Son celebrates his mum

She was a vibrant soul, one who literally lit up the room whenever she entered. And right up until she became less able to get around, Mum was full of joy and always eager to help out, no matter what the problem was.

Being a mother of four boisterous boys – me Nick, Al and Johnny, Mum had a hard time juggling the demands of us all, but she never complained at her unenviable task, nor did she ever turn anyone away – be it family, friends or local faces, wanting to stop by the house for a quick chat.

Mum had an inherent love of music – in particular, the music of Elvis Presley – and she’d always find time to put one of the King’s hits on the stereo whenever she could. Much to Dad’s never-ending frustration, I might add!

Her favourite tune was “Blue Hawaii” – a song that became synonymous with the King’s movies, and one which she first heard when she was flying, as an air hostess, in the early 1960s. In fact, it was while flying via India that she bumped into her future husband, who was cooling in an airport departure lounge, waiting to return home from army service.

Mum would always talk about those days as if they only happened yesterday, when the pair of them would take off in Dad’s car for some wild adventure, without the burden of four boys fighting on the back seat!

They shared a love of travel, and would often explore different parts of the country, investigating little country towns and farms off the beaten track. City slickers, they were not. And they were proud of the fact, too.

After I moved out of home, I’d often make time to go visit them both. The five-hour drive meant nothing, of course – particularly after Dad passed away, and Mum was on her own. She thrived, though, in her own way – always keeping busy, never feeling sorry for herself, and always excited to see her boys, her nieces Susan and Jenny and nephews Josh, Mel and Chris, as well as friends from the town. Mum was a popular lady and despite enjoying time alone, would welcome company as if it a natural extension of her new, quieter life.

Mum was raised in a small town in NSW, called Charlottes Pass. She had one younger brother Harold, who grew up without his older sister, she had moved out of home at a young age to explore the world and create her own stamp on life. She was never an outstanding student at school, but she maintained long-term friendships and interests from her school days, and always emphasised the importance of a good education to us all (and for our own children!).

After Mum and Dad moved to Adelaide, Mum continued her passion of art, painting to her heart’s content while Elvis merrily played on the record player (Mum never did accept the changing of technology – you’d never see a CD anywhere in her house!). And though it irked Dad to have so much noise after he retired from his office job, he’d simply tend the garden, leaving Mum to enjoy her hobbies uninterrupted.

The last vacation they took together was to visit me two years ago in Sydney, a place I’d made my new home some 20 years back. Although they were both struggling with ill health by then, they put on a brave face and enjoyed two weeks of uninterrupted sunshine and warm weather. Coming from the snow country, Mum, in particular, couldn't stop raving about how stunning the climate was – and how beautiful the harbour was in Sydney.

My lasting memories of Mum are simple: a hard-working, passionate figure of strength who never waned in her support or love of her family, and who soldiered on, even when times were tough.

It is a great privilege to write this eulogy to express the sadness that all of us boys share over her loss. Mum, thank you for everything you've given us – and the warmth we shared during your precious time on earth. God bless you. Always.