

## BETSY MERRY

*“Life is too short not to do things beautifully.”*

That wasn't something Betsy Merry simply said. It is how she lived each day.

Betsy succumbed to acute myeloid leukemia on May 23. But not before leaving an indelible mark on the North Shore and beyond.

Betsy was one of Salem's most respected community leaders.

Starting her professional life as a special education teacher at Salem High School and then transitioning into the residential real estate business, she developed a distinguished reputation as a trailblazer.

Her authenticity and commitment to her work built an unmatched level of trust with her clients. As a mentor and role model for aspiring women in business, her influence was enormous.

Dan Fox, her business partner for 14 years with MerryFox Realty, says Betsy exuded confidence and could capture a room with grace and competence.

“Betsy had an ability to make people feel confident in their own decisions,” Dan says.

“She was the best at what she did — by far the best real estate broker around,” Dan adds. “Her success was contagious and people were naturally drawn to her.”

Betsy’s kindness and generosity to causes and people in need was unparalleled, too.

Through her work on countless civic projects, with charitable organizations and with community institutions, she epitomized the attributes of selfless service.

She gave of her time and talents to the Salem YMCA, the Salem Partnership, Salem Pantry, Historic Salem, the Peabody Essex Museum, Immaculate Conception Church and Catholic Charities, among other organizations.

The Chamber was honored to have Betsy as part of the Steering Committee that launched its Thrive initiative last year. Betsy believed strongly in Thrive’s mission to empower women — both professionally and personally — at every stage of career.

Betsy’s family says the tragic loss of her father in a train crash at the age of 4 instilled a drive within her. Her mother’s ensuing struggle to provide for her children as a single parent fueled Betsy’s resilience, hard work and relentless determination.

“She always thought of others before she thought of herself,” her family says.

Her business success, volunteer work and philanthropy brought numerous awards over the years — including the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Yankee Clipper Council, Boy Scouts of America; the Citizen of the Year Award from the City of Salem; and numerous Realtor recognition.

I was pleased to nominate Betsy for the Commonwealth Heroine Award earlier this year, and had the honor of presenting it to Betsy's husband and son posthumously in June.

Nothing was more precious to Betsy than her family. She shared 45 years of marriage and adventure with her husband, Peter. She was the devoted mother of son, Ian, and daughter, Kate Walters, and her husband, Chris. Perhaps her favorite role was that of “Gigi” to grandchildren Peter, Rosemary and Eve.

At home, Betsy was a consummate chef who enjoyed hosting dinner parties with her vast network of friends, her family says. She tended her beautiful gardens and created exquisite floral arrangements. Every holiday and special occasion was cause for celebration, and Betsy could always be found beautifully dressed and radiating warmth, kindness and positivity.

How would Betsy like to be remembered? Dan Fox believes Betsy would want to be thought of as someone who worked hard, loved her family, volunteered her time and never let anyone get in the way of accomplishing her goals.

Betsy's family says they will honor her life by upholding her legacy — to be bold, be bright and to always be our best.

Kate Merry Walters says her mother opened doors for women and led by example. She taught Kate the importance of developing a career to support herself independently, and then how to balance a career and family gracefully. Kate says she will now pass those values on to her own daughters.

I personally had the privilege of working with Betsy on a number of projects and initiatives and was happy to nominate her for one of this year's Diamond Awards.

Betsy was an extraordinary woman who was responsible for making positive changes in many people's lives. She will continue to be missed in innumerable ways.