



**Mary Hugh Dotson Cartledge**  
**29 Dec. 1946 – 17 Mar. 2022**

**She was here, then gone.**  
**Now she is many places.**  
**A way to honor her.**

**December 2024**

### By way of introduction.

Mary Hugh Dotson Cartledge and I had too few years together. Like so many others who have spent the majority of a lifetime together, the years were filled mostly with love. Those days not filled with love, were few and far between. As we lived, loved, shared, and grew we realized:

- We would not be together forever,
- We would leave behind those we loved,
- There would come a time when someone would have to take care of our remains, and
- It would be helpful to them, if we were to try and express our wishes

Some of those items, ideas, and concepts become memorialized in legal documents (wills, trusts, contracts, and so on). Others are passed on verbally, with the hope they would be remembered and honored. And then there are some not addressed at all.

Mary was very specific about what was to be done, and not done with her body. I honored those wishes as best I could. She was less specific about what was to be done with her ashes. Lane and I worked together to remember what she had said, what we think she might have liked, and how we could honor her. This is our attempt to do that.

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Boxes in red provide general information about the place where Mary Hugh's ashes were spread. The maps, markers, and circles on the red box pages indicate where things happened.



How the rest of this missive is organized.

Each page, each location is special in it's own right.

- Some locations were/are on the "bucket list" when time ran out.
- Other locations were added because they probably should have been on the list, and yet again time ran out.

So Lane and I try to imagine what she would have liked, what would have been special to her, and hoping in the end when we cross through the veil to the other side, she will say we "honored her and lived her life well."

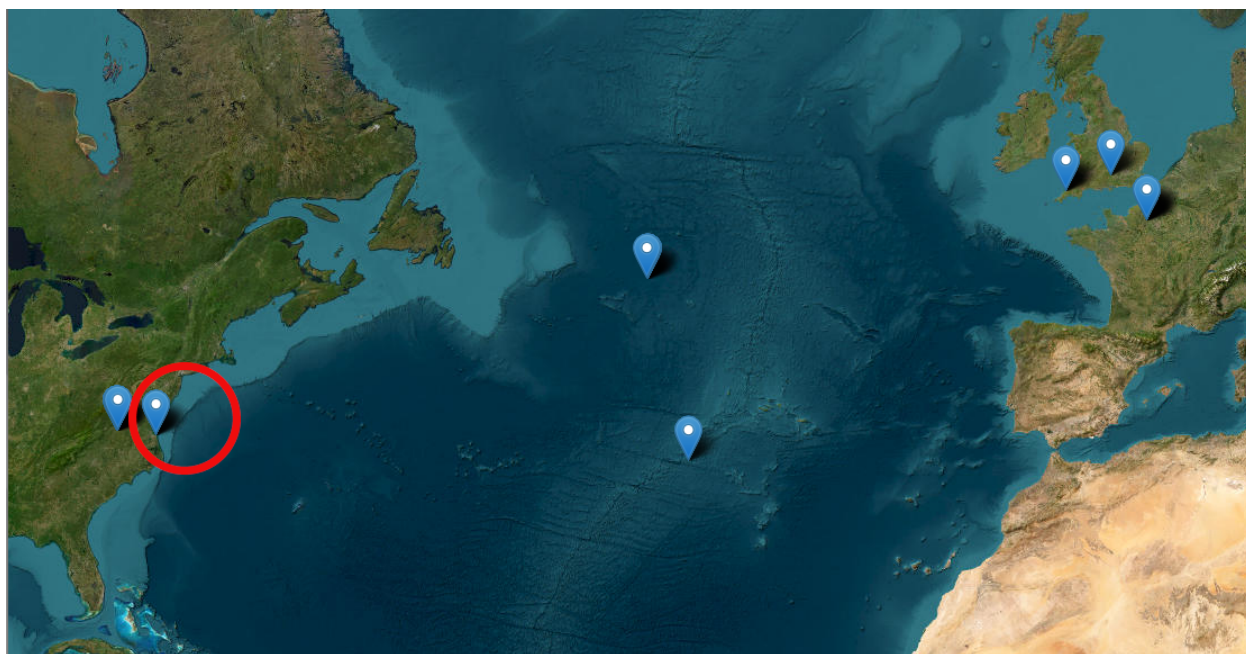
Boxes in yellow provide a specific story about exactly when and where Mary Hugh's ashes were spread.



## Virginia Beach, Va, USA

Deciding where to spread your ashes is a very personal thing and deserves time and consideration. Lane had once mentioned how he would like to have his spread in the Atlantic Ocean off 77<sup>th</sup> Street in Virginia Beach. Mary said casually how she would like to be there as well. Now she is.

It was to be the first of many places, special to her, to me, to Lane, and to us collectively where these acts were to be carried out. In all cases, Mary was there in spirit, in fact, and some of her cats were there as well.



2022:07:31 36°54' 8.81" N 75°59' 19.02" W

Lane took the miniature urn containing some of Mary's ashes (along with some of her favorite cats) out to sea, and swam with it for a while. I stayed on shore and watched him carry his mother up and down the beach as the waves carried them both.

