

Published November 14th, 2018

## Sarah's story - a Lamorinda connection across the pond

By Pippa Fisher



The Minack Theatre sits on the cliffs high above the Atlantic Ocean. Photo provided

Lafayette but also had managed Madison's for five years. And it seemed providential she spoke to me, as I am always ready to tell a Lafayette story.

This is Sarah's story.

Sarah Welsh moved to California in January 1990 to be with her boyfriend, Brian. They had met in Zurich, Switzerland where they had both worked in the same restaurant. At the end of their contracts Brian spent some time with Sarah back in her native England before returning to the U.S.

Sarah joined Walnut Creek-born and raised Brian in California and they were soon married. They visited her family in England every so often and on one such trip renewed their wedding vows at her twin sister's wedding.

In 1994 Sarah started working in the David M. Brian store in Walnut Creek where she managed the restaurant for 15 years. When the store relocated she worked in the stationery department and was soon promoted to manager of the Madison gift and card shop in Lafayette. "I spent five years there and loved it," says Sarah, "Particularly when the loyal customers of the community would pop in and have a chat."

Brian had suffered throughout his life from chronic asthma, which Sarah says became crippling at times, especially during heat waves.

"He had both knee and hip replacements and eventually remained on disability. I was able to take care of him in between working a full-time job. We rented a small cottage in Pleasant Hill where we were quite happy," says Sarah.

Sarah took six weeks off work to recover from her own knee surgery in June 2015.

In July of that year Brian passed away unexpectedly. "He passed away the first day I returned back to work. I never did get the chance to tell him how my first day was. It was, in fact, the hottest day of the year," she says.

Sarah was devastated but remembers the love and support she had from her Lamorinda community and in particular from her work friends.

"It was Dana Lim (manager of McCaulou's in Lafayette) who from that moment on took me under her wing and took care of me," says Sarah. "I continued to work with the tremendous support of all my work colleagues throughout the company, for which I am forever grateful."

With her world completely changed, Sarah says she had no doubts that she would return home to England to be with family. "It was just a question of when. I had the tedious task of selling everything and emotionally being ready to do so. When the idea of going home on the last leg of the world cruise was proposed to me, I had a date to aim towards.

"My older sister and her husband flew out to join me at what was a very emotional time for me having to

Life's bizarre twists and turns occasionally change lives. So it was for the manager of a Lafayette shop, who found herself back in the country of her birth, having called the East Bay her home for 27 years.

And sometimes through these twists and turns, someone appears in our lives. So it was for this reporter recently on a trip back to my home country of England. I was visiting the small village of Porthcurno in remote, rural southwest England with some American friends from Lamorinda. In particular, I had wanted to show my friends the beautiful Minack Theatre, hewn into the rocks of the cliffs high above the Atlantic Ocean. We toured the theatre and learned the history behind it, and as we were paying for our purchases in the gift shop, Sarah Welsh, working at the till, asked where we were from.

It is an understatement to call it a coincidence that we met her in this tiny village and that she not only knew of

say goodbye."

Together they took a British ship, which Sarah says was most fitting as it sailed out under the Golden Gate Bridge. The voyage brought them via the Panama Canal to Southampton, England.

"The time spent on the cruise was a great transition for me. After one month at sea I stepped on British soil again where my sister and husband made me feel most welcome at their home in beautiful Porthcurno, Cornwall."

Coincidentally, on the day that Brian died the other flat in the Victorian property above her sister's Porthcurno home came on the market. It remained unsold until December when, with plans to renovate for herself and to run it as a B&B, Sarah and her sister finally purchased it. "It was almost as though it was waiting for me to return," reflects Sarah.

Sarah says it was strange at first being back in the UK permanently after 27 years away. "It was the little things that I had to get used to again, like the climate. Hearing different phrases ... my American accent was very strong, which people found amusing.

"I continue to stay in touch with friends when I get a free moment to email," Sarah says. "Although I may be thousands of miles away, they'll never be forgotten. Since I am now a dual citizen, I feel I have the best of both worlds."

Author's note: If it was a coincidence that I met Sarah 6,000 miles away in a remote village, imagine Sarah's reaction less than a week later when Madison's property-owner Joan Bruzzone, coincidentally on a tour of England, also wandered into the theater.

And it all started with a tea towel.



Joan Bruzzone runs into Sarah 6,000 miles from home in a second coincidence in one week. Photo provided

Reach the reporter at: [pippa@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:pippa@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA