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Desert *news*

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
ACROSS THE WORLD

APRIL 2006

Joan Margaret Cook

30 May 1922 - 14 January 2006



Joan Cook

30 May 1922 – 14 January 2006

*As beautiful as she was kind
As funny as she was patient
As generous as she was witty
A remarkable Lady who shared her
remarkable life with so many.
“I have so much to be grateful for”*

*You’ll be missed by all
whose hearts you touched
A Mother, a Wife, a Grandmother, a Friend
We know your life shall never end*

*You’ll stay with us forever
Alan, Sally, Grace, Fiona, Paul,
John & Julie.*

Send our love to Grandad!

Words of remembrance

written by Fiona Jane Cook
and published in the
Mid-Sussex Times

Photographs on next page:

Circa 1930 - Jack & Joan (brother & sister)

1949 - Congratulations! on birth of Alan
(with photograph taken 22 November 1950)

1 Oct. 1949 - Douglas & Joan (in car).
New England Road, Haywards Heath.

20 Sept. 1947 - Douglas & Joan - wedding

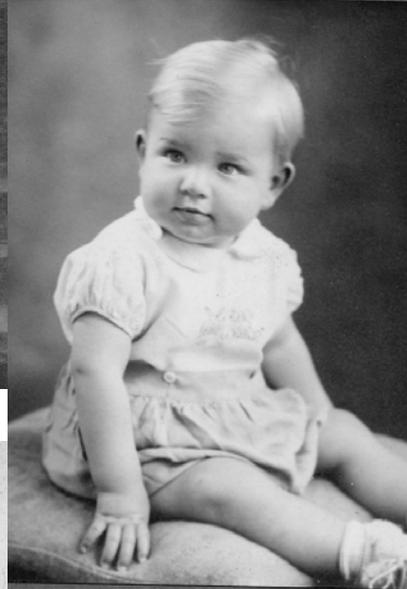
Date unknown: Joan on holiday.

20 September 1947 - Wedding group - see
separate caption.

Mum’s last family portrait



Mum's Photo Album



below: 20 September 1947 in Preston, Lancashire. Wedding of Douglas John Cook and Joan Margaret Topping.
 Back row: Eric Topping, Billy Eskrit, Jack Bradley, Samuel Reuben Cook.
 Middle row: Unknown, Mrs. Pye, "Little Gran" Bradley, Mrs. Fury, Grandma Topping (John Joseph Topping's mother).
 Front row: Unknown, Unknown, Ethel Topping, Florence Sarah Cook.



family mini-biography: Joan Cook

Joan Margaret Cook (nee Topping) was born on 30 May 1922 in Preston, Lancashire. Her parents were John Joseph Topping and Ethel Topping (nee Shanley).

Joan's siblings were Jack and Eric Topping.

During her childhood, Joan suffered from TB, but despite this she attained a high standard of academic achievement at her school. Unfortunately, coming from a very poor family during the economic depression, she was unable to continue her education and had to leave school as soon as she could legally do so (age 14) in order to find work and bring in some money for the family.

