

Marlena Smith,

MBE 1940 -2008



Marlena Elizabeth was born in Cambridge, England, on October 18, 1940, to Doris May and Frederick Downham. Marlena was the second oldest of seven children. She had a happy childhood and enjoyed a close relationship with her siblings. Her mother was an organizer, a clever business woman, and homemaker. She had a great influence on Marlena's life, teaching her "you get out of life what you put into it"

and "to be kind and give of yourself to others".

Marlena lived the rest of her life within that spirit. Academically, Marlena worked hard and earned good grades at school. She was an excellent cook and enjoyed performing on the stage, playing lead roles in school plays. She excelled in swimming, diving, and running hurdles. Marlena also played in the school netball team.

When Marlena was 16 years old and attended a local dance, she met a young man from the nearby U.S. air base. Jerry Smith was intelligent, charming, and respectful. Marlena and Jerry dated and the couple married on July 3, 1957, at the Church of Our Lady and The English Martyrs in Cambridge.

The next year, starting



their own family, Marlana and Jerry were thrilled with the birth of their only daughter, Allison. Marlana was a wonderful mother. She held down a full time job as well as maintaining a perfect home. She worked for the General Accident Insurance Company at that time.

In 1962, Marlana, Allison, and Jerry moved to California. Marlana's job transferred to the

Los Angeles office. Subsequently, she became the office administrator for Glenridge Pools and worked there for 30 years. Marlana was a founder member of the DBE Caernarvon Chapter that was started in 1969. She was Chapter Regent for several years. During this time, she raised money for the British Home by holding highly successful fashion shows at her own home. Marlana also facilitated dinner dances out on her deck that were organized by members of her Chapter – she was a great motivator! She served a term on the





(then) DBE California State Board before becoming a member of the Executive Board of the British Home.

Marlena was President of the Home for a total of 14 years, including 1988 to 1990, and again from 1996 to the time of her death on November 29, 2008. Her many achievements include a greatly increased level of caring, nurturing, and understanding of the elderly, major renovation of the Home facilities, and the personal raising of over \$800,000 to ensure the financial security of the

Home and stability for its Residents.

Marlena's great contribution to the welfare of the British Home was recognised in her appointment by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2005 New Year's Honours List.

Marlena, with her usual grace, was very quick to acknowledge that this honour reflected the marvelous support she had received. She said "I am thankful for the friends, family members, and residents I have encountered



through my association with our Home and the DBE. Therefore, I share, and accept this MBE, on behalf of all who work for this goal - Our Home! I appreciate the confidence you have shown me and



encouragement you have given me. Thank you all, dear friends”.

Marlena will be remembered for her positive and cheerful attitude, her energetic drive, and most of all, her compassion, love and kindness. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her and loved her.

In August 2007, Marlena had already suffered the loss of her dear husband,



Jerry. We are consoled by the thought that they are now re-united in paradise.

Marlena is survived by ever loving daughter, Allison, and granddaughter, Claire, her pride and joy. Marlena will certainly be there in spirit when Claire graduates from NYU in May.

