for who they are and it's been a long journey.

Whammies come along in life, two marriages, a broken relationship and cancer. And that's what I mean about hitting the wall, you can't change who you are and like I say who I am at work, at home, who I am as a person, I'm never any different but the problem is a lot of people don't get it and that's hard sometimes. It comes at a personal cost doesn't it. "

And my final thoughts are: last night in the hotel Peter and I were watching a documentary about Dr Maya Angelou which was a strange coincidence as Peter did not know that I was going to use Dr Angelou's words to end this tribute:

"And when great souls die
after a period of peace blooms
slowly and always irregularly
Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration
Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us
They existed. They existed, they lived and they loved and they were very loved
We can be. Be and be better. For they existed, they so more than existed

The last music track Anne sent to me was Whitney Houston's 'I look to you'

The words are:

'And when all my strength is gone, in you I can be strong, I look to you, I look to you'

Anne is looking to each and every one of us to continue her love.

David
Dr David Sheard