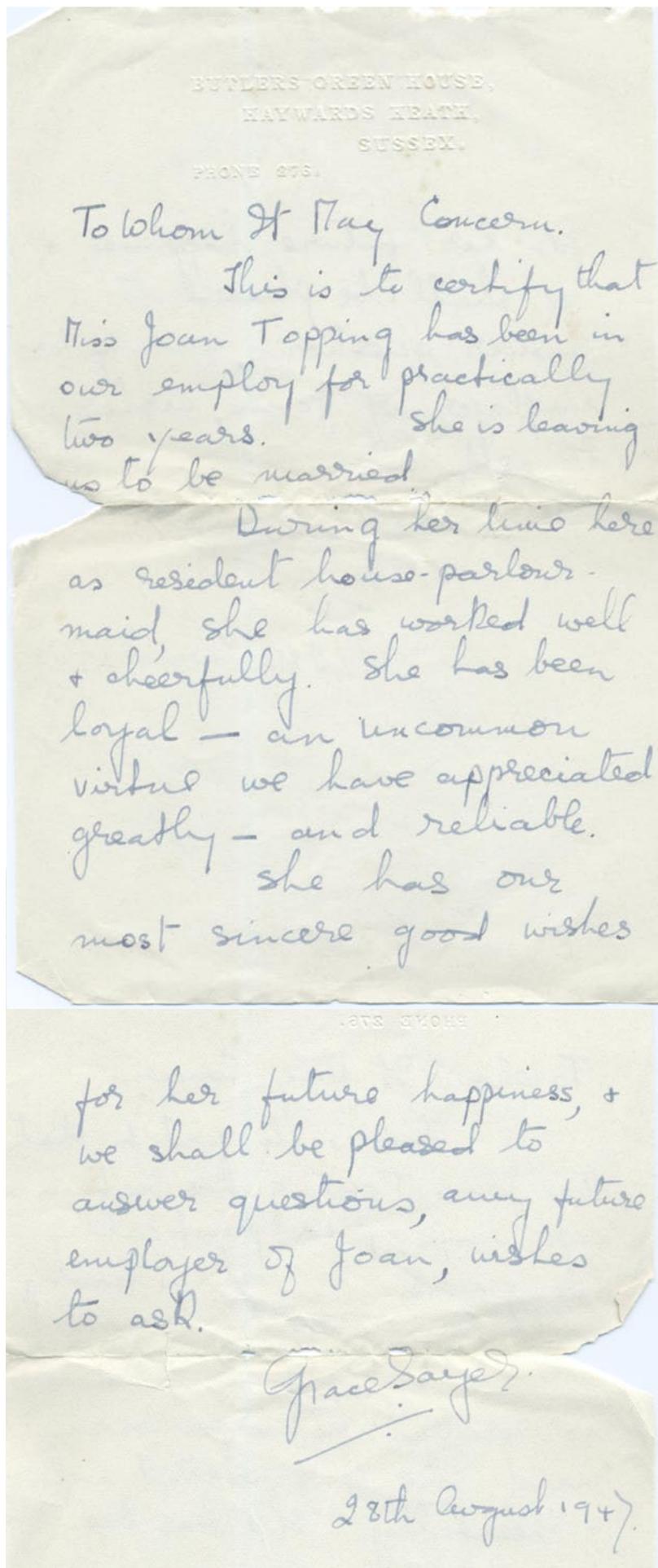
Joan attended Deepdale Modern School, near Fulwood, Preston, where she met Eunice Bass (married name) who became her closest friend for 73 years.

During WWII, Joan worked in a Woolworth store in Preston – carrying out night-time fire watching from the roof of the store.

In October 1945, she left Preston to go to live in Sussex, where she worked 'In Service' (domestic servant) at Butlers Green House on the A272 on the outskirts of Haywards Heath on the Cuckfield road. She went to Sussex to be with her friend, Margaret 'Peggy' Ranger (later Clarke), who was serving with the Land Army. Within a few days of arriving in Haywards Heath, Peggy was relocated elsewhere and Joan was left friendless, to survive on her own in the town that became her home for over 60 years.

During her time there, working for Mrs. Sayer, she met Douglas Cook at a dance and they eventually got married on 20 September 1947 and went to live with her in-laws at 48 New England Road, Haywards Heath, where she gave birth to her son, Alan John on 25 June 1949.

In about 1950, Douglas and Joan attended a Billy Graham evangelistic campaign service at Harringey in London where they both became Christians, after which they started attending the Evangelical Free Church in New England Road in Haywards Heath, where the Rev. Anderson was the minister (He was later succeeded by Rev. Battson, Rev. Ralph, Rev. Kingsley Coomber). They both served the church





below: Joan as a girl in Preston



above: Joan's friend, Peggy Ranger is on the left.

left: Joan at Butlers Green House - circa 1945 - 1947

well for over 25 years before changing to the Kings Church, also in Haywards Heath. During their time at the Evangelical Free Church, Joan served as a Clan Chief of the Juno's section of the Campaigners organization that ran for about 9 years at the church. She was also a Sunday school teacher for many years.

In about 1950 Joan and Douglas moved into a new home at 41 Allen Road, Haywards Heath. Before this happened, Douglas had been involved in a self-help scheme whereby a group of people built their own homes, contributing their skills in order to do so. They pulled out of this scheme when the offer of '41' came along – even though at that time in was a 'council-house', which they later went on to purchase themselves – for about GBP1400! – A lot of money then.

On returning to work (part-time) Joan worked in a restaurant in Boltro Road, owned by Mr. Buckland, a foul-tempered alcoholic. He also had the franchise to run a small refreshment kiosk in the Recreation Ground (where the cricket pitch is behind what is now Claire Hall) and Joan enjoyed many pleasant afternoons running the kiosk during the summer months. Joan then worked at the 'Copper Kettle' restaurant in Commercial Square before becoming a 'Dinner Lady' at the primary school in New England Road (where she got all the school holidays off-work). A few years later she was appointed, with Jessica Tuddenham, to run the footwear section of the newly built Co-operative store in Sussex Road. She stayed there until she retired to look after Douglas who had contracted Multiple Sclerosis.

