

Annabel

December 16, 1937 - May 6, 2006



MONDAY, MARCH 27

☞ *Still inconclusive* but, as the doctor says, today's test results pushed us a little further along the path his thinking was taking him. Annabel had a second catscan at 1:00, followed by an upper body G.I. (think drink barium solution). It all took 27 minutes.....less than 3 hours from the time Dr. Graham's office contacted the Diagnostic Imaging department.

Here is Dr. Graham's view, pending biopsies and mammogram and a further thoracic investigation:

- There is a cancer spot, about 2.5x3cm on the left lung / the cough is probably related to this, as likely are ...
- Swollen lymph nodes below the lungs and to a lesser degree in the area of the stomach
- There is a lump in the right breast ... which may be a cyst, or may not...
- The esophagus is smooth down to a stricture at its' base, which prevents the passage of the gastroscopy device. The tests so far don't show tumourous growth at the esophagus, and he is baffled by the stricture. We will be having consultations this week with a thoracic surgeon toward resolving this. It may or may not be related to the lung problem i.e.: the lung spot may have been discovered while looking for a separate problem in the esophagus.
- There will be a breast mammography and biopsy this week, coordinated with the surgeon consultation.
- A lung biopsy (by needle) will require a trip to Ottawa.

We will be back to waiting by the phone tomorrow. Dr. Graham will be back to us with a plan to go from here.... whither it takes us. We are doing well had a good evening with Michael and Leslie and filled them in on all that stuff above.

We bought a 40" cribbage board (on legs) on our way through Petawawa..... I showed your mother no mercy would have skunked her if I'd had more than two points in my hand.

Love Dad

TUESDAY, MARCH 28

☞ Just spoke to Mom & Dad who have just spoken to the surgeon. As Dad says, "looks like he's got more pull in Ottawa than he admitted to". It appears that Mom will be in Ottawa for biopsies on the lung & breast before the end of the week. I am grateful for the lightening speed of these tests.

Leslie

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29

☞ We have just received a 7:30pm check-in time at the Ottawa General for Annabel, so we will be out of here today a bit later than originally envisioned.

Dr. Graham's view, pending biopsies and mammogram and a further thoracic investigation, is that there is a cancer spot measuring about 2.5 x 3cm on the left lung /she has a severe cough which is probably related to this; as likely are swollen lymph nodes below the lungs and to a lesser degree in the area of the stomach ...

- There is a lump in the right breast ... which may be a cyst, or may not....
- The esophagus is smooth down to a stricture at its' base, which prevented the passage of the gastroscopy scope. The tests so far don't show tumourous growth at the esophagus, and Dr Graham is baffled by the stricture. The tests tomorrow by a thoracic surgeon are directed toward resolving this. It may or may not be related to the lung problem i.e.: the lung spot may have been discovered while looking for a separate problem in the esophagus. She remains on a soupy diet..... Corona beer instead of scotch.
- We anticipate a breast mammography and biopsy in Ottawa, coordinated with the thoracic investigation. Ditto for a lung biopsy (by needle).

Thanks for the good wishes and help ... we are doing a-day-at-a-time.

Love

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'David', written in a cursive style.

David

Dear dear Leslie and family including Michael's family, and Andrea and partner.

We just heard from Winona about your Mother's incredible medical investigative journey which evidently has just begun. We are so concerned for Annabel, for H.D., for all of you going through this difficult time of not knowing what is ahead. We understand your parents are in Ottawa for tests and we are with them in that journey as well. As far as we heard the final results of all those tests might not be in yet, but from what we understand Annabel is very ill at the moment. We want you to know that we will respect H.D. and Annabel's wishes not to send e-mails or make phone calls to their home at this time. We also wish you to know you are all in our prayers and we are sending very positive vibes for a good prognosis. Take good care and know we are thinking of our dear friends Annabel and H.D. and their marvellous extended family - all of you.

Lots of hugs and love from Peter and Aganetha in Winnipeg.

THURSDAY, MARCH 30

☞ I've just finished speaking to both Mom & Dad. Dad is staying with friends in Ottawa. Mom is in the Ottawa General Hospital. I am feeling reassured today as both Mom & Dad were feeling very positive about things. The doctor was speaking of managing cancer as a chronic illness, and how improved the testing and treatments are even over just a few years ago. There is more testing to be done tomorrow and Monday. Mom has opted to remain in hospital for the weekend to "stay in the radar". She is comfortably ensconced in a private room. There is no new info today, except that mom remains somewhat enigmatic. They've done some sampling of lung and lymph and repeated the CT scan. They will do a mammogram tomorrow (the lump wasn't apparent in testing today...fingers crossed) and have another go at her esophagus on Monday. She is in very good spirits today. Biniyam & I will be in Ottawa for a swim meet on Sunday, so hopefully they'll come and watch some swimming.

XO Leslie

FRIDAY, MARCH 31

☞ I had another talk with Mom before bed tonight. She was a bit muzzy as she'd had a sleeping pill. She continues to be in good spirits...sense of humour intact...comfortable in her room...knitting socks at a rapid pace. She had more tests today, ongoing poking and prodding. Her oxygen saturation was low, causing her to faint during a mammogram. Although she hauled herself up and completed that test, they put off an MRI as they decided she'd had enough. She's on a diuretic to help drain her lungs...which she says that is working rather rapidly. She had another CT scan today, eliminating the possibility of a pulmonary embolism. So, still no answers, but they keep looking and it appears that they are determined to solve the puzzles. Dad is confident she's in very good hands and says she's handling it all far better than he'd dared hope. No tests for the weekend. On Monday, the surgeon will have a go at figuring out her esophagus.

Good night! XO Leslie

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

☞ I spoke to Mom before supper. The diuretics seem to be helping. Reducing the fluid in her lungs has given her more energy (better oxygen saturation) and her cough is a somewhat better. She continues to be in good spirits. I plan on visiting her tomorrow.

XO Leslie

SUNDAY, APRIL 2

∞ Biniyam & I were in Nepean today for a swim meet (someone cleverly planned one for the first Sunday in April...we were up at the equivalent of 4:00 am to get there). I had a chance to slip out with Dad to visit Mom at the hospital for a couple of hours. Because it is the weekend, they aren't doing any testing. She is basically "in maintenance", awaiting another tiring day of testing tomorrow. She looked just fine, except for the oxygen tube at her nose. The oxygen thingy makes a pleasant burbling noise in the background like an aquarium, or of those little burbling fountains. She is knitting and doing crosswords. I found one of the books you suggested, Mary, which was good as she was just finishing the one she'd taken. The food is pretty bad, nearly unrecognizable since it is all pureed and moulded, or extruded. She showed me a lump of pureed spaghetti...I wouldn't eat it either! She's sticking mainly to yogurt and meal replacement drinks. Janet Downey arrived with some sorbet that had her looking pretty excited!

So tomorrow the surgeon will further examine her esophagus and take a slice of the lymph node in her neck. Home Tuesday at the very soonest, I expect.

Leslie

MONDAY, APRIL 3

∞ Have just spoken to Mom...my nightly goodnight call...so I can sleep☺ She is still in good spirits, joking about the "lung juice" they are siphoning out of her through two tubes into two "buckets". This is in addition to her oxygen hose. She is well tethered, but not as comfortable as a result. She's been given something for the discomfort and something to help her sleep soundly despite it all. Today she had her MRI, but hasn't yet had her barium swallow (to sort out the esophagus problem). That will, hopefully, take place tomorrow. Current guess is that she'll be in until the end of the week. Still no new knowledge.

XO Leslie

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

☞ Mom sounded really great when I talked to her today. She's enjoyed some visitors and phone calls, and really appreciates the support and good thoughts sent her way. It is certainly clear to me how important she is to so many people, and I have told her so. Today she had a barium swallow and another x-ray. Tomorrow is a day of rest. The surgeon will take a biopsy of her lymph node and look down her esophagus again...procedures that have been expected for a few days now. Definitely remaining in the hospital until at least Friday.

Dad's Aunt Dea Lyall suffered a massive stroke yesterday (she won't recover) and is on the floor just above. Dad has been spending time with his cousin...soon to be cousins as others arrive...so that has provided some unfortunate distraction. Aunt Dea was a truly lovely person. Her husband, Uncle Lloyd, passed away at Christmas. Leslie

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5

☞ It's been one week. We finally received some news today. It's not good. Mom has lung cancer. It is not operable. It has spread. She will meet with the radiologist & oncologist tomorrow to form a treatment plan. Despite all, her sense of humour lurks. She wonders if the chemotherapy will remove her leg hair!

I'm going to Ottawa tomorrow for a few days. Dad sounds pretty fragile. Andrea is flying in next Wednesday.

XO Leslie

☞ We are with you in hope and prayers, and yes we hope chemo works and yes we do not care if it removes Annabel's hair whatsoever or wheresoever! A strong hug for your Dad, our friend Hugh David. Lots of love to Annabel and Andrea and Michael all of you from all the Dycks here in Winnipeg. Leslie, you take care! Love, Aganetha.

