

Funeral speech for Mrs. Sally Bourdage

01.09.2023, 10:00a.m., Dornbach Cemetary, Vienna

Music 1 (Rumi - What was said to the Rose... - Coleman Barks)

Dear Donald, dear Joan, dear James, dear Jill, dear mourners. We bid farewell to Mrs. Sally Bourdage today.

I would like to join you today in shining a light on Sally as a person, so that we can say goodbye to her with dignity and respect.

Sally was born on August 20, 1951 in Cleveland/Ohio, the third child of her parents Jenny and Beekman Myer. Her brothers Don and Calvin were born by then.

She made her first move when she was just 8 months old, after her father got a job opportunity in Chicago. From then on, the family would move three more times when father Myers saw another chance to further improve their living situation.

And so they came first to Elmhurst, then to Wilmette for 7 years, and finally for 6 years to Wood Dale, where Sally graduated from high school. She didn't like being a nomad that much, because for her it meant that she had to start all over again to build up a circle of friends.

After high school she went to the University of Illinois to study German. And there at the university she not only found the education she wanted, but also the love of her life. During the New Students Week, she met a young man who was studying computer science there. Donald Bourdage, her Don. It sparked and the two quickly became a couple.

During her studies, Sally came to Austria for the first time to spend her stay abroad in Baden near Vienna. Don visited her during the holidays and together they drove to the Dachstein to learn to ski there. At that time the cost was the equivalent of not even 25.- €!

Upon successful completion of her studies, she and Don married and traveled to Canada for their honeymoon. While walking along the shore of Lake Ontario, Don found a beautiful little stone which he picked up. This lucky stone, to always remind him of Sally, he has carried with him ever since.

Through a further University of Illinois program, Sally got the opportunity to teach at schools in Lower Austria. So she and Don first ended up in Wieselburg, where Sally took her job. Don started looking for a job for himself, and soon found success. He got a job in IBM's Eastern Europe department in Vienna.

The two moved to Vienna. The first apartment was in Favoriten, was very small and also not very comfortable. And so, after a short time, they moved to Lascygasse in the 17th district.

For Sally, the daily drive to work in Wieselburg that was now necessary, she lustily endured to the end of her one year assignment, after which she could join Don on trips to Eastern Europe.

For a while she taught German to American company employees. And also Marines, who lived in the notorious Marine House on Peter-Jordan-Strasse.

Don's career had progressed rapidly in the meantime, and so Sally got the opportunity to start at IBM at the end of the 70's. She settled in quickly and was soon respected and popular in her new work environment.

Sally and Don moved into a new apartment on Neuwaldeggerstraße, enjoyed life together, pursued their hobbies and traveled a lot. The years flew by. In 2011, Sally went into her well-deserved retirement. After her retirement, she was able to concentrate even better on her voluntary work at the district museum in Hernals, which gave her great pleasure.

Her health has always been good. And so it came as a surprise that in 2016 she had to accept the diagnosis of a serious illness. She completed all the necessary procedures and therapies, recovered from the disease and was able to resume her usual life.

Until the early summer of last year, when persistent hoarseness turned out to be another form of cancer. After the therapy showed initial successes, she and Don went back to Bad Aussee in January and treated themselves to a stay at the famous Hotel Erzherzog Johann. At Easter they could make their next trip, to Pöllauberg.

During a check-up three months ago, which unfortunately could not confirm the good progress of the first few months, the doctors found additional complications, including the onset of pulmonary hypertension. So again new medication.

In July, the Bourdages were able to celebrate an event that has become rare these days: their golden wedding anniversary! It was a nice party in the wonderful Restaurant Klee on the Hanslteich pond in the Vienna Woods.

With a lot of technical and medical effort, Sally and Don then made a journey to their familiar destination in Vorarlberg, on the Pfänder mountain. She was able to attend dinners in the dining room, they went on a tour around the lake, visited her favorite bookshop in Bregenz, and Sally's favorite craft shop in Rankweil.

They were even able to go to the shopping center in Bludenz to buy clothes; they picked out a nice sweater and matching blouse together. And how Sally enjoyed it! She was so happy to be shopping again for the first time in over a year, a little bit of normality. And hope.

On the way back they visited good friends in Altheim and had a lovely time with them.

After returning to Vienna, there were more checks and the planned increase in the dosage of Sally's medication. The following days were ups and downs. On Sunday, August 13th, Sally was actually feeling quite well, but on Sunday night she developed severe pain and had to go to hospital. The complications were successfully treated and so she was somewhat confident again on Tuesday, an Austrian holiday.

Unfortunately, improvements were recurringly followed by deteriorations in her health. From Thursday to Friday, Don stayed through the night with Sally in the hospital, holding her hand. Don drove home briefly in the morning and returned to spend the next day with Sally.

On the advice of Sally's care team, Don went home in the afternoon, but was immediately called back. Sally's life force was drained. She had begun her final journey, closed her eyes forever, and fell peacefully asleep.

For the following song, please bring memories of Sally to mind and think about beautiful scenes and situations that are typical of her.

Music 2 (Jules Massenet, Thais opera, Meditation – Isaac Singer)

Well, who was Sally? What was characteristic of her? We have already heard a little about this in the story of her life stages. But in order to better describe and understand Sally as a person, it is important to take a closer look at her personality.

Sally was a cheerful, sociable, positive person.

She liked to tell stories and could talk to people for hours on many different topics.

She enjoyed traveling with Don. Together they have certainly traveled more than half the world. To relatives in the USA, Chicago, Washington, Florida and the Southwest States.

Or in 1976 the tour to England, Scotland and Norway, with their VW Beetle and the romantic little pup tent with great views of fjords and other magnificent natural scenery.