Christmas 2005

A huge thank you to Sally for the wonderful Christmas party that we all enjoyed in her home in Haywards Heath. Not only was Sally taking good care of Mum, but she also accommodated the ravenous hords for weeks at a time. The table was constantly groaning under the weight of food, and waistlines continued to expand as the food slowly went down - only to be replaced by more - and more!



Best friends for 73 years

Right: Alan John Cook (standing, left) and his mother, Joan Margaret Cook (in chair far right, with hat) with the family of Jeff and Eunice Bass and their two sons, Steven and Trevor (sitting, nearest Jeff) - at Rhossili in South Wales - on the Gower Peninsula. Taken around 1960

Below: Eunice and Joan on Boxing Day 2005, the last time they were together.



Joan and Eunice met while at Deepdale Modern School in Preston, Lancashire and remained friends ever after. War, marriage, children, distance and old age couldn't separate them. Jeff and Douglas, husbands of the two ladies, also became firm friends. Jeff served with the Royal Navy

during WWII and survived many naval battles including those while on the Russian Convoys for which he recently received a medal from the Russian government. Grace and I have also valued their friendship. Both Eunice and Jeff are currently in ill health and we pray for their speedy recovery. May God bless both of you.

Below: Eunice, Joan and Jeff on Boxing Day (26 December) 2005



A new chapter in my life

by Nadia

I was thinking about the days before I came to Doha, Qatar. I had mixed emotions, yet was thrilled from the time that I received my visa. I was so happy and excited as at last my dream to travel and work abroad was coming true. Before then, it never came into my mind that the Middle East would be the next chapter in my life. I was also incredibly anxious because I needed to decide whether to stay in the Philippines



Nadia, hanging around at the Golf Club - with the family, of course

or take this big step, especially considering that my Qatar visa would expire after a month of my being there. A lot of questions bothered me awfully. What if I chose to leave? Would I will loss my present job? Could I find a job in Qatar in just a month? What future would be waiting for me? Would all the money spent be wasted?

But this was my opportunity, and I do believe it

only knocks once. Finally, I chose to leave and take a gamble. My former boss was very upset and disappointed with my decision, as she considered me as one of her key personnel. She tried to persuade me to stay but my decision was firm and no one could change my mind at that point. In fact, the company may have sent me to Mexico for a better career opportunity and I might have been nominated as the next “SBMA Best Employee”, but despite all those offers I remained firm in my decision.

I wasn’t able to hold back my tears from falling when I was at Manila Airport, because I knew that my life would be different from anything I had done before. When I landed in Doha (29 April 2005) I felt very lonely. I missed my family and friends all of a sudden. I only felt better when I saw my brother-in-law (Alan) and my sister (Grace).

Soon after I arrived, Alan was able to obtain a visa extension for me, that gave me another 5 months in Qatar. I was very thankful because that gave me more time to find an employer who would sponsor me.

My first week in Doha went very smoothly. I didn’t have any problems at all. But not at all times went so smoothly. It was during my second week that Grace gave birth unexpectedly and this was the most stressful moment I had ever been through as I was still adjusting to my new environment. She asked me to go to work in her office and do her job. It’s just like I swallowed a deep sea and I’m screaming for help because I didn’t know what I was going to do. I had no choice but to follow her, because of the circumstances. I was fortunate that her boss was on leave during that time, hence I had some time to learn more about the job. Also Grace was only a telephone call away and I could always ask for her help anytime I needed it. I was very grateful that I learned the job quickly because it wasn’t too complicated and the filing system was well organized.

While I was doing Grace’s job, I applied to different companies and attended numerous interviews and received some job offers, but I was reluctant to accept any of them because I was doing Grace’s job and she wasn’t sure if she could go back to work considering John’s condition. I decided to stay where I was until she decided to resign and she had talked with her boss to see if he would be willing to both hire and sponsor me to take over her job. Once she’d spoken to him and he was happy to do so, I decided



Nadia, right, hanging around at the Al-Bandar restaurant - with Michelle



Nadia, just hanging around!

Acknowledgement

I just want to say “thank you” to my family, friends and relatives who supported me throughout - especially to Alan and Grace for all their endeavours.
God Bless and More Power to all!

to stay because I knew I would be safe. I made an excellent decision I guess. I don't have any regrets because both the bosses are very nice.

