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Obituaries



Nelly Mojel

27 December 1923 – 30 March 2015

Nelly Mojel literally lived life to the fullest of her ability until the day before she died. She lived an interesting and full life showing a determination and strength of character that would shape her own future from an early age. Born in Zurich, Nelly was the youngest of 3 daughters to a Swiss mother Marie Weber and an Italian father Dominico Fava.

Nelly was the product of a tough working class upbringing where they made their own clothes or modified wealthy people's handme-downs. Nelly reluctantly left school at 16 to start a Seamstress and Dressmakers apprenticeship. In later life she used her skills to make clothes for her children and herself, and combined with the sense of frugality and not wasting anything, that was common in her generation, she still wore some of her self made dresses until her last days.

Nelly had a real 'green thumb' and loved gardening, with a range of beautiful flowers and a very productive vegetable garden wherever she lived. She inherited this love of gardening (and passed this on to her children) from her father, whom she loved to meet after work at the company garden plot. They would share bread and salami together, with Nelly being allowed to sip the froth off the top of her father's beer before riding home on the cross bar of his bicycle. Nelly was and would always be something apart from most of her peers. Her part Italian heritage meant she was aware of prejudices in her early years and her father encouraged her to do things correctly and honestly.

Nelly was independent minded at a time when it was unusual for a woman on her own to venture as far and wide as she did. As a young woman Nelly travelled extensively to hone her French, Italian and English language skills and she became a skilled secretary and translator working for Swiss Air, a law firm and as a translator for a pharmaceutical company. A highlight of her solo travels was employment on the household staff of Winston Churchill in 1946-47. In 1956 Nelly travelled to New

Zealand on her own with a plan to travel on to America later. This plan changed when she married Coenraad Mojel (Con) a Dutch migrant in Wellington. Living conditions could be quite trying, especially in the early days in New Zealand. Nelly adapted from an independent life as a translator in Europe and then at the American Embassy in Wellington, to living in a converted garage in the forestry town of Tokoroa in the late 1950's. This was followed by the birth of her first child Anna. Looking back at very happy childhoods we can easily say Nelly was a wonderful mother who threw herself into making the best of living in small town New Zealand. She said she enjoyed being a mother but it can't have been easy. We knew that she had sacrificed a lot, including isolation from her family in Switzerland with both her parents dying whilst she was on the other side of the world. She had 2 more children, Sam and Mary. Weekends were spent going on neighborhood walks with unpopular but compulsory sun hats, holidays at Mt Maunganui and trips to the Taupo hot pools. She wasn't content to just stay put and there were regular picnic trips to Whakamaru and Mangakino hydro dams with barbequed sausages for lunch. In 1970 the family moved to the Netherlands for 3 years and South Africa for a further 3 years. Nelly worked hard to ensure that in each place a family home was established and that her children adjusted to the new setting, and of course she would plant a garden.

Nelly and Con both had strong social consciences as well as a strong Christian faith, and supported many overseas missions and causes. Nelly was a great thinker, spending hours at her beloved typewriter working out work schemes for the unemployed or making suggestions regarding social legislation. She would then send these ideas to the Prime Minister of the day. We found a file of replies to her suggestions from Rob Muldoon, David Lange, Jim Bolger and others. In later years she also contributed to late night talk back radio discussions. Nelly did not know the meaning of boredom and would always have something to mend, someone to visit or write to, she attended courses into her 80ies and drove her car until her 89th year, limiting herself to familiar places and driving a circuitous route that would not involve reversing. She loved to visit op shops and would engage people wherever she was taking an interest in what they had to say.

In our mother's last few years she became increasingly frail and moved to Auckland in 2007 to be nearer to her children. Despite encroaching old age, Nelly kept her fitness started all those years ago, walking everywhere in Zurich and skiing.

To reinforce Nelly's taste for the 'unordinary', in June of 2014, at the age of 90 and

a half, Nelly's daughter Mary took her back to Zurich where she visited her old school and church, the old family home, went on a boat trip on lake Zurich and visited her beloved Uetliberg. Mary and Nelly took the train part way up and walked the remainder of the way until they reached the lookout at the top. Our mother was really looking forward to the Auckland Swiss Market day in May 2015, she previously enjoyed the Swiss cervelat sausages and talking to other Swiss people.

In the last 2 weeks of Nelly's life she spent a few days at Mt Maunganui, reliving the memories of wonderful family holidays. She went to the Swiss Café in Milford for coffee and her favourite, plum tart with cream. She went to church. She stopped on her beach walks to talk to people with young children and dogs.

Nelly became ill suddenly on Sunday the 29th of March, passing away peacefully with her 3 children around her on 30 March 2015.

We thank the Mojel family for sharing their memories with us. (NS)

Wo's Dörflein dort zu Ende geht;
wo's Mühlenrad am Bach sich dreht
Da steht in duftigem Blütenstrauß
ein Hüttlein; 's'ist mein Vaterhaus!
Darin noch meine Wiege steht,
darin lernt ich mein erst Gebet
Darin fand Spiel und Lust stets Raum;
darin träumt ich den ersten Traum.
Dort schlagen mir zwei Herzen drin,
voll Liebe und voll treuem Sinn;
Mein Vater und die Mutter mein, das
sind die Herzen fromm und rein.
Drum tauscht ich für das schönste
Schloss, wär's felsenfest und riesengross
Mein liebes Hüttlein doch nicht aus;
denn es gibt ja nur ein Vaterhaus!

Franz Krieger 22.8.2012

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