Now, when I go to the beach, and shade my eyes from the glare of the sun, I can imagine she is there as well.



Shady Grove, Gladys, Va, USA

Mary Hugh was proud of her life growing up at Shady Grove. She described it as almost idyllic. Running with the horses and dogs. Calling out to her older sisters when the bus was coming up the hill and they needed to hurry. Swimming in the eponym of the road running in front of their registered historical house.



2022:08:01 37°10' 14.71" N 79°2' 52.24" W

Shady Grove is a working farm with cattle and live stock. While Mary loved the farm and loved animals, the thought of her being in the fields with the animals (and all that animals do), was "a bridge too far."

There is a walled off cemetery on the farm within sight of Shady Grove itself. Mary is there where she could see the house, where she could hear and smell the livestock, where she could feel the sun, and yet not be trampled on and stirred up.

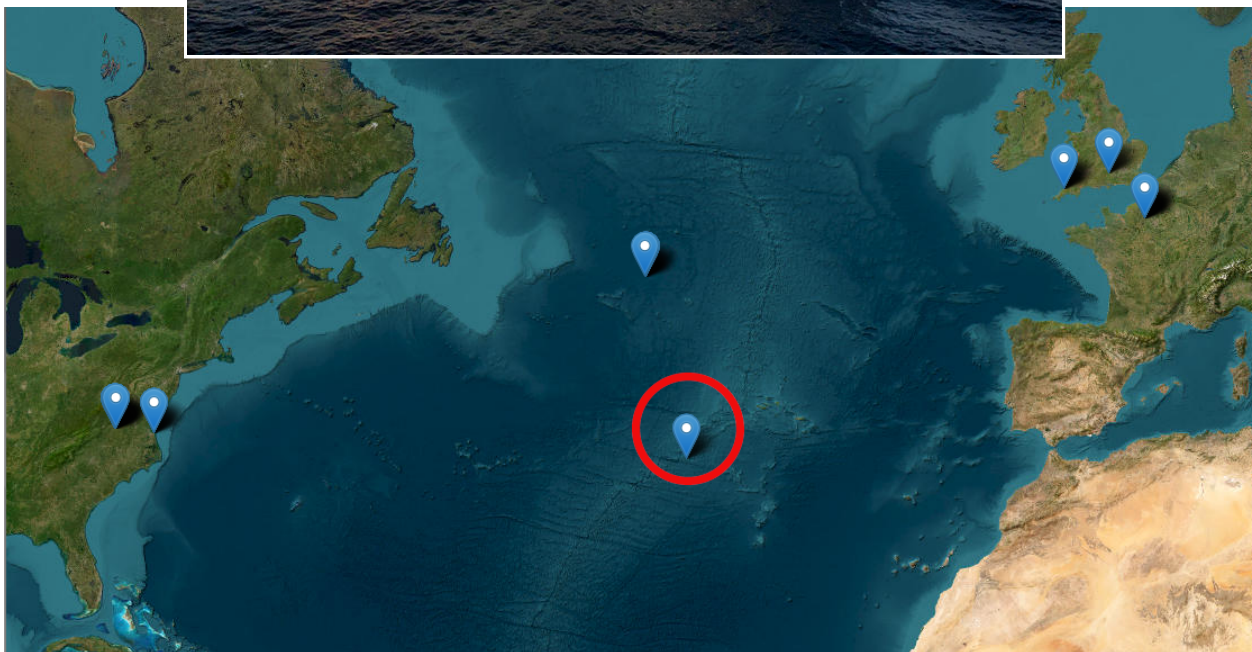
I hope she is happy being outdoors, having her cats with her, and being near where she grew up and created so many memories.



## North Atlantic, East Bound

Mary enjoyed cruising. Walking into a magic hotel where you went to sleep in one city and woke up in another. Where your meals were cooked to your liking, and were always available. Where you could have interesting conversations day or night. Where you could meet new and interesting people, and sometimes form friendships lasting for decades. Truly a magical place.

Construction of the Celebrity Apex started in July 2018, and she started service in June 2021. If all goes well, she will be cruising the oceans of the world well into the 2060s. I hope her 2,900 passengers experience the same level of service, and create as many memories as I did, and I hope Mary Hugh would have.





2024:05:08 35°16' 35.4" N 34°23' 17.9" W

As with so many other things, there are traditions and rituals to be observed, otherwise whatever it is isn't what it should be. So it is with our cruising.

- The obligatory picture on the balcony, where the lady of leisure could start to become accustomed to her deservedly earned life of leisure.
- There are glasses of wine to be enjoyed with family or new friends, to talk about the day's events, or how to solve the world's problems. Solutions were somehow lost the following day.
- Places of quiet contemplation and reflection far from the madding crowd.
- The enjoyment of simple celebrations, made special because of family and friends.

Special times and rituals in cabin 12136.



• Santa Cruz das Flores

• Santa Cruz da Graciosa

• Horta

• Velas

• Angra do Heroísmo

• Ponta Delgada

• Vila do Porto



Highclere Castle, Newbury, UK

Mary and I enjoyed the Downton Abbey series on PBS. We watched it from the beginning, were upset when characters died, were enthralled with the movies, and wanted to visit Highclere Castle which served as the Downton Abbey. We ran out of time.