☞ I am truly without words. I am in tears. Being so far away is awful. If there is anything I can do which is pretty much unlikely please let me know. My heart and thoughts are with all of you. Love Mary

THURSDAY, APRIL 6

☞ Everyone seems to appreciate their evening update, and it's therapeutic for me, so I'll continue from Ottawa. If you want off the list, be sure to let me know. I've added a few people to the list as those in the know expand.

I joined Dad in Ottawa today. We're leaning on each other. We went to see Mom twice. In the afternoon, she was fresh off a procedure to expand her esophagus. In theory, she'll be able to eat normally again, although she's feeling nervous about trying and the hospital food isn't exactly inspiring. She is down to one drainage machine on her left (sick) lung and with luck that will be removed tomorrow as her lung seems to have finished draining. That would improve her mobility and comfort tremendously. Tomorrow, the doctors meet and we hope to get a lot more detailed info about her illness and treatments. Another good day to cross your fingers and say your prayers!

She continues to be in remarkably good spirits. She beat Dad & I at cribbage tonight, and is able to laugh and joke with us. She looks kind of sweet and elf-like with her oxygen tube tucked around her ears.

XO Leslie

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

☞ It was a busy day today. Not all the answers we want, but a few more. One of the important outstanding questions seems to be the primary source of the cancer, lung or breast. So they did an ultrasound and biopsy of the breast today. That's a 48 hour wait for results beginning Monday am, so treatment plans will probably happen mid-next week. Weekends are quiet. They will likely offer both radiation and chemo and will begin treatment before she is released. The palliative care team (focused on pain management and comfort which is now in their venue) saw her today and it was very nice that she really doesn't need their services yet. The only pain (mild) comes from all the things they've "drilled" into her (her words). So that is good. She is tired and she still coughs, but is basically feeling okay. She ate lumpier food today, testing the waters of her freshly expanded esophagus. We also met the cancer clinic liaison nurse today who gave her a basic outline of what she could expect there. Details next week. What we do know is that there is cancer in both lungs, both chest cavities, one breast, the lymphatic system (not sure if it's taken up residence or is just passing through) and her bones. That suggests some grim days ahead.

However, for tonight, we were laughing ourselves silly over cribbage in a room full of beautiful flowers. The universe turned upside down for a brief moment when Dad skunked us both.

XO Leslie

☞ It is what we were afraid of...from what you have been writing; one knew that the prognosis could not be good. I was hoping so much that it would not be in her bones...because that is, as you say, grim. I am so glad you are there with them right now...it will be the best support both of them can have.

Hugs to them both...to you...And you know you are free to write anything you need to say....yell and scream and stomp and holler...or just buckets of tears...they will just join with mine... My love, Winona

SATURDAY, APRIL 8

☞ Mom was in great shape today, mostly driven by determination to get even at cribbage. I helped her shower (tricky when you have a hose attachment), got her hair clean, and gave her some new p.j.s to wear. We only managed one complete game of cribbage which I won, almost skunking Dad. She "scolded" me for not winning fast enough☺ Mike, Lisa & Eva were in to visit today, and Mike was able to stay for a couple of hours, which was a real boost.

Medically, Mom had her pleur-adhesive (sp?) today (quite literally lung-glue). After draining her left lung, adhesive is injected into the space between the lung linings, where the fluid was collecting, to glue them together, so fluid can't collect there. Hopefully this will prevent a recurrence of the fluid build-up for quite some time, possibly permanently. It was a painful procedure, so they gave her pain & sleeping meds for the couple of hours that it takes for the glue to stick. I anticipated that she'd be sleepy & uncomfortable when we came back mid-afternoon, but she was revved up and ready to go at cribbage. She's been encouraged to enjoy a before dinner drink, so we brought Cointreau, which she thoroughly enjoyed before homemade soup care of Janet Downey.

Mike will bring his family in for another visit tomorrow. The cribbage will continue with maybe a game of scrabble. Serious scrabble will begin when Andrea arrives!

XO Leslie

☞ I must share with you a little story about your Mom & Dad. It was early spring at La Ronge of course - I heard a CB message - Horner are you bye? - It was your folks coming up McGibbon Bay with the first load. It was very windy and Nut Bay was a mess so they came around the corner into our bay. I went down to the dock to meet them and help dock. I have never seen a boat quite so full of "stuff" plus two wet adults and one black lab that was, I am sure, glad to have feet on solid ground. Well, we came up to the cabin and I asked your Mom & Dad if they would like a cup of hot tea? Your Mom's response - "No, but I will have a drink of Scotch!!!" I am glad she is allowed a "wee dram" before dinner.

I know this is likely the hardest time of your life. You will all keep strong for each other and trust me when I tell you although it is not easy by any means you will get through this dreadful time and hopefully the outcome will be a good one.
Kindest regards, Kathy Horne

☞ Thank you for your uplifting updates. Your mother is being looked after well by her loving family and friends and she has quite a positive spirit. I am using telepathy and prayer to send beams of hope and health. I have been thru some of the lung issues (I had major surgery years back) I wasn't able to get my hair washed and after 3 weeks of being in bed like a beached whale I burst into tears and a lovely young technician took her lunch break to shampoo my hair. Very difficult when you have tubes in your lung etc.. Wonderful things do happen. I have never played cribbage but it does sound like fun. Lots of love to you all.
~Joanne

SUNDAY, APRIL 9

☞ Unfortunately the news has gotten much worse very quickly. Leslie and her Dad got a call this morning as her Mom was having difficulty breathing. She is now on a full respirator. Testing has shown the cancer to be a particularly aggressive variant. The doctors have concluded that there is no possible treatment. She is coming home to the Deep River Hospital this evening, where they will do everything they can to make her remaining time comfortable. Thankfully, Annabel remains relatively pain free.

Andrea is now arriving this evening and will be joining the family in Deep River. Future phone calls should now come to us at 613-584-3185. Thank you all for your kind thoughts and prayers! Andrew

☞ What a difference a day makes. Yesterday, Mom had such a great day, and we were looking forward to discussing treatment plans. However, as most of you have heard from Andrew, she had a crisis in the night. The cancer seems to have taken another giant step and significantly reduced her ability to breath. She's not actually on a respirator, although that course was offered. Mom prefers, and we support her, that she be given comfort only measures in order to stay alert and with us for the time she has left. We were told today that chemo and radiation will not benefit her. She is now wearing an oxygen mask and her oxygen has been kicked up enough to maintain good saturation. She is starting to have a bit of pain around the base of her ribcage and a panicky feeling when she has trouble breathing. Fortunately, the good doctors have all kinds of wonder drugs to which she is responding well, and she is able to stay pretty comfortable. What we hope for now is a gentle passage.

Mom was transferred to Deep River where we have a lovely large room for our sleepover parties. She found the ambulance trip tiring, however arrived in ongoing good spirits (what an amazing woman she is). Andrea arrived this afternoon shortly before the ambulance left Ottawa. Mom is looking forward to playing Scrabble with her tomorrow! XO Leslie

☞ Andrew, we appreciate your time re the most sorrowful message and we are ever so sad with you all. We pray that all methods of pain relief will be delivered to Annabel. This is so sudden for us to comprehend and we cannot fathom how sudden this huge, massive change is and will be for all of you, including of course dear Annabel. Please know that we are sending all our emotional strength, all our prayers and thoughts your way.

God be with Annabel, Hugh David and all of you children, grandchildren and extended family. We so wish the prognosis was otherwise, a miracle is what we had hoped for. With much love, Aganetha and Peter

☞ I can't find any words to express the great sorrow and shock that both Myron and I are feeling right now at this latest news about Annabel. Annabel has been in our thoughts and prayers many times every day and with each e-mail update it sounded quite hopeful. I am feeling quite numb. Annabel has always been such a tower of strength and a friend that I treasure. Whenever we got together no matter how much time had elapsed, we could just pick up from where we left off and enjoy the moment. That is rare. I can hear her special laugh right now. We had some good times.

Please give our love to Annabel. And hugs to Hugh David.

We shall continue to keep all of you in our prayers through this most difficult time.

~Olesia & Myron

MONDAY, APRIL 10

☞ We were blessed with a very good day today. The palliative care room in the Deep River hospital is really nice. A double hospital room with an extra bed and cushy recliner for sleepovers, at the quiet end of a hallway, with big windows, a view of the woods and a bird feeder hanging just outside. We are enjoying the finches and chickadees.

Mom had a lot of visits and calls today, both exhilarating and tiring. She enjoys the loving support, laughter and company. She also enjoyed some quiet naptime. We read to her or she listens to music and dozes comfortably. The various medications that they are giving her are keeping her very comfortable. Oxygen mask aside, she continues to be very much herself. She beat Dad & I at cribbage this morning (as is traditional) and is determined to have a game of Scrabble tomorrow (in which Andrea traditionally kicks our butts). Hoping for another good day tomorrow!

Leslie

☞ Annabel, you have given so much joy to many people not just through your weaving but through your outlook on life. The colours you have chosen, the figures and patterns have all some how affected people and given them joy and satisfaction and your words of wisdom and dedication to making the world a better place to live have also influenced people like me who while I do not weave appreciate commitment to making the world a better place to live. You have taught many people the love and appreciation of not only weaving but the spirit in which one weaves and consideration for how the wool is obtained and prepared for the articles that are made.

