

Holding Her, At Last, Forever

I am happy to share my painting of my mother holding my rendition of my older stillborn sister born in Cardiff, Wales in 1947. It was with the help of Brief Lives - Remembered that I was able to find the mass, unmarked grave of my sister this past May. A link sent to me for Cardiff cemeteries meant that within a day, even though I was in Canada where my parents and I immigrated in 1957 and the local council I was dealing with was in Britain I was given the name of the cemetery and the plot number of my sister's resting place. She lies with other babies and children in plot EJ58 in Cathays Cemetery in Cardiff.

By email, I quickly negotiated with Cardiff Council, which owns the cemetery, to have a plain wooden cross made for my sister and put on the grave.

But first I needed to find out when my sister was born so that I could put that on the cross. I worked with the General Registry Office and eventually received a copy of my sister's stillborn certificate. I began to cry when I imagined my mother filling out this certificate a few weeks after her daughter's birth, being presented with a piece of paper that had no column in which she could put a name for her child.



I learned from the certificate that my sister had been born on February 11, 1947. From the burial record I had earlier received from Cardiff Council, I knew that she had been buried four days later on February 15, 1947, as "Stillbirth Jones".

I then had the task of naming my sister since I did not want her to continue on this earth as an unnamed child. I knew that my mother had picked the name Linda for her first baby but was never able to give her that name. So I honored my mother's wishes and chose my name as my sister's first name. My mother's two middle names are Catherine and Cora. I am Linda Catherine. I chose Cora for my sister's second name and in honor of my Welsh dad I chose the Welsh name Ceri as her third middle name. While sitting by the grave in Cardiff in May, my sister became Ceri to me.

Despite fears of flight disruptions because Covid I knew that I had to go. I became the first person in my sister's family to be able to visit her grave in 75 years.

On May 1, 2022, I flew from Toronto airport into Heathrow, immediately took a train to Cardiff and booked into my hotel in the city centre.

I stayed two weeks and spent each afternoon at the cemetery. I began to garden to add to the cement plant holder I had brought with me filled with artificial pink and white

roses for my sister. Over two weeks I bought both real and artificial flowers to build a visible grave for my sister and David - the only other Found child in her plot born a year and a half later whose broken cross lay on top of the grave - and all the others.

As expected, the trip was difficult, sad, and necessary. My parents died in 2012 and 2016 without ever knowing where their child was buried. I know that there are many who belong to this organization who know exactly what I am talking about.

As I sat at the grave each day and took a break with my mug of coffee after gardening, I cried and spoke to my sister. I felt that my mother's powerful feelings of repressed grief and my own grief were coming up, through me and finally being expressed.

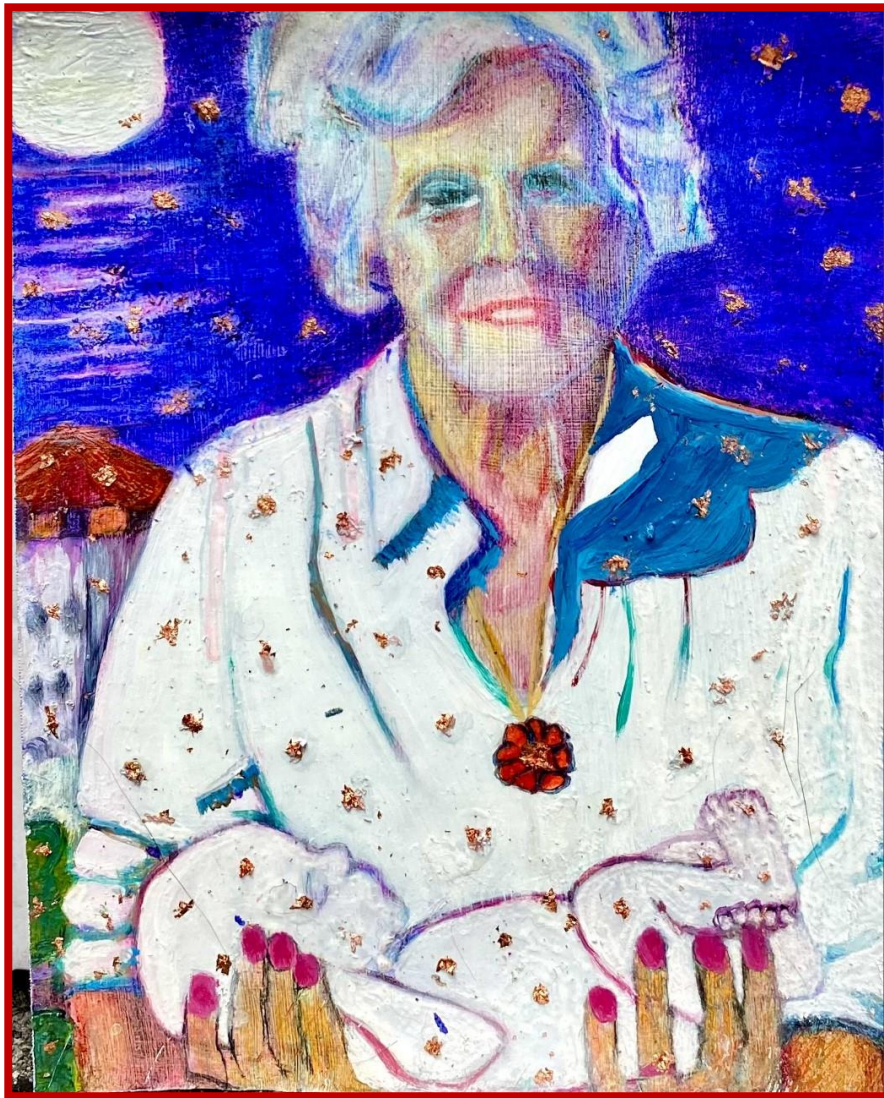
For I realized later in my life that I had tried to take on my mother's grief and that I also as the subsequent child had been affected by her grief over the loss of her first child and the terrible way that she and my dad along with tens of thousands of others were treated.

I am 70 now. My sister would be seventy-five. I am retired from working life and one of the things I began to do was paint.

Before my trip to Cardiff in May I had started a series of what would be four portraits of my parents that centered on my mother. I was thinking of her a great deal as I thought about the trip coming up.

When I got home to Canada and began the fourth and final painting, which you see in this newsletter, I decided I needed to incorporate my mother holding her stillborn daughter. As many of you will know, she never saw her child, never held her, and when my parents asked where their child was buried, they were stonewalled. Like all the others, eventually they gave up.

At my sister's grave I realized that it was probably part of some great plan that it would be me that would come to visit her. I don't believe my parents could've stood at that spot, quite lovely on the surface, knowing what had happened to their child and knowing it was not what they would have chosen for her.



Holding Her, At Last, forever"
9x12" Mixed Media
Oil, oil pastel, pencil, copper leaf
Painted by Linda Jones