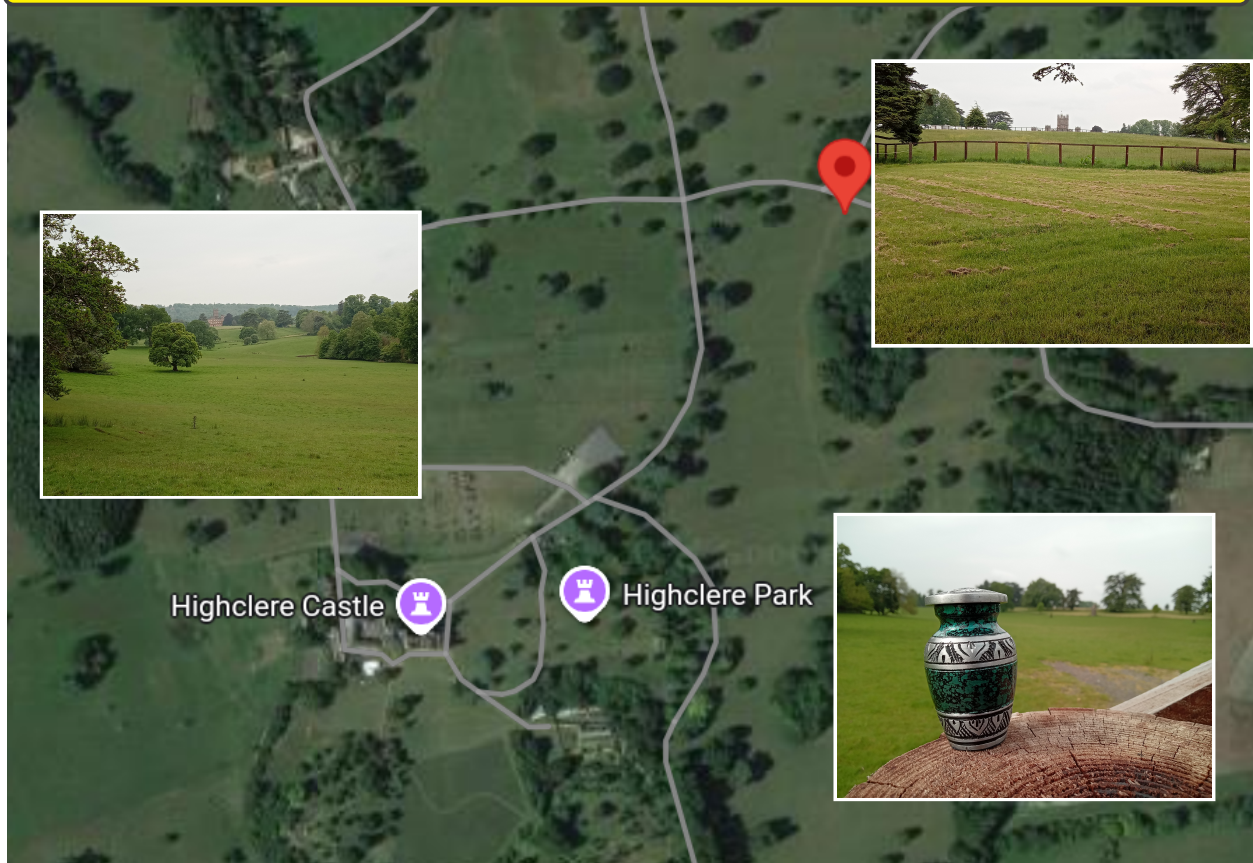


2024:05:18 51°19' 50.80" N 1°21' 14.33" W

When I got to the road leading to the castle, there were lots of No Parking, No Entrance signs, and a gate closing the road. There was also a sign pointing to a Public Footpath. My understanding is British footpaths are public property and anyone can use them. So, I did.

I walked the road towards the castle, took pictures along the way, marveled at the manicured fields, and talked with fellow walkers. As I got close to the castle, there was another gate saying No Entrance. Only this time there were two gentlemen who said that really, really no one was supposed to go up there. They were filming the next movie, and were disinclined to move the tens of trailers so we could get a clear picture of the castle.

As a German couple and I were walking back to the entrance, a little old Japanese woman approached us and through broken English asked if the castle was on this road. We said it was, gave her a hand drawn map, and she was on her way. A few minutes later, a younger Japanese woman came running down the road, and asked us if we had seen her grandmother. We pointed in the direction we had last seen granny, and continued on. When we got to the entrance where the gate prevented anyone from going further, there was a large SUV parked in the middle of the road with a young Japanese boy in the passenger seat. Mary would have loved trying to make sure all three generations were safe and secure. She would have made friends with them all, and walked away with lots of stories to tell.



## Port Isaac, Cornwall, UK

Port Isaac was the primary filming location for the television series *Doc Martin*. Port Isaac was called Portwenn, and many of the outdoor scenes were filmed there. Local residents were often called upon as extras, and the entire village was used in the series.