In 1983 they went to Japan, Hong Kong, Bangkok and India. Then in 1998 to Egypt on a Nile cruise, to the pyramids, to Cairo and to Hurghada. And in 2006 to Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and finally to Cape Town in South Africa.

But even in our latitudes, the Bourdage's have been eager to travel. And here they were very faithful to their favorite places! For many years they traveled to Pöllauberg, mostly at national holiday. And to South Tyrol, to the Alpe di Siusi. For 20 years they were guests in Bad Aussee in the Salzkammergut, where they happened to end up in a snowstorm when they were young. They loved the "Rauhnächte" with their parades there. And for a total of 36 years, they traveled regularly to Vorarlberg, to Lake Constance, to the Pfänder.

Sally and Don traveled extensively through Switzerland! They have visited Davos, the Emmental, the Eiger and the Montafon, from Interlaken to St. Gallen, from Graubünden to Zurich. They liked to sit down in Zurich in the Cafe Odeon, where Trotsky and Lenin had been guests long before them. And they visited their favorite "Orell Füssli" bookstore.

What else did Sally like to do?

She loved reading, a hobby she shared with Don. Her favorite genres were historical treatises, novels and biographies. The two of them owned countless books. Sally's last book was only given to her by Don shortly before her death: a memoir about a bookbinding workshop in Oxford during the World War.

Her passion for reading also led to her great interest in libraries! She visited legendary book collections such as the British Council Library, the American Consulate Library, and of course the great libraries in Vienna.

With her knowledge, she could definitely have shined as a guest on quiz shows. She enjoyed watching them on television, like the show “Quizmaster,” for example. And on BBC the Eastenders, a series that has been running since 1985 and is probably one of the most successful series in the world.

Sally enjoyed handicrafts. She also knitted and crocheted, but her favorite activity was embroidery. Many beautiful pieces with beautiful motifs she created over the decades, many of which were given as gifts to dear friends.

What else can be said about Sally?

Her cooking skills were simply legendary. She loved experimenting so much and cooked her way through every cuisine in the world. She was quite easy to give gifts to; She always had fun with a cookbook. She always used the recipes as a guideline and modified them to suit her taste. Her friends had a very special term for this form of refinement: She “Sallyfied” the dishes!

Sally’s life story would not be complete if her love for animals were forgotten. It was around 1980 when the Bourdage’s were out in the Shopping City South near Vienna picking out tiles. On the way to lunch at a pizzeria, they passed a pet store. And there he sat, the most adorable puppy the world had ever seen.

They ate the pizza very quickly so as not to risk someone else snatching this sweet dog away. Then they went back to the pet store as quickly as possible and took him with them. “Bodo” became his name, incidentally a nickname of Don’s from the Youth time. Bodo became 14 years old.

Afterwards, the two cats Koko and Sara came to Neuwaldeggerstrasse, and Sally took care of the two cats with a lot of love and dedication.

Music 3 (And I Love You So – Perry Como)

Scientists agree that there are two areas in life that have a particularly important impact on the quality of life: family relationships and friendships. And Sally cultivated friendships sincerely and intensively. I would now like to read to you two texts from good friends of Sally that testify to this:

From Martina and Peter:

Two weeks before her death, Sally visited us with Don at her request. Her physical condition was probably very bad. Despite this, or perhaps precisely because of this, we had a very good and valuable conversation for everyone. Don, who has recently been lovingly caring for her around the clock, deserves a lot of respect and sympathy.

It is also a small consolation that she maintained her loving and yet very special nature until the end. We can and will remember you as we all knew and liked you.

From Trude (district museum):

Dear Sally, it is incomprehensible to us but unfortunately true. You are gone from us. We don't want to believe it. Our loved and respected Sally is no longer with us.

You were a fixture in our museum, always there wherever and whenever we needed you. You really could be used anywhere, such a smart, active, interested, well-read woman.

Thank God you found your way from the university in America to us at the Hernals District Museum.

You have seen a lot of the world, came to Austria in 1973, were a German teacher in Wieselburg, and worked at IBM.

You came to the district museum in 2011, a stroke of luck for the museum in a difficult time. You took part in the move to Würmla in 2012 and were fully involved. When it reopened in 2014, you were able to live out your diverse talents.

You took care of the library, but not only inventoried it: you restored completely tattered books, translated texts from important events in Hernals into English, looked after visitors, gave tours, and so on. You were just everywhere, including on opening day, Sunday.

Dear Sally, we are infinitely grateful that we were able to get to know you and thank you for everything you have done for the District Museum of Hernals, and that is a lot that will remain.

We got to know you as a wonderful, extremely helpful person, and are infinitely sad that you are no longer sitting at your desk at the entrance to the archive. We miss you so much. You will always remain a part of us.

Let's now say the Lord's Prayer together for Sally:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

Sally was a good person. She has managed to live her life the way she wanted and enjoyed it. Yes, it might have lasted a little longer, but Sally really did have a happy, fulfilling life.

Richly filled with joy, beauty and love! And how wonderful that you gathered here were all an important part of her life!

Sally's journey is over. Our own path leads us further. To our own hills and valleys, perhaps to some peaks, to impressive and beautiful places.

And when we think of Sally, it is with gratitude and joy that we were able to walk part of the journey together.

Music 4 (Somewhere over the Rainbow – a favorite from the Wizard of Oz sung by Sally and Don's Goddaughter, Maria Victoria Gauster)

At the grave

We don't know what eternity is like, but as you wished it to be, that's how it should be for you.

When the sun rises and when it sets we remember you. When we breathe in the scent of summer and the flowers bloom, we remember you. As the leaves rustle in the beauty of autumn, we remember you.

When we are tired and need strength, we remember you. And when we feel joy, we remember you.

As long as we live, you will live too, because you are a part of us, forever.