It is in this spirit that I send my thoughts and prayers that you use your vision and determination to assist you on your healing journey. ~Barbara Robinson

☞ *We wish it for you, a good day and lots of sunshine, love, Aganetha.*

☞ *Please give our best wishes to your Mom for us. Tell her to think of something really bizarre with a "q" "x" or "z" to win at scrabble!*

Good Night, Kathy

TUESDAY, APRIL 11

☞ Another good day! Aganetha wished us sunshine and we had lots of it. Mom's room gets the morning sun which lights up her bountiful garden of flowers. We played Scrabble, although we are only halfway through our game (pausing for meals, visitors, phone calls, naps) and will continue tomorrow. So for today...no news is good news.

XO Leslie

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

☞ We soaked up another good day today. We finished the Scrabble game and Mom squeaked out a win...most unusual. Andrea was right behind her. Once again, nothing new is good news.

I've attached a couple of photos taken today. You can see that she continues to look good, very much herself. She took off her O2 mask briefly and combed her hair. She can manage with just nasal prongs for meals, but needs the higher level of O2 through the mask most of the time.

XO Leslie

☞ *The pictures of you, Annabel, are wonderful; images of you depict you as our very lovely, wonderful, gracious, amazing friend. The window at your bed is so perfect for your personality and the flowers are gorgeous, a flower among the blossoms is you. Love you! ~Aganetha and Peter*

☞ *Your Mom does look well and like herself. With the flowers and the view of the outside it is truly like she has her garden around her. Give both your parents a hug from me. Love, Joanne*

☞ *What's she doing in the hospital?!?!?! She looks so good! ~Doug*



THURSDAY, APRIL 13

☞ Tonight I am sending out the evening update on Leslie's behalf. So far Andrea has been "sleeping over" with Mom. Today Andrea is feeling like she has a bit of a flu, so Leslie is spending the night.

Yet another good day. Mom continues to thrive on visitors and phone calls. When Dad and I got up to leave this evening, she insisted that we stay a while longer as she wasn't tired yet.

And all of the flowers are spectacular!!! There must be close to 2 dozen arrangements, and no 2 of them are the same. As one of the nurses was heard to say "She must be a very special person!" Between the flowers and tranquil view from her window, Mom's room is a peaceful oasis.

We continue to be thankful for all of your kind thoughts and to be heart-warmed by the outpouring of well wishes from the many people who have been part of Mom's life.

Andrew

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

☞ Another good day! Lots of visitors. More flowers. More joy & laughter.

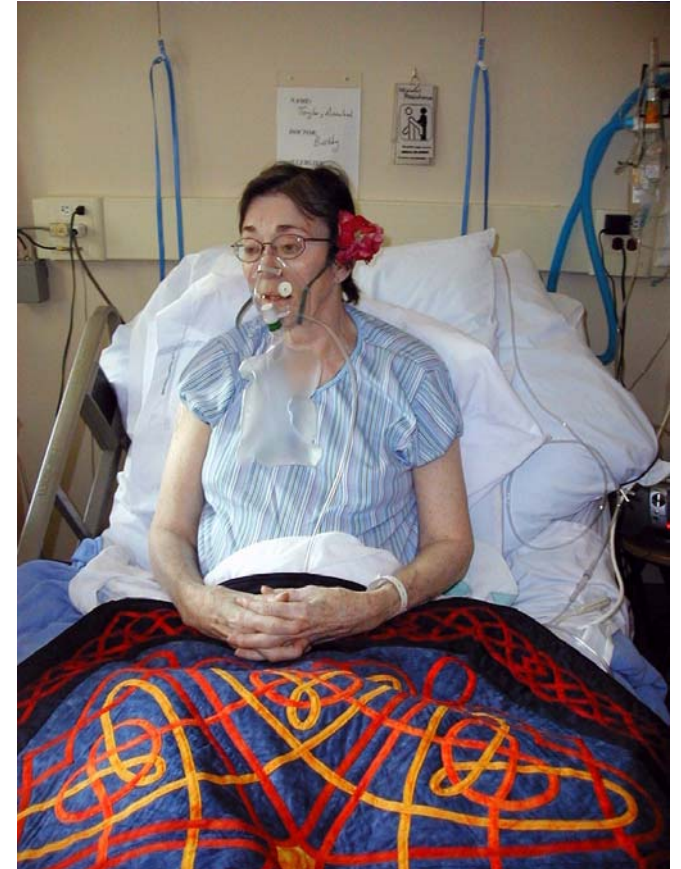
A nice little story for today is in the pictures above. When Mom was first diagnosed, I couldn't focus on much, and as I anticipated long periods of uncomfortable treatments and convalescence, I wanted to do something to provide comfort and help her through her days, so I designed a quilt. Dad and I went shopping and chose some beautiful fabrics just the day before we got the final instalment of bad news. I felt very sad that I wasn't going to have time to make the quilt for her, and of course much sadder to be losing her so soon. I am blessed with wonderful friends, however, who took my fabric and my plan late on Sunday night, and delivered her quilt to her this morning. I don't have adequate words to express how much that means to me.

Leslie

☞ *What a wonderful story. The design and colours are perfect. It is a true comforter in every sense of the word. Makes me weepy.*

Annabel is blessed with much love from everyone who knows her. I think of her everyday.

It occurred to me today as I was doing the laundry, that I have thought of Annabel almost everyday for years. I have two beautiful woven "Annabel dish towels" that I use all the time. I like to see them hanging in my kitchen. They are much used and much laundered but always beautiful. I really do love them. They are classy... like Annabel. ~Olesia



☞ *You think you know who your friends are when things are "nice and smooth" and "normal". Then, you really find out who your friends are when things are "bumpy" and "insane". Cherish your friendships and tell them how much you love them. ~Kathy*

☞ *A gracious woman who knows how to set a table, has impeccable manners, knows the right words and when to use them and has the integrity that makes life a better time, a better place to live in.*

And Annabel always dresses so well! Cooks much better than Martha Stewart and even bakes a Martha cake that leans like that famous tower in France! Way to be! ~Aganetha

LEAVE GRIEF
AND SORROW
OUTSIDE
THIS DOOR



For me and Winona it is losing our dear friend, we speak to each other on the phone and via e-mail. We are three close buddies even if we do not see each other that often. We bonded many years ago writing hilarious poetry while sitting on some moss covered rocks near your La Ronge cottage. We bonded during weaving, raising kids, walking and talking, drinking scotch, wine, eating good food, talking about just anything and much laughter all around. I wish for another good day for everyone tomorrow.

(I do not edit my e-mails). Hugs, Aganetha.

Do Not Stand By My Grave and Weep

*Do not stand by my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep;
I am the sparkle in your eyes,
and the smile on your face.*

*I am the thousand winds that blow,
I am diamond glints on snow;
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn rain.*

*When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.*

Cherish the love and memory of my living.

Do not stand at my grave and cry.

*I am not there...
I did not die.*

*To live in the hearts of those you love,
Is not to die.*

~Mary Frye, 1932

Sent by Sharon DeLint

SATURDAY, APRIL 15

☞ Lots happening today...good things. The doctor decided that Mom had better get off her butt (my words) or risk bedsores, so they had her use a walker to get to the bathroom (enema) and then had her sit in her chair, rather than stay in bed. She was pleased with this development, as she really hadn't had a sense of what she should or could do. She was also pleased to surprise them with a lot more strength than they expected. They are talking about a walk up the corridor or sit outside on the deck on future days. The icing on the cake was having Meghan (my 14 yo daughter) arrive to paint watermelons on her toenails. She admired how they glowed in the afternoon light and showed them off to any who entered the room.

Busy tomorrow with relatives visiting: John, Diana and Margaret Taylor from Calgary & Area; Kenneth & Imelda Taylor from Winnipeg; Pat Matheson from Winnipeg and Mark Hinds from Ottawa.

Happy Easter. XO Leslie

☞ *Great news about Annabel being mobile. Tell her she has great watermelons. Meghan is true toe transformer. Hugs to all.* ~Olesia

☞ *Loved the watermelon toes and you can tell Megan she can always set up shop with creations of that sort! Next time I see her she can do mine!*

I'm thinking too, of Andrew and the kids...wondering how the kids are managing with this.
Hugs to him for me. Love to you all... ~Winona

☞ *Wow! What a lovely turn of events that mobility is prescribed. I am thrilled for all of you. A little fresh air with bird song and croci may do another boost to fair Annabel's spirits. She is such a trooper.* ~Anne

☞ *You are having quality time with your Mom and those memories will help to tide you over some of the difficult times ahead. I admire your determination to make your Mom as comfortable as possible, bathe her, paint her toe nails, read to her, bring good juices, good foods. And her toenails, now those are such gorgeous watermelon patterns! A lovely granddaughter in the room smiling and doing her Gramma such a joyous deed!* ~Aganetha



EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 16

☞ Happy Easter. It was sunny and beautiful here. Mom had Andrea don rubber boots and help her have a shower (the whirl pool bath needs a plumber) so she could be appropriately cleansed and groomed to entertain Easter company. Dad's sister arrived with a family friend. Later we had Dad's brother, his wife, son, daughter-in-law and daughter. Attached is a shot of my brother, Mike, and my cousin, Ken, massaging Mom's feet. The Queen of Everything is being pampered and attentively cared for. Feels good to us too!

