Betty Morgan 1928-2020

By Jonathan Wilson · 31 October, 2020

MOTHER OF CHAMPION WEIGHTLIFTERS, SHORT IN STATURE: BIG IN PERSONALITY

The lights of Mill Road gleam a little less brightly tonight after the death of Bessie "Betty" Morgan at the age of 92, one of the oldest residents in the area.

Betty, who came from the well-known Silverman family, lived in Perowne Street for 68 years, setting up home there in 1952. She was a well known figure in the area, a familiar face in many of the shops and cafés until moving into the St Georges Court care home earlier this year. She died in October after developing pneumonia.

One of eight children, Betty was born in the city on 12 July 1928, to Samuel and May Silverman. Her late brother Charlie established the Silverman's Office Furniture company, which still trades in the city while sister Doreen, aged 94, still lives in Fen Ditton.

In 1952, Betty married Ken, who worked as a carpenter for British Rail, and gave birth to two sons, David in 1964 and Tony in 1969.

Although a mere 4ft 7inches tall, what Betty lacked in height she more than made up for with her big personality and strong work ethic. And it was as a mother that Betty thrived, showing extraordinary devotion and commitment to support "her boys" in their sporting careers. Both excelled in weightlifting and Betty was determined that each would achieve his potential. She supported them at events but beyond that normal parental help, she offered crucial financial help at one point working three separate jobs so that David and Tony could have the time to train when financial support for top athletes was not available.



David Morgan inducted into the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame, 2013. From left: Welsh weightlifter Daruis Jokarzadeh (6′ 9″) bronze medal in junior world championships; Welsh long jumper Lyn Davies, 1964 Olympic gold medal; David Morgan and mother Betty. Photo courtesy Jonathan Wilson.

And that devotion and commitment paid off: Tony became the youngest British senior champion at age 15, completed in the 1992 Olympics and then won a bronze in the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

David twice came fourth in the Olympic Games in Los Angeles (1984) and four years later in Seoul. And is the only athlete ever to win gold at five different Commonwealth games. He competed in three Olympic Games, won various world championships and broke multiple world records. His sporting achievements culminated in the award of the MBE in this year's New Year's Honours list. And Betty could not have been more proud when David told her the news.

But David and Betty's trip to Buckingham Palace in June was, of course, cancelled in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Betty with son David. Photo Jonathan Wilson

Sadly husband Ken died in 1994 of leukaemia, aged 69, but he lived long enough to see many of the successes of his sons.

In later life, Betty loved dressing in bright colours and always wore high-heeled boots.



In April 2004, Betty decided to slim-down her wardrobe. A neighbour, jokingly printed a sign.

She enjoyed her garden, butterflies and flowers, the Cambridge Botanic Gardens being one of her favourite haunts. Betty was also a proud grandmother to Tony's children, Katie and Tom.

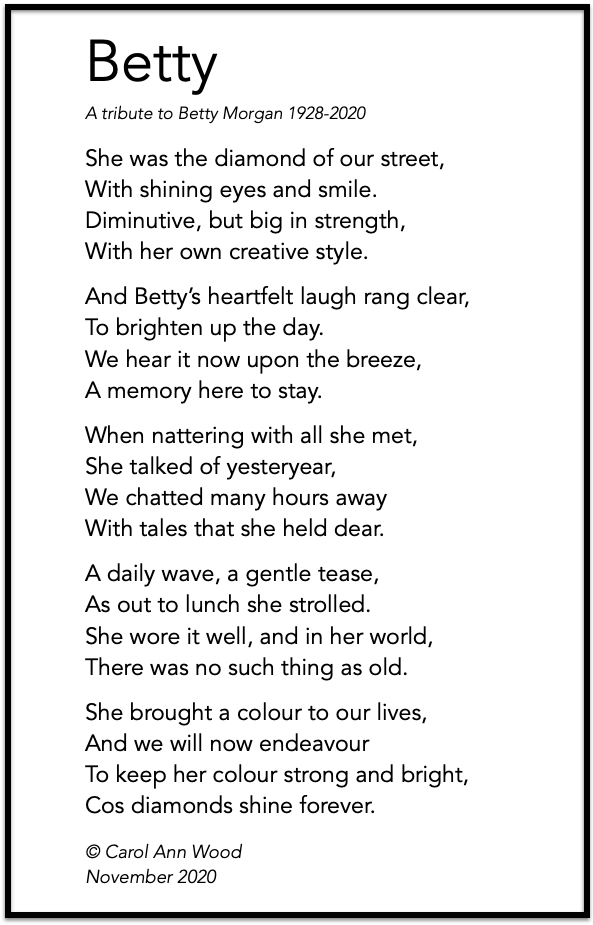


Betty with (L-R) Perowne Street neighbour Monica Smith, granddaughter Katie and son Tony enjoying the Perowne Street party in 2009

Betty loved the Perowne Street/Emery Street residents' street parties. She regularly had breakfast at the Salvation Army, lunch at Ditchburn Place and afternoon tea in the Grafton Centre or elsewhere in the city centre.

David and Tony intend to host a more fitting event to celebrate their mother's life once the Covid pandemic has passed – hopefully an all-singing-all-dancing street party in Perowne Street – and are planning to adopt a bench in her honour in the Botanic Gardens.

Local poet and neighbour, Carol Ann Wood, has written a poem to celebrate Betty Morgan's life in Perowne Street.



Betty

A tribute to Betty Morgan 1928-2020

She was the diamond of our street,
With shining eyes and smile.
Diminutive, but big in strength,
With her own creative style.

And Betty's heartfelt laugh rang clear,
To brighten up the day.
We hear it now upon the breeze,
A memory here to stay.

When nattering with all she met,
She talked of yesteryear,
We chatted many hours away
With tales that she held dear.

A daily wave, a gentle tease,
As out to lunch she strolled.
She wore it well, and in her world,
There was no such thing as old.

She brought a colour to our lives,
And we will now endeavour
To keep her colour strong and bright,
Cos diamonds shine forever.

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Captured from mill-road.com, 6 November 2026