



## Mari A. Atchason

June 3, 1943 - July 20, 2023

Mari Atchason of Camp Hill passed away peacefully on July 20, 2023, in Mechanicsburg, PA. Mari was born in Dublin, Ireland on June 3, 1943, to Bartholomew and Rose Ellis. In addition to her parents, Mari was predeceased by her beloved husband of 56 years, Jack D. Atchason, Sr. (d. 2020). Mari and Jack met in March 1964, were engaged in June, and married in October of that same year. After several years in Peoria, Illinois, the Atchason family moved to Central Pennsylvania in the early 1970s and have been immersed in both the East and West Shore communities ever since.

Mari dedicated her career to creating magical and memorable experiences for thousands of first-time and seasoned travelers alike. As the Owner and President of Travel Professionals, Inc., Mari specialized in luxury travel, cruises, group tours, and customized global vacations, which spanned six continents. Her most popular destinations included Ireland, Italy, European River Cruises, and Alaska. She established herself as one of Central Pennsylvania's leading travel agents, serving many local organizations including the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra (HSO), the Pennsylvania Restaurant Association (PRA), and the State Employees Recreation Association (SERA). Mari garnered national and international recognition for her contributions to travel partnerships between her two homelands. She served as the former President of the Eastern Travel Association (ETA), an Advisory Board Member of American Express Travel, and a member of the

Ireland–U.S. Council and Skål International. Her impact touched thousands of lives and organizations, and she loved when people approached her in public, sharing their gratitude for enriching their lives through travel.

Mari's one-of-a-kind energy made her the center of any social occasion, and she possessed unmatched blarney. She defined this inherently Irish gift of gab as "the ability to tell a man to go to hell and make him look forward to the trip." She captivated all with her accounts of past travel and her proposed visions for future trips. She always greeted anyone she encountered with a compliment and a smile. To the girls, she would describe each of them as "La Bella Donna," and to the boys, she would provide a flirtatious piece of wit, always followed by pulling from her purse's seemingly bottomless stash of Kit-Kats. She would oftentimes break into song with her beautiful voice and bless her family, people on her trips, and friends with kind words. Mari always led with her generous heart from helping one in need to more formal philanthropic commitments to both local and national causes.

Mari loved her Irish heritage and all the "sons of Ireland." She spoke fondly of her meetings with U2's Bono and Adam Clayton as well as golfer, Rory McIlroy. On Sundays, she always checked how Irish golfers like Rory, Padraig Harrington, and Shane Lowry were doing in their respective tournaments and cheered them on 'til the end. A proud follower of Notre Dame Fighting Irish football and Villanova Basketball, one could hear Mari yelling, "GO IRISH" or "GO NOVA" each fall. Her home would often buzz to the sounds of Irish rebel songs and other traditional favorites from the Dubliners, the Clancy Brothers, and Van Morrison. Mari was always the first to accompany these legends in tune.

She is survived by her devoted children, true Irish twins, Colleen A. Joyce (John) of West Cape May, NJ, and Jack D. Atchason, Jr. of Camp Hill, PA, born on the same day, one year apart. She is also survived by her

granddaughters, “her three angels,” Maddie, Jackie, and Emily. She derived no greater joy, pride, or enthusiasm than from her role as a grandmother, supporting all their hopes and dreams. Mari is survived by her brother, Gerry Ellis (Margaret) of Birmingham, England, as well as many Irish cousins across the U.S. and Europe. She is also survived by many close friends with whom she gathered often at the West Shore Country Club, as well as the Club’s dedicated staff, who treated her with the utmost respect and kindness.

Amidst this heartbreaking loss, Mari would request us to adhere to one of her favorite Irish blessings: “Grieve not...nor speak of me with tears...but laugh and talk of me as though I were beside you. I loved you so... ’twas Heaven here with you.”

Services will be private.