Andrew cooked, of course, two legs of lamb and fixings. We had two sittings of dinner to allow for someone to be at the hospital. I took Mom in a plate of lamb and beans and lemon mousse for dessert. She ate more than she has in ages.

If anyone has any photos of mom that they can send electronically, please do. I am collecting.

Leslie

☞ *You know your Queen of Hearts just loves those massages! Go full royal Annabel, is what I say! Hugs to royal attendees all! ~Aganetha and Peter*



☞ *I was just looking at the photos you sent this week with Annabel's toes and the quilt and I am struck in all of them by her serenity and poise. She is an incredible woman and what a gift her shared time is. I am unspeakably grateful to have met you, Leslie, and your mum, and your family. My life is enriched by all of you and I feel so very blessed by our friendship. This is an emotional rollercoaster for us and I can only imagine how very tired all of you are. I am sending you a HUGE virtual hug and wishes for a sweet sleep. I will see you tomorrow.*

Take care, Anne ox

MONDAY, APRIL 17

☞ Another lovely day. Bright and sunny, showing the flowers and watermelon toes off to good effect. The relatives came through for another round of visits before heading off to their respective homes in Alberta and Manitoba. Mom made it all the way to the next hospital room for a visit with my elderly next door neighbour (no kidding!) who is healing from a fractured pelvis. She can move around with a walker and a portable O₂ tank.

When the doctor saw us today, she confirmed what we are seeing. Mom is doing very well. Her lungs are clear (relative to their condition), the lung glue appears to have done its job, her colour is good and she doesn't cough much anymore. We are on a plateau which, the doctor said, could last for weeks. Of course we cannot know how long or take anything for granted, but we are in a really good, peaceful period right now.

I would like to send Dr. Maziak a big raspberry. She was our least favourite thoracic surgeon at the Ottawa Hospital (we loved everyone else, but think she should switch to research where she only interacts with rats). Last Sunday she suggested, rather coldly, that we needed to decide whether to put Mom on a respirator and that we didn't have long to make our decision. That choice would have seen Mom drugged into unconsciousness and intubated. What would have been the point of that?!?! Would love for her to see (but not talk to) Mom now.

If there is anyone that doesn't want to hear from me every night, please let me know, and I will make another list for those who want less frequent updates. Unless you tell me otherwise, you'll remain on the nightly list.

Leslie

☞ *My mother passed away five years ago. I was on leave from my job at the time, so I was able to spend everyday of the six weeks with her while she was in hospital before she passed away. Those six weeks were the best and worst times ever. The best was that I was able to be there with her and worst was that I was not able to have her here for longer. There are days when I think I need to call my mom, then I realize she is not here. I still make the call but it is not long distance --- no cost. Enjoy your time with your mom and your family.*

I also want to let you know that I include you, Andrea, Mike and your father in my prayers. ~Sheila Devine

☞ *Wow, that is just so great that Annabel is walking and even visiting another patient. And yes, send a raspberry to that whatyoumacallitdoctor! We can even learn from idiots, I read that somewhere.....*

And to Annabel, you are one strong woman, a trouper indeed! Lots of love from Aganetha who with Peter, just visited one of his cousins who does nothing but complain about all his aches and pains due to a bad leg. He could learn many things from you Annabel and family!

It was gorgeous out today, 16 and calm as can be and still is as we head for the snooze pad. Sleep well and keep on walking, talking, loving, laughing, make doctorwhoevernutball eat her words. Leslie if I find some rats I will send them to her.

Love, Aganetha

TUESDAY, APRIL 18

☞ Another big day! She started with a shower, which is a really good workout. She uses a walker to get down the hall and then sits on a chair in a shower room while Andrea or I help her get clean. She got me good with the spray head☺ She really likes the feeling of being clean and in fresh p.j.s.

Her weaving guild buddies showed up around 11:00 and it felt like a party. These wonderful women, whose friendships Mom cherishes, are going to weave a cloth for her interment, so that we won't be subjected to artificial grass around the grave. She has chosen an urn created by Charley Ferraro and the cloth will be wrapped around the urn when it is buried. It all seems just right to and for her. After having coffee with Mom and discussing weaves and colours, they went off to the house to dig through her yarns looking for just the right stuff.

Mom seemed a bit tired to me today, although it's probably no wonder with all the excitement. She enjoyed all her guests and the fresh bouquets which arrived today.

Leslie



☞ Dear Annabel

I know that I would not be the person I am today or doing what I am in my life without your influence. You are our "weaving mother" to all of us who attended the Weaving Program in Prince Albert. You taught me the attitude and the creativity along with the techniques. You tailored ("taylored"?) the program for each of us and allowed / encouraged us to find our own way through it. I am especially grateful for the opportunities you gave me to teach, and develop the confidence to go further in that direction. Because of you, I have a working situation that I enjoy and that I am good at doing.

Your example of embracing change and going forward with a positive attitude, as well as fighting for what you believe in, is something I appreciate in you. Your quiet sense of humour and good cheer makes people like you and want to be with you. Thank you so much for everything you did for me and meant to me. Love Judy Haraldson

☞ Looks like the party was about to get out of control.....as long as the other tenants don't call the cops.

Doug

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19

☞ What a gorgeous day today. Having nothing pressing on our social calendar this afternoon, Mom & I had a little nap and then ventured out onto the back deck of the hospital where she beat me twice at cribbage. The deck is conveniently located just outside Mom's door. One of the nurses taught me how to hook up a portable O2 tank on a walker, so we can 'escape' any time we want. I had to request a fresh tank part way through. As I explained to Guy, the day nurse, "she's winning and thus not ready to come back in☺" Leslie

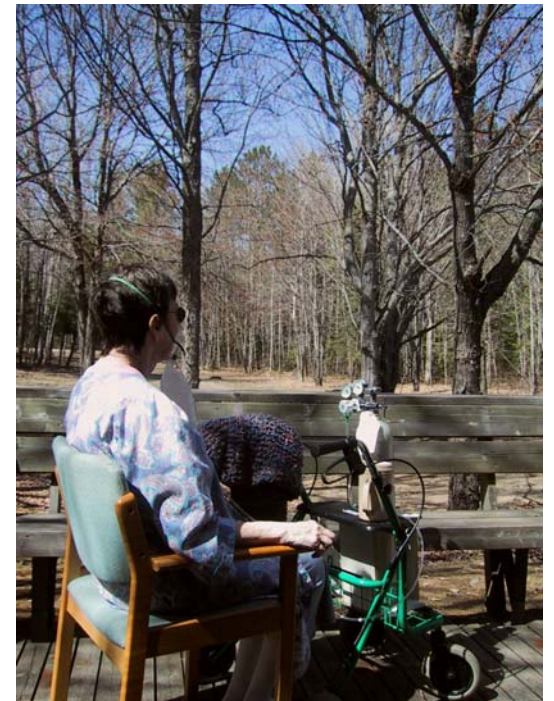


☞ *What a heart warming image, three generations of strong Taylor women. Beautiful!*

So glad you had a sunny wonderful day. I send you a big hug and hope there are many, many more. This sunshine is so good for the soul.

We missed you chez moi for NNN, and had a lovely extended visit with Jane afterwards. The making of the quilt makes me feel a lot closer to Jane, and I think part of the glorious fire and water legacy will be our enduring friendships. The multiple layers of Annabel, making all of our lives richer, a little each day.

take care, anne xo





THURSDAY, APRIL 20

☞ Another lovely day today. We didn't get back outside, but did manage to otherwise amuse ourselves. My cousin, John McIvor, arrived all the way from Seattle. Mom was absolutely delighted to see him. He'll visit with us through tomorrow before starting his trek home. His own parents need a high level of attention.

Biniyam, my 12 year old son, bravely headed off to a big swim meet in Brampton without me. This is a first, and we were very proud of him for heading off any way. Another swim parent is taking him along. Nana asked him to be her champion, and gave him her colours (a pin with the letter "A") to carry into battle. Grampsy "tattooed" him before he left.

Mom continues to be quite comfortable. She's started to wake half way through the night and asks for another little pill to get back to sleep. Don't know if that's a meaningful change or not.

XO Leslie

☞ *Gorgeous young man.....love the hair!!!! Tattoo is great and I'm sure he'll do well carrying his talisman into battle. I wish him well.* Love Mary

☞ *Went to Brantford this afternoon, boy was it noisy!!!! Saw Biniyam win his heat and bought him a grilled cheese sandwich.* Love, Mum and Dad

☞ *I don't make a habit of passing along e-mails, or bad jokes...but when this one was shared by the manager of Ten thousand Villages...it is too good to keep....if you have all already laughed over it, discard it...otherwise, share with your mother...and anyone else who needs a chuckle. Or, as Les, did, a large groan.* Winona

Rose Buds 'n Hanging Baskets

A teenage granddaughter comes downstairs for her date with a very sheer blouse on and no bra. Her grandmother just pitched a fit, telling her not to dare go out like that! The teenager tells her "Loosen up Grams. These are modern times. You gotta let your rose buds show!" and out she goes.

