

Margaret Shaw 1941-2021



For Mum – A Journey Through Loss and Love

HELEN TAYLOR (COMRADE BADGER)

A Life Remembered

My mum was feisty, fiercely loyal, and never afraid to speak her mind. She was blunt at times—straight to the point, no sugar-coating—but beneath that tough exterior was a heart of pure gold. She would do anything for anyone, often putting others before herself without a second thought. To my two daughters, she was the perfect Grandma—funny, warm, and always ready with a cuddle or a kind word.

She loved my dad deeply and cared for him right up until he passed away in 2019, quietly pushing aside her own illness to make sure he was looked after. That was Mum—always thinking of others first, even when it cost her.

If I had to describe her in one sentence, it would be simple: she was my mum. And that says everything.

Her Story: A Life of Love and Meaning

Mum was born in Dukinfield, a proud northern woman through and through. It was at St Luke's Church where she met my dad—brought together not just by faith, but by laughter and light, performing in church pantomimes. Their connection was instant, and in 1962, they married, beginning a partnership that would span 57 years.

They had two children—me, and just 13 months later, my brother. We were her world, and she was ours. Dad worked as an engineer, while Mum spent most of her working life at the Senior Service cigarette factory. She was hardworking, dedicated, and always had a story or two to tell about the people she worked with.

When they both retired, life changed. My dad was diagnosed with vascular dementia, and Mum stepped into the role of his carer with quiet determination. Around the same time, she was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis—but she kept that in the background, focusing all her energy on caring for him. She hated him going into respite care and often felt guilty when she needed a break. That was just who she was—selfless to the end.

The Illness: Facing Pulmonary Fibrosis

After Dad passed away, Mum's own health began to deteriorate. Her pulmonary fibrosis, which she had pushed aside for so long, could no longer be ignored. I became her support—taking her to appointments at Wythenshawe, helping her navigate medication changes, and trying to keep things steady.

She began antifibrotic treatment, but it made her ill and she was eventually taken off it after being admitted to Tameside. A second medication was tried, but it caused more harm than good. The disease was progressing steadily, and it was heartbreaking to watch.

Through it all, Mum remained as brave and strong as ever. She worried more about me than herself—just as she always had.

My journey: Life After Loss

It was during one of Mum's appointments with the ILD nurses—Katie, who I'll always remember kindly—that the idea of joining the support group came up. While Mum was having bloods taken, I stepped out and made the call to Clive Green. I didn't know then how much that moment would mean.

Clive and his wife Sue welcomed me with warmth and understanding. The support group became a lifeline. I wasn't just learning how to manage the disease—I was finding a space where I could talk, grieve, and eventually, start to heal.

Mum joined the group too—reluctantly at first. But she grew to love it. Month by month, she formed connections, especially with Barbara (our “comrade fundraiser”) and Kevin. She'd save chairs for them at every meeting, making sure we all sat together.

Then came Covid. Face-to-face meetings stopped and we moved to Zoom. Mum didn't quite get the hang of it—she'd be chatting away over everyone until we had to gently mute her. But even through a screen, she brought her light into the room.

After Christmas 2020, her health worsened and she was admitted to hospital with Covid. For four weeks, we couldn't visit. In January 2021, she passed away. The pain of not being there with her will never fully leave me.

Moving Forward: Love, Legacy, and the Power of Community

This is how I came to the group—through love, through loss, and through a quiet, desperate need for connection. And what I found was far more than I ever expected. The Tameside Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group has given me so much: information, guidance, shared stories, tea, coffee, cakes, sandwiches, canal boat trips, Zoom calls, laughter, tears, and—above all—friendship.

This year has been especially hard. In March, we lost our beloved El Presidente, Clive. His warmth, humour, and tireless dedication helped make this group what it is today. And now, in his memory, we're more determined than ever to carry on his legacy and keep the vision of this special place alive.

Mum may be gone, but she's still with me—in every story I tell, in every kind gesture, in every breath of strength I take from this community. This group gave me a place to grieve, but more importantly, it gave me a way to keep going. For that, I'll always be grateful.