Mary and I enjoyed the series, not just individual episodes, but the positive way most of the characters evolved over time. The inter-character dynamics were realistic, and engaging. After an episode, we would sometimes discuss the current story line and wonder how the writers and directors would resolve conflicts, or pursue possible alternative endings.

Port Isaac was on our “bucket list,” but we ran out of time.



2024:06:01 50°35' 35.85" N 4°50' 7.61" W

Port Isaac is small. With the benefit of hindsight, it was obvious from the TV series and the limited number of exterior shots and vistas. Generally, we were too caught up in the story line to pay close attention to the background(s).

I stayed in a “glamping site” about 2 miles outside of the village and walked in to see buildings from the series. I stayed there because the hotels, B&Bs, and rooms in the village were way out of my price range. Walking into the village, you can see the major buildings which served as back drops, including Dr. Martin’s office, and the Large’s restaurant.

The map pin is sometimes listed as “Bert Large’s Bench” after one of the characters in the series. It is in the center and just above the tree line in the top center picture. The bench has a nice view of the port, and all that happens there.

I think Mary Hugh would like the location.



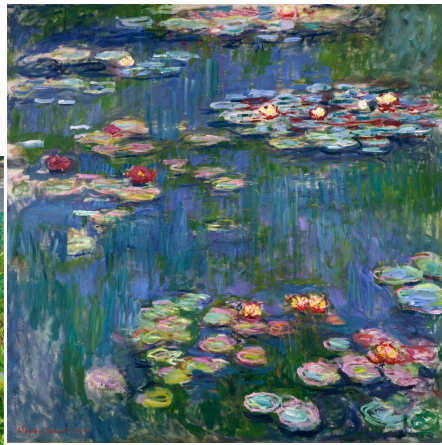
## Giverny, Eure, FR

Paris was our favorite city in the world. The food, the people, the atmosphere, and being together all combined to make each and every trip there with family or friends a delight. Included in all those visits were Monet's works. Whether sitting in silent wonder at the Musée de l'Orangerie, or on the bench in his garden looking across the lilies to the Chinese bridge.

Mary took me to Giverny on one of those trips. Wandering through the garden to get to the underpass to the pond was a riot of colors and scents. So many different shades of blue and pink. So many different petal shapes. So many ways to overwhelm the senses. And then, there was the pond.

The pond is on the other side of a fairly busy road from the garden. You reach it by walking through an underpass and along a twisting path. Sitting on the bench at the eastern end of the pond, looking across to the bridge, the noise and chaos of the world slips away. There is peace and quiet there. You do feel as if you are far from the madding crowd.

There is only you and your loved one's hand you are lucky enough to be holding.