The next day the teenager comes down stairs, and the grandmother is sitting there with no top on. The teenager wants to die. She explains to her grandmother that she has friends coming over and that it is just not appropriate.

The grandmother says, "Loosen up, Sweetie. If you can show off your rosebuds, then I can display my hanging baskets."

Happy Gardening, Love Winona



FRIDAY, APRIL 21

☞ My update is early today as I am on overnight shift for the weekend. Andrea's husband, Eric, will arrive tonight and leave Monday. I'm sleeping in so she can go stay with him at Mom & Dad's house.

Our days seem to be ever eventful. Feels like we are the social hub of Deep River. Lots of visitors, phone calls, flowers and cards. Much appreciated.

My cousin, John, spent the day with us before continuing on his trek back to Seattle.

My daughters, Meghan & Lauren, sang a hymn they've been practising for their paternal grandparents' fiftieth wedding anniversary next month. "Bless our Homes and our Families". Mike's wife, Auntie Lisa, who is a talented singer, has been helping them to prepare. It was lovely. They sang it twice and, of course, made their Nana cry. That's not too hard...and is something of a sport in our family!

Mom had a chance to give her youngest grandchild, Eva, a hat that was first worn by Mike when he was very small, then by my girls, and will come to rest with Eva. Over the years, it has come to be known as "Mikey's little hat". Mom had me add fish to it, taken from some fish earrings of hers, to match a board book of Eva's.

What a fun and funny day. XO Leslie

SATURDAY, APRIL 22

☞ Today was an interesting day, funny, sad, happy, touching. We shared family stories and memories as we shared out Mom's jewellery and precious things. We did this at the hospital so that Mom could see all these things that she didn't even know she was leaving when she set off for a couple of days of testing less than four weeks ago. Mom wanted to be sure that important family treasures and also her favourite things would be remembered, kept and cherished. And that everyone would 'have a piece of her'. I think we accomplished that today.

One thing that I will wear and treasure is her engagement ring, which Dad says he purchased along with a bottle of champagne two and a half years before she finally agreed to marry him. The champagne was consumed and replaced frequently by other denizens of the U of Manitoba residence. When Mom's parents returned from their walk...nicely timed to allow him to propose, again...Grandpa shook Mom's hand and kissed Dad, while Grandma peered at the ring without her glasses and said, "It's the thought that counts".

We have noticed a definite deterioration in Mom's breathing in the last one or two days. She gets more out of breath more easily and finds moving around takes more effort. Still she soldiers along and teaches us face this thing with courage, love and laughter.

☞ *I am glad to hear that the waterworks are still functioning normally, nothing like a good hymn to bring on the sobs. What a treat for the girls to share those times with their Nana. Sorry to hear that Annabel is finding breathing more difficult. I can sometimes almost pretend that this isn't happening, when I visit and she is looking so great. I try hard to keep the good karma when I am with you and sometimes the absolute shittiness of this just darn near overwhelms me. Take care, anne xoxo*



SUNDAY, APRIL 23

☞ Today we had a talk with the doctor about medication strategies. As the breathing gets harder, the anxiety increases. Fortunately, the doctor and nurses (our favourite is Sandi) are smart, experienced and flexible. They've suggested some changes that will, hopefully, allow Mom to stay relaxed which of course, makes breathing easier! It may be soon be necessary for Mom to move to a medication pump which would provide a constant stream of feel good with no hills and valleys. Helen, who is still next door at the hospital, but hopes to return home next door to my house tomorrow, asked if Mom was receiving something...um...er..."euphoric". I said, "yes". She said, "GOOD!" A lovely effect of Mom being a bit buzzed all the time, is that her inhibitions are dropped just a bit, and she feels quite free to say what pops into her head. She continues to be very funny, with wise, poignant and weepy moments built in every so often.

She played a couple of games of cribbage today with Andrea, Dad and Eric and enjoyed watching "Howl's Castle" on a laptop. The journey continues.

XO Leslie

☞ *Thanks for your daily updates. Sometimes I feel I'm intruding on a private journey, but on the other hand, I was the hospice nurse and rep. on the med-surge ward I worked on, not that long ago, so I know the process. I think you're all doing a stellar job, and after nursing my Dad at home with lung cancer, I can assure you that all of you will feel really good and complete about this after. I was also a case room nurse --the process is similar. Somehow you close the circle. One comes into the world with love and one goes out with love.*

Give your Mom and your Dad Our love.

And if humour is needed--a late Easter joke: -- Question: -- What happens if you pour boiling water down a rabbit hole? Answer:--You get a hot cross bunny.

Love to all, Joan

☞ *My aunt was volunteering at the hospital. She asked if Mrs Taylor was my "friend's mom". I said yes. My aunt said "how old is she, my God I thought she was one of (meaning you) her sisters, she looked so young! I thought your mom would like that story.*

Lots of hugs and prayers to all your family, Tammy

☞ *I cannot explain it but what I saw in Ontario really impacted me. Although something really sad is happening, there is something really beautiful going on in that room that is unexplainable. It is a role model for all of us.*

Kudos to you, Andrea, Mike and the rest of your family for helping your mom to go through this so wonderfully, and to your mom for her courage.

Lots of Love, Margaret

MONDAY, APRIL 24

☞ Mom and I had a good night last night. A new strategy of giving her an Adivan before her sometimes anxiety-provoking Ventolin treatments seems to have helped. I sat with her during two nocturnal treatments so that I could quickly change her back to her full O2 flow and this also seemed to help. Despite a better night, I'm tired. Andrea is taking over nights for the week.

A good night led to a good day today. Mom continues to be very much herself. She had Dad bring in her woven scarf collection for review. Among other things, she is choosing some for the Weaver's Guild show in Prince Albert this summer. In one of the pictures, you can see a local weaving buddy, Irene Cox, helping her fix the fringe on a silk chenille scarf. Irene is one of our local angels, bringing Mom a steady supply of baked custards which, topped by a healthy dose of fresh maple syrup, are among the few things Mom is eating.

Till tomorrow. XO Leslie

☞ *For certain the wise, funny, weepy stories your Mother shares, endures and helps you walk through are so very important to you and to all of us. I know Annabel as someone with a sane sense of humour, a quiet wit which at times was so on the mark that it startled me coming from someone so careful with words and comments, someone who when she let down her guard was so darn funny in the most sophisticated way.*



--- have to tell you a story about Annabel and Peter arguing - keep in mind we were visiting in PA from Winnipeg and were leaving back to Winnipeg at 7 that morning - Annabel was sitting on a couch, Peter on a foot stool in front of her - both had scotch in hand, well more in the head, never mind it was 3:30 a.m. and neither of these two would stop saying "NO Annabel!" "YES Peter!" "Annabel, that is just not how it is" Yes, Peter that is exactly how it is, you are not listening!" "Yes Annabel I am listening....." when asked what the argument was about neither knew except that it was dealing with some social issue of the time.

Les, Winona, Hugh and I sat eyes half closed watching the fire roar in your lovely fire place, hoping either one of them would give in. Winnie finally said something to the effect of the word "Horrors!" and she and Les went home. I went to bed and I think Hugh David finally pushed both of the other two up your stairs.

For many visits after that Annabel and Peter would just laugh and have a few comments on their argument however no one knew what it was about. To tell you the truth we stopped caring what it was about years ago! I can still hear their voices and their urgent talk and their occasional laughter.

A great long dinner, a lovely fire and lots of camaraderie on many a visit to P.A.

Love Aganetha



TUESDAY, APRIL 25



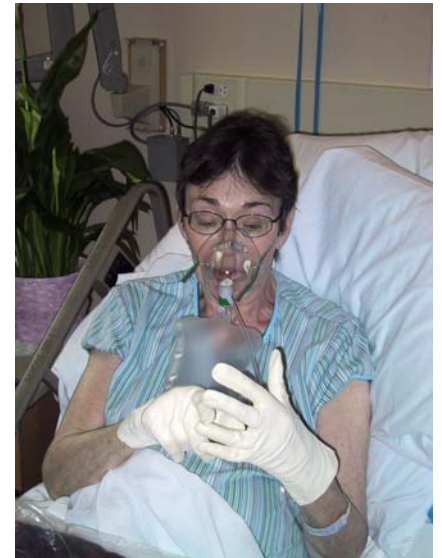
☞ We are into bitter sweet days. Bitter as we see Mom slipping. She is notably weaker and having more trouble with talking, eating, etc. She sometimes has trouble focussing and is seeing auras again. We can no longer pretend that we are still on the comfortable plateau of the two weeks past. She is now receiving her Dilaudid through a pump, hoping to even the peaks and valleys that may contribute to the breathless anxiety that grabs her every so often. She continues to have Adivan on demand which seems very effective. She is still not ready, however, to be heavily sedated.

And so there is still the sweet. Today was a fun day. We had a scarf, glove, evening bag party and distributed more of Mom's favourite things. You can see her in one picture trying on her white kid leather wedding gloves. Janet Downey & Bernie Chandler arrived for an afternoon visit with a fabulous red hat and purple T-shirt. My daughter Meghan arrived after school--wearing her newly completed (sewn herself) eighth grade graduation dress and her great-grandmother's pearls (received after our jewellery party--and played her flute for her grandmother. And to top it all off, she skunked Dad at cribbage this evening; although I don't think he played with his usual rigour.