I'm happy and contented where I am now. I have no regrets about any of the decisions that I took. Although it's difficult to be apart with my family and friends, sometimes we need to make sacrifices. If you really want to achieve something it is a matter of choice, determination and self confidence. Try and try until you succeed. Don't loss your hope as it brings you a brighter tomorrow.

About Doha, this place is not too dreadful although there are only a few places to hang around in, but I will be alright. One of my favorite places is the Golf Club – it's nice to sit, dine and relax. The Sheraton Hotel is also one of the best places here for me. I love to sit there with a cup of tea or coffee with friends. Life here is very convenient. I can easily go out shopping anytime that I want - which is one of my favorite hobbies! You can meet people of different nationalities with different cultures and traditions and you will learn on how to deal with them. The only thing that makes me unhappy is the weather, particularly during the summer which is now approaching. Also some people are stupid but I just ignore them as long as they don't harm me, but of course I still need to be cautious at all the time.





The mighty Antonov 124



Here's some photographs I took this morning of an Antonov Transport Plane. It's a big beast and in the back of this one were two Chinook Helicopters and a Main Battle Tank. It's the biggest production aircraft in the World and I got to go and sit in the pilot's seat!

The Russian pilots were great and they turned the engines on for us too!!! Being Customs I am able to go anywhere I want so it has its perks and everyone including ships Captains etc. call me Sir as I am Mr. Cook over here!! haha!!

Well I hope you enjoy the photographs. If you look closely, you may be able to see me between the tyres of the aircraft.



Travelling to Qatar

by Michelle



When I received my visa I was overwhelmed with joy. I said to myself, finally here is what I've been waiting for. Unfortunately, upon receiving it I immediately found out that my visa would expire on 14 February. And I'd only received it on 12 January. Furthermore,

there was another problem - I found my passport number didn't match the passport number that was written on my visa. So, I had a very short period of time to arrange all the necessary papers before going to Qatar. So, I immediately went to Olongapo to ask for some assistance from my Auntie Puring, as she knows Manila very well. The next morning my Auntie and I went to the Qatar Embassy to correct the number written on my visa. Sadly, we didn't know at that time that it was Eid Holiday and that it lasted for a week. So, we decided to go for my medical examination where I encountered another problem. One of the tests showed a minor health concern - I was anemic! I was very, very worried because every day seemed to produce more problems - whatever I did. What worried me most was the time constraints as I had to process all the documents in less than a month and yet a week was already wasted due to the Eid Holiday and another for the medical examination. The doctors advised me that I needed to take the medication for a week before I could go back for another medical examination. After a week passed by, I went to Manila again for another medical examination and another visit to the Qatar Embassy. Thankfully, when I got my medical examination result I was declared healthy and fit. I immediately went to the Embassy and presented the medical results and they corrected my passport number on my visa as well as starting to process the necessary visa certification. The Qatar Embassy advised me to go back after two days to pick-up my visa certification. The next morning, back in Olongapo, my Auntie accompanied me to the travel agent to arrange my flight. They immediately booked me on 4 February 2006. I thought everything was ok, so I went to Pangasinan to wait for my flight. After two days of waiting, I returned to Manila to pick-up my visa certification. I was packing my things when the telephone rang and it was my travel agent. They informed me that there was a problem because we didn't manage to reconfirm my flight because they said I hadn't paid

my balance on time. It was stupidity on their part that they never advised me about it. I was so angry but there was nothing I could do. They told me that they would book me a flight on 8 February and that I needed to pay an extra \$100 in addition to the \$935 that I had already given them. I was very angry, but what could I do. It was confirmed that my flight was booked for 8 February 2006. On the day of my flight I felt nervous. At the immigration office they gave me a hard time. They asked for all my documents, like visa certificate and letter of support from my brother-in-law and sister, because they are my sponsors in Doha. All of these things I had ready to hand in case that the immigration needs it. In the aeroplane, many questions came in my mind: What if I can't see my sister? What will happen to me?

When I arrived at the airport in Doha, I was the last one who went through. My sister told me that they were worried about me, as all the Filipino's had already gone through, and still they couldn't see me. I told them the reason why I was the last one out was because when going through Customs, they asked me many times if I'd brought a bottle of wine. Of course I did not. They put my bag through the x-ray another time and pointed out a bottle. It was a bottle of salted fish that I had brought with me. The guy identified me as a Filipina because of that salted fish. It was funny.