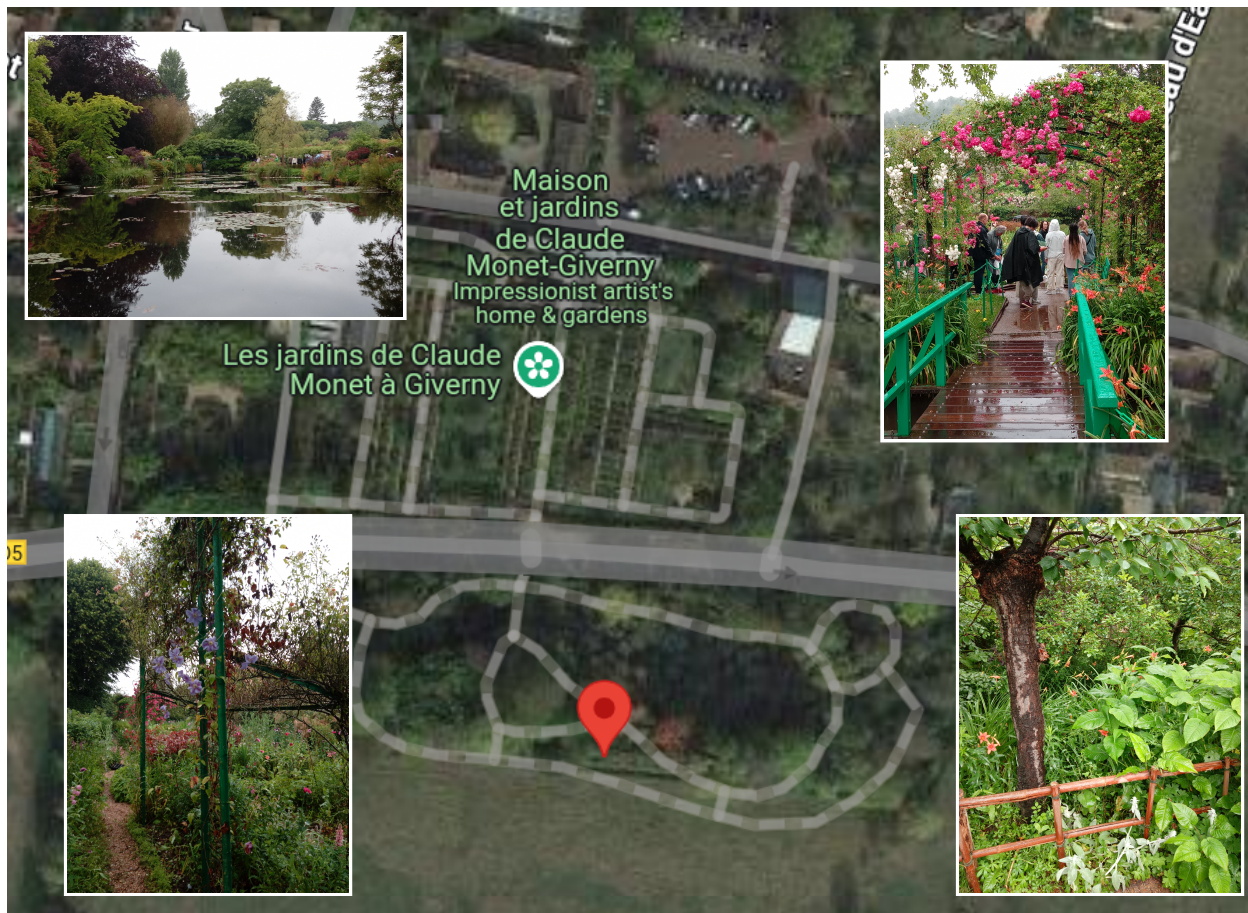
2024:06:20 49°4' 27.10" N 1°32' 1.89" E

Lane and I took a guided bus trip from Paris to Giverny and onto Versailles about 2 months before the Paris Olympics. We were two people on a bus of 50, in a sea of buses. There was no way we would be considered alone to gaze in wonder at the garden and the pond.

The rain was slight when we left the bus. It became more insistent as we trudged from the parking lot, through the village towards Monet's studio. We took shelter with a couple of older women in a car port, hoping the rain would let up "anytime now." The let up would come hours later. In the mean time, I purchased umbrellas for Lane and I so we could soldier on.

The crowd continued on through the rain, through the garden, around the pond. If you slowed down, you risked being crushed. Still there were times of peace and quiet, but fewer, further between, and of shorter duration.

The time Lane and I spent in Giverny was very different than the time Mary and I spent there. I think she will enjoy it more at the beginning and end of the day. When the crowds are gone. When the birds are singing. Where she can hear the stream gurgling and see the bubbles passing.

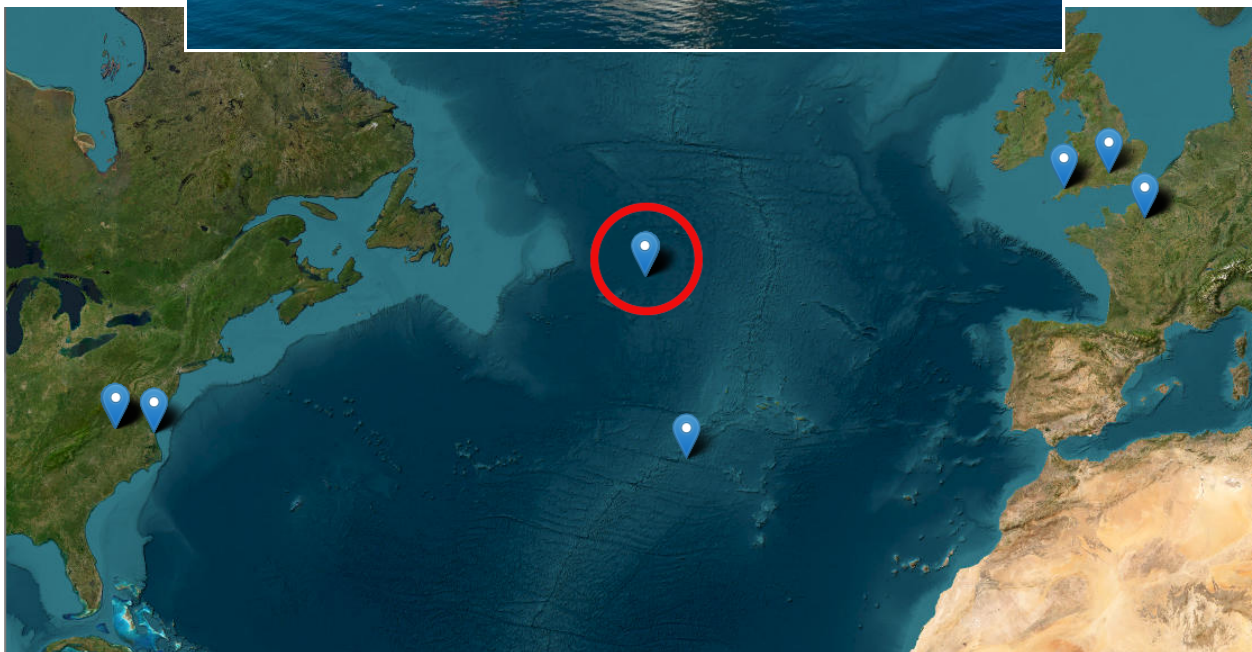


## North Atlantic, West Bound

The first time Mary and I were on the Queen Mary 2 was a cruise in the Caribbean in 2006. After looking at the ship's lines, and learning a little of the ship's history, the distinction between a cruise ship and an ocean liner became clear. A cruise ship is intended to provide leisurely travel within a limited area. An ocean liner is intended to move people and cargo quickly and efficiently from one port to another. The differences are apparent when you look at the ship's lines.

