

BORN TOO SOON

FORE WORD

Every one of us, yes, I mean all human life is chance; the male and female who produce a child make yet another unique human, so it is inevitable a proportion of the miracle is not perfect.

This is why I write a little about my two humans that made me. Mum and Dad who loved me very much, and helped me to be the best I hope I have been.

As a very ordinary person my life will probably not be very interesting but it illustrates how things were and future generations may find comparisons thought-provoking. However due to my disability, I use that word because any malfunction for anyone causes a restriction in some way or another, I know some people do great things in spite of their handicap.

Shelley my daughter says I should let some things pass by, that affected me far more than would appear in my memoirs, but that is not how memory works for me, although the difficult times are not forgotten, it is the good times that come to mind naturally. It is the best time of my life, because, once we retire, we are all equal, there is no hierarchy. As I grew older unlike my colleges at the bank, I could not apply for promotion, and I felt inferior which I do not suppose any one ever gave a thought to. Now I have that off my chest.

MY MOTHER



At the turn of the 20th century a child born out of wedlock was still frowned upon, and I believe after some recent information and working out for myself, my dear Mum must have been “born on the wrong side of the blanket” as they used to say.

In 1915 Brenda Hedvic my mother, was born to Elsie Anderson, at 179 Cromwell Road Hounslow Middlesex. At the age of two, Captain Anderson, Elsie’s husband left the marital home and it would appear another Captain, Captain Newel lodged with them and remained there, along with Grandpa Anderson who obviously protected her from the truth. Mother had a sister Zena, who was seven years older than her, it would appear she was sent to stay with aunts who lived at Ripley Surrey, which in those days was out in the country. She hated it and resented being sent away in favour of a little sister, and throughout the whole of their lives bore a grudge and poor Mum never knew why and neither did we. It is obvious now that the lodger Fathered Brenda, sister Zena learned this fact at some point, but despite her harsh behaviour towards Mum, she never told her. For that I thank Zena, because my Mum was such a soft gentle person, it would have upset her rose tinted view of life. The thing that imprints the fact that the man we all called Captain was my grandpa was many years later when I was five, Captain became seriously ill in hospital, and I was taken to see him. In those days only family were allowed to see the patient and only children could visit if the relative was dying and asked to see them.

In spite of her start in life, Mum had a pretty good young life, she spent many hours watching Grandpa Anderson working at his

tailoring business, he was what was known as a master tailor and made suits for the local gentry. The Anderson side of the family were Swedish and I know there was a military background, I was taken to visit an uncle Par and two aunts of Mum's who lived in the garrison town of Aldershot.

I think it was her grandpa who encouraged her to take up dancing. She not only loved it but when she was old enough, she taught it, much to her older sister's annoyance, as she was allowed to use the front parlour and would be heard counting '5678' and the piano, the only means of accompaniment in those days. Mum was a fun-loving person, but by today's standards very naive. She joined the Penguin Swimming Club; she took singing lessons and sang with Ronnie Hilton, who went on to become well known later. When she was a teenager, she entered a competition with a friend for the Daily Mirror Eight, a dance troop, but when her friend was turned down because she had a withered hand, Mum walked out.

When she left school where I believe she did quite well, especially at art, she asked her mother if she could go on the stage, she was allowed to go on one condition laid down by her mother which was to keep her warm knickers under those frilly ones. When young girls went on the stage in those days, they had a Matron to keep a watchful eye on them. When she returned home, she got a typing job at Park Davis manufacturing chemist situated on Hounslow Heath. Shorthand and typing was a very common subject taken at evening classes by young women around that period. Mum had one or two boyfriends, one when she was quite young named Charles Hawtrey who also went on to become well known especially in the Carry-On films. For those too young to know about them, they were very popular English comedies, she nearly became engaged to the son of the local laundry owner but it would appear to have fallen through for

some reason and she fell in love with Sydney Philip Nunn who worked in the maintenance department. He was very shy and the other girls in the office dared mum to chat him up.

We all know the rest.

A little trivia that could have changed both of their futures and I may never have existed. After meeting several times when cycling to work, Dad from Wimbledon and Mum from her home, Dad finally asked her if she would like to go the pictures, they arranged to meet by the shoe shop outside the Railway Station, I believe it was Ealing Broadway. They both arrived on time, one outside a shoe shop on one side of the station the other outside a shoe shop on the other side, they both waited and then on giving up they bumped in to each other when walking away. Obviously was meant to be!

MY FATHER



It is quite difficult to know where to start with my father's background. I know he was brought up on a farm in Feltham, Middlesex along with his brother and two sisters. He was the youngest by 8 years, not much was said about those early days, except that they all worked very hard, so perhaps that is why his father eventually sold the farm and went in to an entirely different occupation running a café close to Wimbledon Station. In

those days these outer London areas were still very rural and there were very few cars. I am not sure how old dad would have been before he started his apprenticeship as a carpenter at Park Davis and Co at the age of 14.

They were certainly a musical family. Grandma Nunn told me how they used to all get together on Sunday after tea, Brother Fred on banjo, Sister Helen or Nellie as she was known playing Piano, Lillian or Lily as we all called her, on mandolin and Sidney played the violin. Apparently, he was getting on really well with this instrument but unfortunately, he lost the top joint of his middle finger on the circular saw at work. These days it would have probably been stitched back on. He did not continue playing the violin but he could always knock a tune out in his own inventive style on the piano at any family occasion.

Dad was surrounded by many relations. It was the norm in the late 19th century and even into the early 20th century, when his mother was a young woman, to have a large family.