Here's hoping that tomorrow brings us a little more sweet. XO Leslie

☞ Well, that is some Queen of She-bah knitting socks surrounded by a harem of blossoms looking for all the world like she is fully in control of everything in her castle, or whatever a She-bah lives in! Overlooking a field of long haired sheep no doubt with weavers hither and yon working on computer based looms with say, Michael as instructor, Andrea as controller of woolen head wear and a quilt maker overlooking a huge long table of beautiful cloth with her Father the architect. In this dream there are many grandchildren with hats ornamented with fish and animals too amazing to be real, the children are romping about singing love songs to the Queen.

We have always thought of you as a deeply intelligent friend who has wisdom beyond the rest of us. You showed us gracious living, generosity beyond belief, you have a wit that is so deep and calm and on the mark. Your wit did not border on sarcasm; you lacked sarcasm, again unlike some of us. You know who we are.... You have so much patience with all of us, accepting us as we are - that must have been difficult at times since our cultures surely have great differences and yet many similarities. We talked today of your gift as a social worker, your stories and understandings of some of your social worker situations, your travels into rural Saskatchewan and what you observed and how the situations affected you and how you dealt with them. You are someone who truly knows what it means to listen. You are in tune so to speak.



We think of you as the artist weaver and how many times you influenced, showed, shared your integrity with/in or to others! Gracious you gave so much; you are giving so much by your constant knitting of socks now, your donation of those amazing scarves. You were chosen as the artist to give a gift to royalty and of course why not? Your life is a blessing to us all. We think of you as a parent who raised your family with your loving partner - raised them to be the amazing human beings they have become and are going to continue becoming. Your grandchildren are most fortunate in that your legacy will influence their future growth. You are a giver of human ness, kind ness and the best of what a soul can give. You take us on your journey with great dignity and love. We are truly blessed. With much love, respect and admiration, Aganetha and Peter.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26



✧ We were fortunate to have another good day with little change from yesterday. Each one is a gift.

A real highlight of the day was discovering that the pashmina, sent from Dubai by our dear family friend Colin Beaton, had actually arrived at the hospital on schedule and had just been waiting for someone to come and ask for it (no one had clued in that it was for a patient). The pashmina is lovely. You can see Mom modelling it above. She was loathe to let it out of her sight until bedtime when it had to be carefully stowed in its very elegant box. She also had Dad dig out her own red hat which she has gifted to Andrea. She has lots of fun seeing her special things before choosing the right person to own them.

I have been collecting pictures of Mom and Mike loaded ~200 of them onto a laptop to watch with her. Her eyes aren't always focussing just right anymore so that is easier than looking at prints. Still, I find myself printing out more and more photos on letter size pages which we stick up on the wall at the end of her bed. There is quite a gallery developing.

XO Leslie



✧ Absent the ability to be there and see it for myself, this is the next best thing. The photo is most excellent. This is of course precisely the effect I was hoping for. I'm very happy that it made it there and Annabel likes it (sorry I spelled her name wrong on the package!) Thank you so much for the photo, really means a lot to me.

This is so odd you know, I'm sitting here in a temporary construction office in the middle of the desert beside a massive building with 7000 people working on it, with lots of people all around me working frantically, and I'm sitting at my computer, tears in my eyes, looking at a picture of my friend with a smile on her face on the other side of the planet wrapped in a Pashmina I bought a few days ago.

Somehow, everything around me has dimmed a bit, it's all not quite so relevant, its sense of priority has lost its edge, the frenetic focus on impending deadlines has lost its tenacious grip on me. I can only imagine the situation for all of you is a quantum leap in comparison.

Crank up the volume on the long distance radar scanner, we're sending as much positive energy as possible. Colin and Sue



THURSDAY, APRIL 27

☞ Another good day with more red hat play. After a lovely dip in the hospital whirlpool tub, she stayed in her easy chair for the rest of my day with her (I leave ~3:00). She dozed through a good part of the morning, being exhausted by the bath, but ate a good lunch and was bright and more chipper when I left in the afternoon. I'm sending this out early today as I am in the shift that attends a play this evening starring three of my kids (Meghan, David & Lauren), one of Mike's (Matt) with Mike's Sean on lighting.

Dad wanted a picture of Mom wearing purple in her own red hat, so we had some fun with it. Dad had gone shopping and found a purple shirt which she put on after the bath. In the second picture, she is explaining that if it is cold, one can ditch style and wear it like this. For anyone not familiar with the red hat concept, the poem is below.

It strikes me, as we play with the red hats, that Mom never will grow old. I don't see her as an old woman now, even if she feels like one a lot of the time. She will certainly steer clear of Alzheimer's, which she feared, and will never have to deal with the aches, pains and indignities of old age, although she undoubtedly would have carried on with grace and humour. She's giving the fuzzy red hat to Andrea, who looks great in it. I have my own red hat, although I am technically not qualified to wear it for a few years yet. I don't think I'll ever look at any red hat again without thinking about Mom. XO Leslie

☞ Hello there! Yes, I know the poem because years and years ago - Annabel sent it to me! At my age it is giving me strength and I just purchased a purple cotton leisure suit - for outdoors in the garden and for certain I wear the shark's tooth necklace my Dad made me years ago.

So - Met a man on the sidewalk in front of our home today - he was admiring my umpteen tulips and when he saw me with milk jugs full of water about to water my row of primroses, he asked as if stunned "Do people find you eccentric?" Of course I answered "No, not at all why do you ask?" He said that he was not certain if it was the milk jugs, the purple suit or "that thing around your neck." He quickly added that my garden was gorgeous and he thanked me for the view. So of course I quietly thought he meant me as the view, however I kept that to myself.

The hose is now connected so I put the milk jugs away. Perhaps I should get a red hat. Lots of love, Aganetha

☞ Nick has coffee most mornings with friends at McDonald's.. Most are the gang that go out to Henry Romoren's for supper one night a week. Every Thursday morning ladies of the Red Hat Society go there for coffee also, and both groups prefer one particular corner. So it has been a challenge to see who will get there first. After reading your e-mail Nick said tearfully, "I will never complain about the Red Hat ladies again". Love to all, especially to Annabel. She is in our thoughts constantly.

Wish we could do something to help besides praying. Madeleine.



Warning

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells
And run my stick along the public railings
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain
And pick flowers in other people's gardens
And learn to spit.

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go
Or only bread and pickle for a week
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry
And pay our rent and not swear in the street
And set a good example for the children.
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

Jenny Joseph

FRIDAY, APRIL 28

☞ Sorry that I didn't send a note last night. I was asleep on the job...or rather, at the hospital. I was on the overnight shift and forgot to send my note out before I went back last night.

After 2-3 days of decline early in the week, Mom seems to have levelled out again. She is notably weaker than she was a week ago. Eating, talking and moving take a lot more out of her. However, she continues to enjoy cribbage, music, stories, etc. When she breathlessly announced something yesterday, we didn't hear her. She looked at us in exasperation and said it would sure be easier if she didn't have to say things twice, so I gave her the school bell she's been provided with to 'ding' when she wants us all to pay attention. ☺

The weather has brightened back up this week. We're having gloriously sunny weather once again, and it is slowly warming back up. As mentioned before, the bird feeder outside the window is a real source of pleasure (many blessings upon the kind volunteer who installed and maintains them outside each and every hospital window).

XO Leslie

☞ *Mum has been forwarding your emails to us each day; I read each of them and look at all the pictures. Although I am sure you are very busy I am compelled to write back. I feel as if I have come to know her much better through this, almost part of the family. Your Mom is not only warm, kind and gentle but she seems to be very strong and graceful. I am deeply moved by the love, compassion and care that your emails convey that is shared between your Mom and the people around her. There is a tenderness and a sensitivity that touches my soul. We pray for God's grace and his blessing on you all, may you feel the warmth of his loving embrace.*

God bless, Mike (White)



SATURDAY, APRIL 29

☞ Leslie is spending the night at the hospital again, and has asked me to send out the update. (Between the two of us, we forgot last night.)

It was another busy day. Four of the grandchildren (Meghan, David, Lauren and Matt) were in a play put on by the local youth theatre group this past Thursday and Friday evenings. This morning, one of the kind souls who helped out with the production dropped off a CD with more than 100 photos from the play. You will see Lauren in one of the attached pictures explaining some of the photos to her grandmother (the other attachment is a great shot of Andrea and her mother "playing footsie"). Then this afternoon, we were given a DVD of the play, which we were able to share with Mom after supper. It is truly wonderful to live in a small community with thoughtful people who make it possible for Mom to enjoy her grandchildren's performances from her hotel room.

Andrew

☞ OOPS. I must be tired. Of course it is from Mom's *hospital* room that she enjoyed the pictures and DVD.

☞ *Andrew, I preferred your original thought.....hotel room. The pictures are wonderful and the "footsie" is no doubt an exercise for inactive legs and a very good one.*

I talked to HD last night and he told me all about the play, the community and the DVD of the play.....you are indeed fortunate to have neighbours and friends like this.