We enjoyed our time on her (I can't think of any cruise we didn't enjoy), and watched her cruises over the years. When the opportunity arose to take the weekly shuttle between Southampton, UK and New York City, I thought we could enjoy the ship again.

Construction of the Queen Mary 2 started in July 2002, and she started service in January 2004. If all goes well, she will be cruising the oceans of the world well into the 2040s.





2024:06:26 46°1' 3.72" N 37°32' 39.89" W

The Queen Mary 2 is in a class by itself. Art deco surrounds you. A library and bookstore to rival libraries in many medium towns and cities. A teak promenade encircles the ship. A sailing and traveling experience unto itself.

Linen table clothes were the norm. The number of children could be counted on one hand. Elevators and ramps to help those who eschewed stairs. Staff ubiquitous and yet almost unseen. This cruise was a shuttle from Southampton to NYC. No port visits, no tours (aside from those on the ship), just a straight run in cabin 11060.

The final 18 hours were troublesome. My train was to depart NYC for Norfolk at 3PM. The ship was scheduled to arrive at 6:30AM, but was delayed four hours, and used a different port. Disembarkation took 2.5 hours. Bus departure was delayed one hour. The cross town bus took an hour. A quick bite at the train station prior to getting on the train, and seeing a sign saying the train had been canceled. An anxious train ride to Washington, DC. A race to catch a different train to Hampton, Va. Explaining to the Amtrak bus driver why no tickets were given to those of us whose train was canceled. Arriving at Norfolk at 12:30AM only to find no cell coverage.

I think Mary would have liked the transit, but not the final leg of getting home.



## Kedron Baptist Church, Gladys, Va, USA

The Kedron Baptist Church played a big part in Mary Hugh's early life. Lessons learned, ideas instilled, thoughts formed, and relationships forged there influenced her for the rest of her life.

In her later years, she was a member of the Episcopal church, and enjoyed studying the spiritual beliefs of the rest of the world as well. She looked for the good in people and strived to find ways to help those in need. Mary made everyone she met feel loved, special, and important.

Hers was a life well lived and enjoyed. She was so very grateful for her many blessings and felt privileged to have experienced so much joy and love in one lifetime.



2024:07:06 37°10' 16.31" N 79°4' 31.39" W

During a phone call with Mary's sister Alice, I told her about the places Lane and I had chosen to spread Mary's ashes. Alice asked if I had been by Kedron and left some there.

I said Lane and I had been by, but had not left ashes. On my return trip to Gladys, I did leave some at her mother's marker.

There are now three generations near the Kedron church. Two generations memorialized in stone. One actively remembered in the sanctuary. One in the memories of those who loved her.




Places not yet visited.

There are places Mary and I talked about, but I haven't visited since losing her. This blank page is a placeholder for places yet to come.



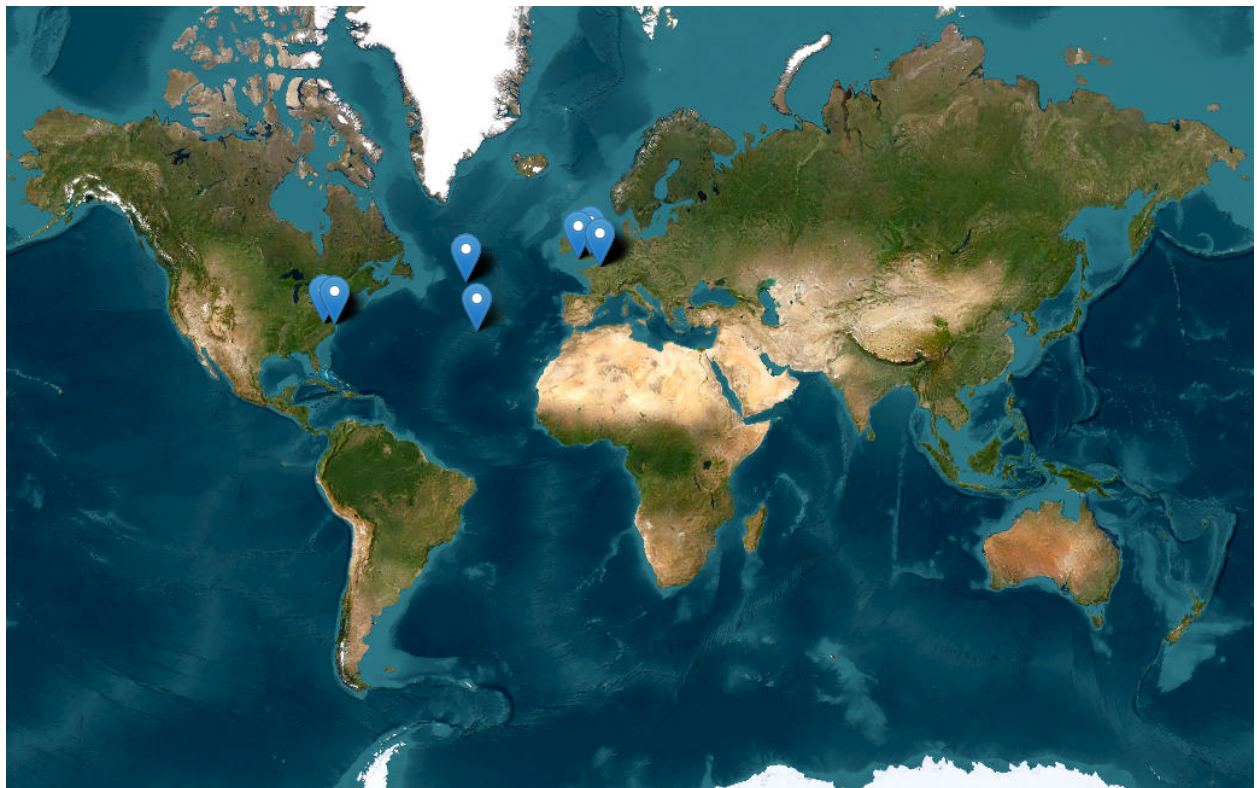
There aren't any stories yet.

