



Vale
Cushla Mary Lewis
 13/2/1962 to 10/6/2019

The second daughter of Tom and Maree Lewis, Cushla and her family have spent many happy times on Norfolk Island. Although her parents had visited many times before this, Cushla first arrived on the island in May 1971 on board "HOLMGLEN". She and her mum were sick for the entire journey, and the master wanted them off the vessel. Thankfully George Park got them all off just before dusk, as the weather then closed in, and the ship couldn't work for many days. The family rented Peggy Evans' house up Red Road, and here began Cushy's love of Norfolk. Many visits later, and with "Roaring Forties" now home, she spent some years living and working and singing amongst you all, and she revisited many times.

Her tragic death has shocked everyone, and there are no answers. Her funeral was held in Tauranga on 15 June, and she was buried in Te Puke beside her beloved grandparents. Here is the Eulogy, delivered by her mother:

Born in Te Puke and spending her early childhood at Maketu, Cushla was a happy child, a delight to us all.

She started school at Maketu, and then to Mount Maunganui Primary. Her schooldays were all just fun! Education was not a serious matter for Cush. Art and music were her strong suits, and the high marks she received in these subjects meant that the low marks for Maths and Spelling could be overlooked. This explains why I would get urgent calls from strange places saying "Mum, Quick! I can't talk! But how do you spell "illustrious"?"

By age 7 she had a "boyfriend" – his father, she told us, was rich, and he owned the Cossie Club! Cushy knew this was true, because the boy had overheard his mum saying "You might as well live there, you practically own the bloody place!"

Intermediate school offered fresh opportunities and on school trips she would sort out teachers who couldn't erect tents, light fires or get the BBQs going.

Secondary school in 1974 saw her off with Kathryn to board at Sacred Heart Girls College in Hamilton, where she formed lifelong friendships. Once again, actual education didn't take up too much of her time, and she knew that convent rules could be safely ignored!

Her grandfather had a winery, and brewed extremely potent bottles of "plonk". On one home visit he gave her a bottle to take back to school. At 2 am a few mornings later, when a distraught little nun phoned me about my drunken daughter, all I could do was laugh! I knew immediately what had caused the noisy party and the tipsy students. I reassured her that there was no need for instant dismissal, and told her to just send them all back to bed! Nothing more was heard on the matter.

Cushla struggled through School Certificate & UE, getting there purely on the strength of her high Art and Music marks, and in her final year she gained the Major College Art Award.

At 18 she began nursing training, but left after a year of continually fainting at the sight of blood. Heading to Waikato Polytech, she successfully completed a course in Media, TV & Design. She went on to work at Tasman Pulp and Paper Co in Kawerau, where they ran an in-house film production unit making safety & training films for the mill, in the forests, and in the warehouses.

(continued overleaf)

I BUY LOCAL

I invest in my community

I CAN SOCIALLY INTERACT WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

I EAT FRESH

I choose quality over quantity

I worry about future generations

I LOVE HANDMADE

I buy from a family over a corporation

I like knowing who grows my food

I'M SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT

I support independent artists & crafters

I choose tasty veggies over pretty ones

**I AM PROUD TO KEEP OUR LOCAL
ECONOMY GOING STRONG**

Cushla - continued

She learned to film whilst suspended from great heights; in confined and dangerous areas; and hanging from aircraft. Sadly the company folded in her second year, and she was laid off.

Things went sour for Cushla, and the Black Dog of Depression hung about the place, until she won a six-month contract at Tauranga City Baycourt Complex. She designed their original logo, and big musical murals which hung on the building for many years. She also planned Baycourt opening ceremony, where she met and spoke with Princess Diana.

For a change she headed to Norfolk Island, and when she landed the job as personal assistant to the Administrator's wife she couldn't believe her luck! She lived – over the next three or four years, in several of the lovely old Georgian Houses from the prison period, “caretaking” the houses during restoration programmes. The Administrator's wife had Scotch terriers, and Cushla acquired a golden lab named Chewy. These were happy times, as her duties included walking the VIP dogs. They enjoyed the beach as much as she and Chewy did!