XO Mary



SUNDAY, APRIL 30

☞ The weather was beautiful today. It's been improving steadily since Wednesday. Today, the project was a trip out to the back deck of the hospital. The door to the deck is adjacent to Mom's door. This trip was different than our last one, as Mom is no longer able to walk. A wheeled deck chair was produced, along with the portable oxygen cart. David came over for a little visit with his Nana while she was outside, and I came over as well to join Mike, Andrea & Dad. Mom enjoyed herself so much that she asked for a fresh O2 tank when she emptied the first one. They were out of small portable tanks, so they brought out the BIG one. We figured we she could have slept out for the night before she ran out!

After a few stable days during the week, Mom is noticeably weaker today. A big change, noted above, is that Mom can no longer walk at all. Tonight, she decided not to bother with her nightly trip to the bathroom as it is just too hard for her. This is probably something of a relief to the rest of us, as getting her there was starting to get a bit scary. Although she is very quiet a lot of the time, she continues to dig into her reserves for her grandchildren, visitors, and phone calls.

XO Leslie

☞ *Hugh, I don't know what to say. I haven't known what to say since this all began. With the first email I thought is was a mistake, I had just seen Leslie and nothing was said, then I realized that this was true, it was really happening. We have read Leslie's nightly bulletins with sadness in our hearts, but also much joy for the love which is surrounding Annabel. You must be very proud of your family who are surrounding you both with love and support. I have read your email to Leslie and my heart goes out to you both. Annabel is the epitome of 'dying with dignity' – something we all hope we can do when our time comes. We will keep you all in our prayers and I pray that Annabel will 'go quietly into that good night' Margaret and John.*



☞ I've sat myself down, over several weeks, in front of one computer or another looking for words that didn't come. *How do you say 'Annabel is dying?'* I have found no easy way. The cancer was discovered Friday, March.24 by catscan in Pembroke.

Leslie Ann took to speaking for me and for the family..... building an emailing list (*largely by hearsay request*) to about sixty people and families that now receive her nightly bulletin. Others seem to be independently expanding upon this with short lists of their own. This note of mine will be completely redundant to some and startling to others..... I apologise. I haven't the ability to distinguish at the moment between one and the other.

Tonight turns three weeks since we came home to Deep River from eleven days in Ottawa General Hospital.....three weeks since we learned that there was no treatment for Annabel.....that surgery and radiation were not available options and that chemotherapy would itself kill her.

The Ottawa radiologist, on that Sunday morning, asked Annabel what she wished them to do. She responded "*Nothing*". The radiologist asked "*Is that your wish?*" She quietly replied "*That is my wish*". He, equally quietly, said "*We are terminating all testing and all treatment and you are discharged to the hospital in Deep River*". We returned to Deep River in an ambulance that evening, to be met at 10:30pm by our own Dr. Barbara Bushby in the room which was to become a second home for all these weeks.

Leslie's email that night brought a flood of people the next day bearing floral arrangements, and peppermint foot cream.....and love. They have slowed, but never stopped since. The night-before-last I watched five of our grandchildren perform in a Youth Theatre Production by the next morning a CD with the dress rehearsal pictures was brought around to Leslie'sand before supper an unedited DVD of that final performance was dropped offfor Annabel. She watched her grandchildren perform ... in the evening ... on Andrea's laptop.

I had not begun to comprehend, I guess, how deeply our family has become rooted in this community. I have now been shown in many ways and so many times that I almost expect to be hugged each time I step into Valu-Mart.

- Anne and Jane sewed a complex and spectacular quilt for Leslie and Annabel in four days....
- Jan made a brilliant yellow pillow for mother's feet and crafted earrings for Leslie & Andrea.
- Meghan came in and painted watermelons on her toenails and returned another day with her flute
- Lauren came in with her mother and their guitars to sing 'Let it be'
- Biniyam swam in Brantford, away from home for the first time by himself, with 'Annabel' boldly painted on his arm. He swam as her champion, winning his first heat and beating his best times.
- Madeleine sent a wonderfully soft prayer shawl from Christopher Lake, and
- Colin couriered a magnificent, fine Kashmiri Pashmina from Dubai (where he was when I spoke with him), and tomorrow ...
- ...will meet Charley, if all goes well, at the Toronto airport to retrieve a piece of Charley's ceramic pottery which he will be carrying in from France in his hand luggage for Annabel.
- Annabel will be remembered at shows in Prince Albert
- Anne brought in fresh maple syrup from her own lot twice (She still smelled of the wood smoke), and ...

- Irene provided two home made custards to pour the syrup over ... and now maintains a supply of custard in our cooler in the room, as they are the favourite among foods that Annabel can eat.
- Pam and Jean and Ruth and Irene are weaving a special cloth for and in collaboration with Annabel. Pam brought in the first pictures of the fabric yesterday.
- Mary Lynn brought in a glass tulip she had crafted and left a small glass bird in our mailbox.
- We have peppermint foot cream and leg cream and grapefruit body and hand lotions and people who willingly apply it to an equally willing Annabel several times a day.
- Catherine delivered large gingerbread cookies, and Tammy left two boxes of big homemade muffins outside our closed door
- Anne and Julian each handed over a care package one day when I encountered them minutes apart in a parking lot
- Down the lane all doors are open to me at any time, and indeed when I knocked on Julian's door at 7:30am the morning following our return, he poured Drambuie in my coffee while Kathryn, claiming to have been a short-order cook on Route 66, whipped up scrambled eggs and peppers.
- Each day Leslie's Andrew feeds two shifts for supper and provides lunches for the cooler, while Mike and Lisa supplement the suppers and provide fresh carrot juice and exotic healthy shakes that provide nourishment through a straw. Annabel has family with her 24/7.
- At times the room resembles an exotic garden show with every horizontal surface and some extra ones covered with blooms; and I can't move a vase without knocking cards to the floor.
- A man comes by every so often to fill the bird feeders that hang outside the windows of each room. He provides the feeders and the seed himself.

....and so it has been going. People who approach her bed or chair with trepidation walk away smiling. Visitors are legion, emails stuff a binder, the phone rings regularly.....and Annabel presides over all with rare courage, good humour, and a cutting wit now that the barriers are down ... but our days of grace are done. She is failing daily ... no longer having the energy to walk. She rests her eyes for longer spells each day ... although she continues to listen well. Today, for the first time, the flow of medicine in her pump was slightly increased to offset breathing anxiety. Pain has not been a factor. We are unusually fortunate in this.

We are losing, in the words of Doctor Bushby *".... a very special woman"*.

Hugh David



MONDAY, MAY 1 – PART I

☞ Today was another bitter sweet day. Mom continues to weaken and everything is more difficult. Her pump medication (Delaudid) has been increased slightly and it appears to be necessary to increase the frequency of her overnight Adivan. This makes her a little dopier and sometimes a bit confused. She sleeps more and talks less.

However, on many fronts the magic continues. It was a gloriously warm and sunny day today, so Mom chose to postpone her bath and save her energy for a trip outside. She spent over 2 1/2 hours out of doors, and although it was a bit distressing to get there, once out, she was happy-happy-happy. I couldn't stay long, but my daughter Meghan went over to repair her pedicure (I have had to trim the rinds on the watermelon toes). Mom really lights up when she is with any one of her seven grandkids. There were short visits from close friends, and then the highlight of the day. Four of Mom's local weaving buddies (Jean, Ruth, Pam and Irene) have worked feverishly to make her a special cloth and they brought it to her this afternoon.

See part II for more.

☞ *Oh this is getting more difficult; yet as you say, each moment is special and precious. Yes and the photo with Annabel and Hugh David is truly a gem, so very sweet, holding hands, gorgeous blankets over laps, Annabel so frail and Hugh David looking frail - as if this is all not real. I am so very happy that Annabel does not appear to have any pain except that of course the pain of breathing, the constant updating of medications, drowsy spells, sleeping more, talking less. So very lovely that you can go outdoors with your Mom! And that she enjoys it so much as to forgo a bath- which she also enjoys, except now perhaps it is too much effort as you mention. Great that the special cloth has been completed, another wish granted.*

Bless you and everyone there for keeping us informed. A big hug to Hugh David, Michael, Andrea you and all your partners and families. Love, Aganetha.



MONDAY, MAY 1 – PART II



☞ Mom has inspired both great love and great works. One of her concerns has been the choice of container for her ashes. She decided that her choice of urn would be created by Saskatchewan artist and friend Charley Farrero <http://www.farrero.ca/>. The first part of this wonderful story starts with the urn. Charley was honoured by Mom's choice and was sure that he had just the right piece. When he sent pictures, Mom agreed. She was delighted. It would be perfect. The only challenge being that Charley has been working in France.

The second part of this wonderful story is the grave cloth. Dad commented that he found the fake green grass that covers the earth of graveside excavations tacky (we all had to agree), so he approached local weaving friends of Mom's. They agreed to weave a cloth that would cover the excavation and go into the earth around Mom's urn. They were in for a consultation some time back, and went off to the house to root through Mom's supplies. Today, they presented Mom with a breathtakingly beautiful cloth.