I'm sure there will be when the time is right.

Everyone has  
Story to tell 


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# To Honor Her

## A husband's remembrances and promises

She was my guiding light and my touchstone. She was all the things I wasn't. She completed me in all ways, and now she is gone. Her passing has left a hole that can't be filled, and an emptiness that threatens to consume me.



*Mary Hugh Dotson Cartledge, MSW '78 was a kind, giving, and wonderful person. Known to friends all over the world as "Miss Mary."*

We met when she was living in Norfolk, Va and had been accepted into the Master's program at VCU's School of Social Work. We continued to live in the Norfolk/Virginia Beach area, getting married, and getting ready for her to have our son. She would commute to Richmond on Sunday or Monday, spend a few days there, then come back while she worked on her degree. Mary was able to type a Master's level report in one pass without errors or corrections, something I marveled at every time she did it. The week before graduation, she talked to her doctor about the advisability of driving to Richmond one last time to participate in graduation ceremonies. He said it shouldn't be a problem because there were lots of hospitals along the way. On Graduation Saturday, Mary had contractions on the drive to Richmond, none during the ceremony, and then starting again on the way back to Virginia Beach. Our son was born the next day, Mother's Day.

Our life plan time was for her to stay at home for a few months before her using her MSW. Plans change. During the ten years after graduation, she stayed at home, raised our son, picked up a real estate agent's license, got trained as a travel agent, and made life long friends. Training, experiences, and friendships that would make our lives more interesting and enjoyable than if she hadn't.

Mary's nature, training, and inclination was to help others. She set up programs to clothe those who were cold and homeless. She worked in public schools with teens helping them through their troubled years. She moved into substance abuse prevention and treatment in Chesapeake where she worked for several years. Her work and dedication to the under served in life touched hundreds of families and children over the years.



She continued to help others when she retired, connecting those in need with those who could help. Helping others was one of the things she enjoyed the most.

As time and opportunity permitted, we would travel. Sometimes we went alone, making friends along the way. Friendships that lasted for decades. Other times with old friends, and those friendships deepened with shared experiences and time together. The Internet enabled those friendships to grow and continue even during the COVID lock-downs. She never met a stranger, and always enjoyed making new friends all over the world. Many would automatically refer to her as “Miss Mary”, as she let them know she was interested in their lives and wanted to hear their stories.

And then it stopped. Mary had trouble breathing for a few days, but didn't feel it was so bad as to need to see her doctor. On her last day, I helped her to her chair then went upstairs for a few minutes. When I came back she was gone. The minutes it took for the EMTs to arrive were the longest in my life. To hold her hand as it got cold and to start to realize my tears wouldn't bring her back created a hole that is my life. The quickness of her passing was a mixed thing, there wasn't time for pain, also there wasn't time to say or hear good bye. Life was there and then it wasn't.

According to some traditions, everyone dies twice. The first is when the heart stops, and the body grows cold. The second is the last time someone says their name. It is easy to mark the first death, there are professionals to note the date the time and cause of the passing, and the legal requirements to be met. The second is much harder to mark, and only slightly easier if there are children of children of children. The best any of us can do is plant seeds and hope that some take root and bear fruit long after we are gone.

In keeping with the adage “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” The Mary Hugh Dotson and Charles Lane Cartledge IV Endowed Scholarship is set up to help under served and first generation MSW applicants. Populations she cared for and sought to help personally and professionally. Helping people who came from the population she sought to help is the best way to magnify her penchant for helping others. A way of paying it forward, by helping others now in the hopes that they will help others in the same way.

Multitudes of men and women whose minds are much subtler than mine have spent their



*Mary with her newest and best friend Zachary. It was hard to smell Hall's Mentho-Lyptus Cough Drops without thinking of Zach. One of the highlights of her 2 month cruise of the South Pacific.*

lives wondering and thinking about what comes after this life. I stand in awe of some of their wondrous and beautiful creations. I don't know what comes next. To the best of my knowledge, others who have passed haven't let those they left behind know what the ultimate answer is, and so I wonder. I wonder and think about what comes after we leave this mortal coil. In my best engineering mind, I try to apply Occam's Razor keeping in mind that I'll know for sure sooner than most.