Cushla has always been a perfectionist but it was at Government House that she sharpened her skills. The place was kept immaculate, and when VIPs arrived the huge dining table was dressed to perfection. The cutlery and silver gleamed, and the crystal shone. Candelabra and flowers were placed with precision, and the whole place was spotless. These standards and expectations stayed with Cushla, and led to her fearless rejection of any second-rate product, food, or service. Many of you will have been embarrassed to see her almost ferocious rejection of something that didn't quite stack up! I know that any Auckland waiter who has ever served Cushy a streaky wineglass, or a plate with a smeared thumbprint upon it, would have been quite relieved to read her death notice in Thursday mornings “Herald”!

When the Administrator's term ended, it was time to come home, for a brief spell, then off for her Big OE. With a little group she left for Sao Paulo, and this was her base for travels on to La Paz, to Quito, to Macchu Pichu, to Lake Titikaka, and many other amazing and off -the-beaten-track places. (At this same time, two young women back-packers had been hacked to death by insurgents, and Aust/NZ authorities were seeking missing persons' details). Cush and friends were by now visiting the Atacama Desert. In midday heat two of them missed the trail, and were subsequently lost. Later that day, badly sunburned and low on water, they heard a distant car engine, so headed in that direction. Many hours later (and now shivering as night fell) they were picked up by a second passing car. The driver was a priest from NZ, who informed Cushla that she was listed as missing! We got a call soon after.

Her South American travels were done on US\$1 per day, and she was away for a year.

She headed next to Europe, and then on to England to be the first of our family to meet Tom's English rellys, and by late 1989 she was nannying for a wealthy family in St. John's Wood, and able to take her young

charge all over London, visiting famous sights, and places. She was however, forbidden let the child take her shoes off in the park!

Cush returned to NZ in May 1991, when she was 29, and soon after that began went to TVNZ in Wellington. She loved living out at Day's Bay, where there was no road access, and she and her flatmate had to clamber down a bushy track with their supplies. It was here that she acquired her two cats. Her transfer up to TV3 in Auckland was sudden, and she stayed with friends until she got sorted. The cats, came home to Te Puke for a week, and stayed until old age took them some 14 years later! She rented in Ponsonby/Herne Bay, and then lived in the Merceps' boat-house for several happy years.

Eventually the great day came when she found a place to buy; it had parking, a proper clothesline, pohutukawa trees, and space for a pet. She attacked the interior of Linwood Ave with a sledge hammer, and got rid of the internal glass brick walls and tacky brickwork. Tom converted the industrial roller doors into French doors, and she turned a carpark into a terrace garden, with palms and ferns. Presto! It was home. Over the years she has made improvements, and was the first of our children to pay off her mortgage. Her life looked a success, but the Black Dog of depression was always haunting her.

I see my lovely daughter's life like a book, a rip-snorter of a tale like one of those stories you can't put down. It's been filled with exciting places, exotic interiors, wonderful perfumes and the most beautiful music has played throughout - always singing and music, and guitars, and bright flowers. There were madly interesting people along her way, there was beauty everywhere, and brilliantly -coloured pictures on every page of the ever-more exciting story. There was passionate love for those in trouble, and anger at life's unfairness. The gilt-edged pages are full of animals, of walking with her dog Betty, and playing with the children that she loved; Images of colourful pieces of fabric drying in the breeze; she was full of the joy and wonder she shared with newborn babies and their mothers; and her utter thrill on seeing a starlit night sky.

The book is crammed full of fun and jokes, and of sorrows that are shared; there is laughter and more music and some really neat naughty stuff, and some teasing and loud laughter, right up until the last page when suddenly the whole thing goes wrong, and there is ghastly dark stuff which fills you with horror. Nothing makes sense, and it's clear that something has gone terribly wrong for the writer. It's a shocking ending to such a stunningly good book.

Although Cushla's life seemed happy and successful, and she was dearly loved, that Black Dog of Depression finally caught her.

We had no warning that her life was going to end this way, and the loss of our precious child will be with us for the rest of our lives.

Only God knows why this has happened.