Meanwhile, Charley travelled through Toronto today on his way back to Saskatchewan. Our friend Colin Beaton (pashmina from Dubai) met Charley at the airport and saw the urn safely into the hands of Andrew's parents who will bring it up to Deep River tomorrow.

I think it will give Mom great pleasure to see these two pieces together. Meanwhile, I have been instructed to gently wash and block her cloth, underway this evening! "Till tomorrow, Leslie



☞ Dear Hugh and Annabel;

We often wondered why you moved to Deep River after many years in Prince Albert. The recent events of your lives have shown the wisdom of such a move. You have felt the love and affection of your seven grandchildren and they too have had your love showered on them in a way not possible from Prince Albert. Then there's the wonderful thoughtfulness of your new friends and neighbours in the community. It speaks so well to the genuine friendships you have made in your adopted hometown. We too share your daily moments through the pictures and nightly emails. Helen and I are moved by love and care and bravery shown by all. (I can just see Biniyam with "Annabel" painted on his arm winning that first heat and I think I can realize how many fears he overcame to make the trip to the swim meet all by himself.) We often recall our moments in Kin & K40'S - New Years! - The National

Executive drawings - La Ronge - the big stove move - the zoo and travelling road show and those lakeside dinners and Annabel's fine red wines. Please know that our thoughts are with you every day filled with love for you both. Jim and Helen

TUESDAY, MAY 2

☞ Today was a very pleasant day spent in the room. Eva was in for a morning visit causing Mom, who had been dozing along, to have a sudden burst of energy. We didn't try any outdoor adventures today, as yesterday was pretty tiring. Today it was suggested that Mom no longer get out of bed. That means no more bubble baths in the whirlpool tub and also has implications for our trips to the deck. SO I asked if the bed could be taken outside. There was a flurry of logistical discussions (apparently no one has asked to go out in a bed before) culminating in a team of nurses testing the concept with another bed from up the hall. It worked, so perhaps we'll try it tomorrow as the weather looks lovely.

Andrew's parents arrived late this evening with Mom's funerary urn. Mom was absolutely delighted, finding it even better than she had hoped. We had cleared a table in the room and created a bit of a still life with the companion cloth (washed, pressed and hemmed by noon). The urn has been placed on the cloth for all to admire. Leslie



☞ I feel all matched up you can inform Annabel! Wow what a smart looking woman with that gorgeous designer scarf is what people will comment as they see my very own Annabel scarf that matches my glasses they will wonder from where does such a work of wonder appear and I will say from just before the other side just before the place where soon a beautiful soul floats along weaving the heavens with a warp of kindness and a weft of goodness watch the sheep like clouds as they pass over and see a wisp of integrity above, a source of friendship and the clouds of like others around will smile at all the wisdom from the angel who now lives and once lived a life worth living, a life filled with sunny days and children smiling around her with friends below soon missing the angel but knowing they are being contacted vibes of hope and gladness everywhere memories all around.

Hugs,
Aganetha





WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

❧ Oh dear. We lost more ground today. On the principal of bad news first, I will share that Mom is weaker. She needed help to eat today and was unable to tolerate any time on nasal prongs, needing the full face mask "oxygen delivery system". She has started on a second pump with an anxiety-reducing medication similar to the Adivan that she's been receiving. We hope that will lead to a smoother night tonight, for both Mom's & Andrea's sake, as she is sometimes wakeful. Rather than a whirl pool bath, we had a very successful sponge bath. I felt that rolling her would be too stressful, so I sat on either side of her and held her in a hug. I was able to gently shift her one way, and then the other, for a thorough cleansing. She was pleased with that experience. It feels so good to be clean!

Another success story today was a foray outside in bed. It turned out to be a wonderfully easy adventure. Not at all stressful for Mom, and very rewarding. The day was warm and sunny and the bugs haven't started up yet. I think that was the best part of her day. In her room, she continues to take pleasure in the flowers around her, the photos on her wall (getting to be quite a few now), her urn & cloth in beautiful still life across from the foot of her bed and all of us chatting away in the room. She no longer contributes much to the conversation, but doesn't like us to go out of the room to talk because she can't hear what we are saying☺ She feels peaceful and content much of the time...and who can really ask for more?

Love Leslie

❧ I have often wondered what "serenity" looked like and now I know. Annabel has such serenity to accept the things she cannot change with grace. Please give you mom my love and tell her how much I admire her for all she has accomplished.
Love Joanne

❧ Annabel you look gracious! I'm envisioning you in your space amongst your family, friends and treasures from far & wide. So much dignity. A wise and loving queen.

When we left you after our visit, I felt the need to tell Zion that you would not get well enough to go home - he came up with this plan that we would send off balloons filled with helium to float all the way to you in heaven. He thinks they will make you smile. So, when the time comes and God has a handful of balloons - you'll know they are for you! Brandie

THURSDAY, MAY 4

Well, the weather wasn't fully cooperative today. While there were sunny pleasant bits this afternoon, there was also rain, wind and maple keys blowing all about. We decided against a trip to the deck. The black flies are also appearing, well before schedule, so that may also put a damper on our excursions.

Mom had a good night, followed by a rough morning, followed by a super afternoon & evening. She was in distress from about 6:00 am. Andrea and the nurse did a number of things to provide relief. Mom's second pump, providing Versed, had been started yesterday at a conservative level to avoid over-sedation, so once it was increased at 11:00 am, the relief was immediate. Mom was able to relax and enjoy the company du jour. Mike brought Eva in, which always seems to set the calendar back as far as Mom is concerned. She lights right up. Jean Bair was in, one of the gifted weavers who made Mom's cloth, as well as my in-laws who are visiting from Oakville (My mum-in-law is yet another weaver). We had a lovely visit, with Mom alternately dozing, listening in, and adding the odd pithy comment to the discussions! She enjoys having people in the room, even when she doesn't participate, and complains if we leave the room as she can't hear what we are talking about. Leslie

want you to know the iris perfection is in the choice of the receiver as it is her favorite royal hued spring flower with its buds opening as she closes her eyes as her children hover to provide relief as we all wish so much for the calm she desires requires deserves receives as we observe images sent that her body is slowly frail among the many best joys is eva who turns clocks back even if for only a joy of the moment we pray for a peaceful journey we wonder since wireless communication exists whether she is already connected virus free somewhere with lines to you even though you will have to remember in order to understand this is without punctuation due to the inability to think otherwise love from over here who will be away from this page until tuesday however in friendship peter aganetha hug you in surround



Leslie and family-all of you have given me more hope for the future of the human race than anything I have read. Tel your mother that I am like her sister-I don't want to correct my typos because I don't know if I wil lose my message. Love to all of you – Joanne

FRIDAY, MAY 5

∞ Today was a more difficult day. Mom struggled more to feel comfortable, frequently using the extra doses on her two pumps and twice requiring injections of a third drug that has been kept in reserve. As a result, the dosages on both pumps have been increased significantly. Likely, this will keep her much more sedated, undoubtedly preferable to the 'air hunger' she finds so distressing. Keeping her comfortable is the only goal!

Mike brought Eva in for another visit today. Eva has grown quite comfortable with Mom in her bed with her mask, and says 'Nana's smoking' when Mom's Ventolin mask is steaming away (we also like to say she's being fumigated or evaporated). Eva always gets a smile from Mom and brings out the best of whatever energy Mom has left.

I'm on overnight duty tonight. 'Til tomorrow. Leslie



SATURDAY, MAY 6

∞ *Today is a grey day looking across the Ottawa River to the far shore..... Yesterday, at about six o'clock, Guy, at the direction of Dr. Bushby, gently slipped Annabel into a medicated coma. We do not expect that she will make it through the weekend. Hugh David*



∞ *Leslie...Andrea...Mike...I walk with you and with your parents through this time...*

Love, strength, peace to each of you...Winona

∞ *Some of you say "Joy is greater than sorrow"
And others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater"
But I say unto you, they are inseparable.
Together they come, and when one sits alone
with you at your board, remember that the
other is asleep upon your bed.*

--Kahlil Gibran (sent by Cecile Miller)

SATURDAY, MAY 6

☞ Last daily update: Mom passed away just after lunch today. Very peacefully, with Mike & Andrea in the room. She had been sedated since yesterday afternoon.

Things for which we are grateful: Because it was sudden, she enjoyed excellent quality of life until she became ill in March. Because she experienced no pain and little suffering, we had time and a tremendous opportunity to enjoy each other, laugh, cry, sing, read, play, share the journey and say the important things. Because it was fast, suffering was kept to a bare minimum.

Now comes the hard part.

For those of you who are or can be close, we will have an open house to celebrate her life at Mom & Dad's home on Saturday next, 2:00-5:00 pm, 940 Burke's Bluff Lane. Details to follow.

For those of you who are closer to Prince Albert, we hope to have a reception in conjunction with the Prince Albert Weavers Guild show.

Thank you for being with us on our journey. It has been much easier knowing that we were/are not alone. Leslie



☞ *Thank you for sharing the past few weeks with me and many others. You all did a wonderful thing with celebrating life with your Mother.*

Treasure the memories for the memories become the treasure.

Love, Aunt Dorothy