From that perspective, there is something on the other side or there isn't. If there isn't anything then it doesn't matter how we treat others, and by the same token there isn't any punishment for those who are unkind to us. A nothingness is the easiest situation to consider, the harder one being that there is something there. One possibility of something being there is we are judged and consigned to ever lasting nirvana or never ending torture. A possibility I have difficulty with from a moral perspective. A different possibility is we are judged and then recycled to a higher or lower plane based on how we lived on this plane. A possibility more intriguing because it isn't an absolute and has the promise that if we live a good life, then things will get better during the next go around. Yet another possibility is that on the other side of the veil, we get to be whatever or whomever we want. This



*Mary Hugh Dotson Cartledge after a good meal with good friends and good conversation in the Pacific Ocean between Vancouver, BC and Honolulu, Hi.*

option is interesting because we would have agency over ourselves. It isn't hard to imagine wanting to once again have a body strong and without pain, able to see again with clarity, and hear the sounds of birds and the wind whispering through the trees. If crossing through the veil allows you to become whatever you want, then finding someone who passed before could be a challenge. Would you or they be the same as when you were last together, or would time have changed you both? At least two common threads weave their way through all these (and perhaps others) possibilities. The threads being: we don't know what comes after this life, and treating others well will help regardless of which possibility is correct.

And so I continue on. I try to make real the plans she and I made to help and to be kind to others. To treat others the way we would like to be treated. I continue to put one foot in front of the other, hoping that when I pass through the veil I'll be reunited with the woman who completed me and she'll say I lived her life well and honored her.

A husband.



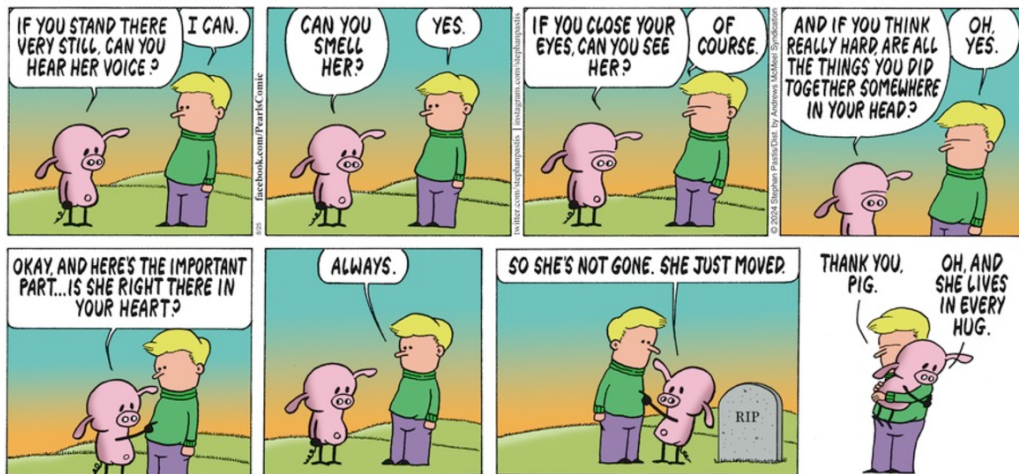
Mary with “her boys.” Her son Lane, and husband Chuck.



Mary with one of many “children with fur” over the years. The number of children with fur peaked at eight and bottomed at one. Three of them were with her when she passed.

**PEARLS BEFORE SWINE**

**BY STEPHAN PASTIS**



Published 24 August 2024.

### By way of conclusion.

There is no conclusion. These few words are to balance the structure at the front. I have places to go, and things to do. As things are marked off my (and our) "bucket list," others are added. I will take Mary to those places Lane and I think she would have liked.

I carry her with me always and everywhere.

*"... And so I continue on. I try to make real the plans she and I made to help and to be kind to others. To treat others the way we would like to be treated. I continue to put one foot in front of the other, hoping that when I pass through the veil I'll be reunited with the woman who completed me and she'll say I lived her life well and honored her."*



### Acknowledgments

There are many people whose conversations, ideas, and experiences contributed to making this booklet. I cannot name them all because too many have been lost in the sands of long ago places and times. These few (in chronological order) are the most recent in the last few years:

John Rice whose memorializing events comments were the seeds for this missive.

Mitchell and Peggy Fine, whose council and steady hands have helped me through tough times. Their coffee table book about their "bucket list" trip to Africa served as an impetus to capture Lane's and my experiences in a permanent form.

James V. Romanik, Senior Director of Development, School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University whose work was instrumental in creating the Mary Hugh Dotson and Charles Lane Cartledge IV Endowed Scholarship. James and his staff caused me to examine not only my life with Mary, but also encouraged me to look towards the future and how I could and should proceed. Putting those ideas and experiences on "paper" helped me to focus my mind.

My life is richer for each of you being in it. Thank you all for helping me as I continue putting one foot in front of the other.