

Nobumi, Mai, Maho's friends and colleagues, family friends – everyone here today.

It is truly an honour for me to say a few words as we bid Maho goodbye. It is of course a time of immense sadness for all of us as we contemplate our premature loss: our hearts are heavy and undoubtedly we carry regrets. But we are here to celebrate Maho's life and the amazing person she was. To capture her wonderful spirit and spend some time reflecting on what a truly special person she was and how privileged we all are to have had her in our lives and to have been part of hers.

Maho was born in Toyota, Japan, but most certainly did not come off a production line – she was definitely one in a million. Her name Maho means true sailing and she navigated the ups and down of her life with joy and positivity, with resilience, empathy, gratitude and humour. As a small girl she was strong and determined, she was inquisitive, and loved playing outdoors exploring nature. Maho was popular with her friends – and although she usually knew which game she wanted play, Maho's mother Nobumi told me, she was the one who listened to everyone, balanced views and facilitated compromises so play went smoothly and everyone was happy! All these characteristics noted by Nobumi in

Maho's early years are well-recognised by those of us who came to know her later.

When Maho was 9 years old, she came to the UK. Nobumi was a teacher whose interest in the Steiner philosophy led her to train at their College in Forest Row and Maho became a pupil at the Michael Hall School. In this environment Maho's natural curiosity, creativity and empathy really flourished. After just one year in Sussex, Maho declared to her mother that she would not be returning to Japan, nor would she go to a Japanese school in the UK! Her life would be in the UK – and so it was.

She quickly learnt English and took up the violin – Maho's love of music permeated her life. Her eclectic taste in music embodied her inquisitiveness, her open-minded attitude, her adventurous willingness to try new things and her undoubted ability to connect with others. Maho actually toyed with the idea of going to music college after leaving school, but in the end chose science while her passion for music thrived alongside.

Maho went to University in Swansea where she studied Biochemistry. Here she discovered research which she loved. She discovered bacteria and the things they could do, good and bad, and this took her to

Nottingham for a Masters degree in Microbiology and Immunology before securing a PhD studentship with Professor Ruth Massey at the University of Bath.

It is easy at this point to focus on her academic achievements of which there are many - a first class honours degree, Merit for her MSc, a PhD and her research was published in top international journals. Maho was bright in every sense of the word. But there was so much more to Maho than this, and counting these countable achievements does not reflect the full measure of a life, her life.

Maho had a remarkable knack for nurturing enduring deep friendship – her realness, her warmth, kindness and sense of fun. Everyone remembers the first time they met Maho. How welcoming she was, for example, to new PhD students joining our department, and this translated into lifelong loyal, generous friendship.

‘Maho often would bring little gifts when we met’, said Diana, a close friend of Maho’s here in Brighton, ‘not on any special day, only because she had them and she thought of me. Little treats from Japan, a new tea she liked - you never knew what was going to be inside that paper bag but it was always thoughtful’.

It was during her PhD that Maho was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension, a serious condition that had crept up on her silently.

However, she bore this illness quietly with great courage. Maho was appreciative of all the good things in her life and resolved to pack more and more in, never letting the inconvenience of her condition or its treatment get in the way. She would say often “I’m grateful” – and this was ‘striking to those friends who knew she was going through a hard time, harder than most people they knew. She was grateful for those things that seem small but aren’t. “I’m grateful that I can work from home, that the sun is out, that my mum can come”....’

Her strong spirit and her grace carried her through her illness such that those around her knew little about it, so light she made of it. There was no point in hating it, she decided, as it was part of her and that would mean hating herself. Maho set a trend with her bum-bag – forget about the infusion pump it housed that was keeping her alive – it was a highly practical addition to her wardrobe where she could also keep her ID card, lab-timer and phone. Soon others were following her fashion in Bath, then Brighton!

Maho took inspiration from Stephen Hawking. One of her favourite quotes was from him - ‘However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at – it matters that you don’t just give up’. Maho was hugely successful in so many ways and she never, ever gave up.

On a more personal note, I have come to know Maho's mother Nobumi over the last few weeks and seen with my own eyes and felt the power of the love between her and Maho and her devotion to Maho. Although drenched in sorrow and grief right now, she has taken great comfort from the 'silver-linings' she has encountered through the friendship and support she has been offered from people from all parts of Maho's life, that connect her to Maho.

She has a message for you, Maho:

Waiting at the airport, crying feeling so very sad, trying to get to England from Japan after the phone call she dreaded, Nobumi was with a friend who had lost her husband, brother and father in less than a year, 'Don't worry', the friend said, 'we will be going soon ourselves and see them again then'. 'Be patient Maho', Nobumi says, 'wait for me, I will see you soon'.

Maho – we will never forget you, your 'wicked head-back, table-slapping laughter', your brilliant smile on your beautiful face that could melt any heart.

You live forever in the memory of the love you have shared.

Melanie Newport (2nd May 2023)