On my first day here in Doha, I really didn't want to go out alone. I was so afraid because I'd heard that most of the guys are harmful. I didn't even want go to the store near our flat or throw out the garbage. But time has passed and I learned that it's not a risk but I don't go out alone at night.



ALAN'S REFLECTIONS

As regular readers will have noticed, I've given the *newsletter* a new look for this, rather belated start to the new year - more like the magazine that it's become. It seems to have grown immensely since it started life as a newsletter. Each edition seems to take more time to prepare than the last, and this was no exception. Several days are needed to get our *magazine* into print, so I hope you all think it's worth the effort!

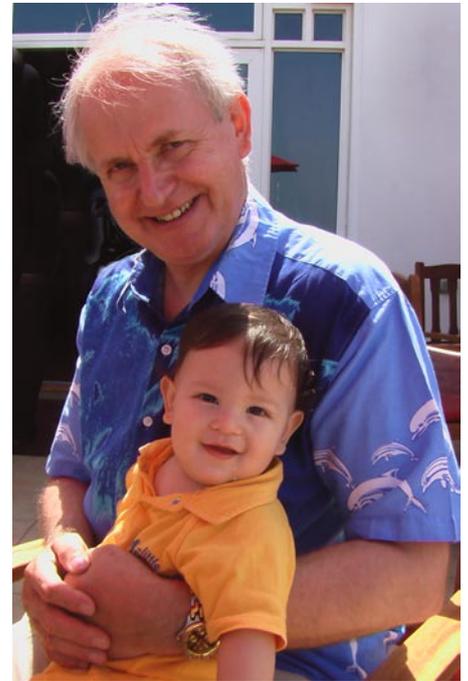
Writing this part of the magazine is always the most difficult task. Now with the passing away of 'Mum', I'm the most senior member of the 'Cook' family and the writing of this page seems even more difficult than usual. In recent weeks, I've been giving even more thought to our future than usual and still haven't answered the various questions in my mind. Unlike mother, who had a very stable life and lived in the same home for over half a century, Grace and I don't have a home of our own and are subject to the whims of an employer providing us with accommodation. We have lived in 8 homes in 4 different countries in 5 years and our possessions are scattered around in 3 different countries. In a few months we face the prospect of yet another move, as my contract expires and it seems unlikely that the company who employ me will get their contract renewed. Even if I stay with QP, either as a direct hire employee or with another contracting company, we'll be faced with yet another move. On the other hand, we could be really on the move - to another country, if this job fails to continue. We sometimes wonder what adventures lie ahead.

One of the major projects I've been working on since returning to Doha, is digitizing all of mother's



collection of photographs. This is a huge task as I'm also making it available to the family through the internet. I've scanned and uploaded 150 photographs so far - and have many more to do. I'm not, at this time, spending a lot of time re-touching / cleaning the photographs,

as each would take many hours of time to repair. However, at least the project is underway. I'm also trying to make some progress with another project; documenting the family history - another time consuming task. I've gone back about 5 generations so far, but this is still not fully complete. Linking



these two projects is also important as the people in the family photographs need to be identified. Just one example of the work this entails is as follows: I found two photographs, one of William Muggerridge (my grandmother's eldest brother) who emigrated to Australia many years ago (see photograph below left), the other of a cattle dog in Australia. There was a small amount of writing on the back indicating that it had been taken at a place called the Howe Cattle Station. Using the internet to contact people and send them copies of the photographs and the writing on the back of one of them, I found that the cattle station had been located near a small town called Mudgee, north-west of Sydney in New South Wales. I'm now trying to find out more on this. As you can imagine, time spent on this project is immense. However, if I don't do it, there is no one else in the family who can, as I knew many of the people in the photographs from the days of my childhood. I'd also sat with my mother, a long time ago, and asked her help in identifying some of them. The problem now is that she didn't tell me about many of the photographs she had in her collection, and consequently, some won't be identified.

As you will have read by now, we recently welcomed Grace's youngest sister, Michelle, to Qatar. We're hoping that she will be able to find work here fairly soon. It's great to have another member of our family here in Qatar. Grace has also received a tremendous amount of help from both her sisters who run the home and look after our little lad.

Soon after returning to Doha, we were given the good news from the doctors, that John has now overcome the kidney dilation problem that he has had since birth. That was a great weight off our minds and we thank God that we now have a healthy son who is in good shape - as you can see in the photograph (above).

Alan