Just a little about what I know of the earlier life of Grandma Nunn. Her husband died before my parents married. Because Grandad Nunn had no insurances or presumably did not own the property they were living in, she had to leave the café and for the rest of her life she lived with one relative or another. I do know my father was buying his parents a house at the time of his father's death and Grandma said she did not want dad to give it up. More about that later, it was not until many, many years later that the council rented her a little bungalow in Hanworth, I believe people had to wait just as long if not longer to be allocated a property. And there were no social services or income support in those days.

I remember quite a few of Henrietta's relations, that's Grandma's name, Hettie for short. There was Lottie, presumably Charlotte, Annabel and Alice her three sisters. Some of their children were Queenie, Dolly and Winnie. All names that conjure up an era! Funny, I cannot remember any of the boy's names. Strange as I know there were a few. I suppose they would have been classified as working class in those days and certainly Grandma Nunn worked hard all her life cleaning to earn a few shillings and always doing her share wherever she was living. She played quite a large part in my life as I was growing up, she was the one who taught me to knit and I am so grateful for that.



I wish I had asked her more about her parents and grandparents, it could have been possible to learn about the family back as far as the early 19th century, but we do not think of such things when we are young. In fact, we never think about getting older, or how interesting it might be to know our family history.

Back to dad:

After he served his apprenticeship which lasted seven years, he earned enough to afford his first car. It was a three wheeled Morgan which was quite sporty for the day, with a folding back roof rather like the hood of a pram, if you remember what one of those looked like? He obviously took his family out, especially his sister Lily as she was unable to walk, they said it was due to the kneeling on stone steps while scrubbing them but the way I remember her, the size of a doll with fingers curled up, I do not think that would be the diagnosis today. While I am on the subject of my Auntie Lily, I only ever knew her married to Uncle Roland or Rolie as we all called him. He worked at the Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish factory situated on the Great West Road not far from their home which was in Lime Tree Road, Hounslow. Auntie must have been taken off her feet gradually as she brought up two sons, Leslie the eldest and Stanley who was always known as Chub. Of course, I remember them well, although Chub never walked but for a totally different reason. He had a physically debilitating condition and died at the age of 21. I shall always remember him; he was such a happy boy and with his jokes and his ever-present drum kit he left us with happy memories even though his time was short. Looking back briefly to the life my aunt and Uncle lived it almost seems Dickensian. My Aunt was sat in a back room in their house situated at the end of a cul-de-sac, so she saw no one all day. When her husband came home at night, he would cook their mega meal. Except for the times when Grandma Nunn stayed, he sat at a wooden kitchen table while Lily ate hers in the sitting room on a tray. They barely spoke, and Uncle had to attend to all her personal needs with no help whatsoever. It was not until years later she was offered a home help. This was not like the care assistants of today, they only did domestic duties. I remember holding on to the side of a big bath

chair with Uncle pushing her out for occasional walks and that seemed to be their life and yet in a strange way certainly Uncle must have missed her or perhaps it was the everlasting routine caused him to pass away just one month after his wife's death. She lived to be 61 even though she was practically a skeleton. It has to be mentioned here however that she created some wonderful smocking and needlework in spite of her disabilities. I always remember her favourite artist was Liberace and she liked me doing her hair. Like the others in dad's family, I knew she had a wicked sense of humour which obviously had an effect on me to remember so well.

A little about my other Aunt on my father's side. For the whole time I knew her she lived in what would be called today a town house although it was much larger than the modern ones. People did not seem to move house as frequently years ago, so 32 Denison Road, Lower Feltham, Middlesex was her home right up until she was unable to care for herself in her late eighties.

She was married to my favourite Uncle Con. Of course, his name was Cornelius but nobody called him that. He worked at Hovis which was then situated near Vauxhall Bridge in London. I won't say any more about them in this section as they figure quite prominently in my early life.

With regard to Uncle Fred, I will tell what little there is to tell now. I saw very little of him not because he lived miles away, in fact he lived just around the corner from Aunt Lily but he never visited her, I do not know why. He was married to Florence. They made me welcome on the rare occasions Grandma Nunn took me to visit. Looking back, it would appear they led a very private life, they were always going to places when Fred retired but apparently, he developed crippling arthritis, he died just after his retirement.

My mother and father had no more to do with him after their wedding as he agreed to be their best man but after all arrangements were made, he said they should not have wed so soon after the death of their father who died in February. The June date was kept with full agreement by their mother who said it made sense to live in the house dad had bought for them. However, apparently Fred was a rotten best man, not hiding his feelings. Mum told me she was holding the bottom tier of their wedding cake when they were leaving and she nearly pushed it in his face! To my knowledge they never had any more to do with them. In those days you were supposed to be in mourning for six months, just think if it had been today the situation would not have arisen.

Anyway, Brenda Hedvic Anderson married Sidney Philip Nunn on June 1st 1936; I think the service took place in St Stephens Church Hounslow.

They took up residence at 32 Rosslyn Ave, Feltham, Middlesex, where they remained for the next 36 years.



SAME HOUSE 50 YEARS LATER

MY EARLY YEARS

I dedicate this section to my parents and I am sure you will see why by the end of this part of the pocket history.

After 18 months of wedded bliss mum and dad faced parenthood with much elation as most young couples do. On a very foggy night in November a real "pea souper" as it was called, mum went in to labour so along with Grandma Nunn who was living with them at the time, dad drove to the Hospital very slowly, due to the weather conditions, Grandma with her head out of the window guiding the way. They finally reached the West Middlesex Hospital but there seemed to be no one about, so dad went down one corridor and Gran down another through doors at the end, only to come face to face with each other, their fit of giggles alerted a member of staff, and Mother was whisked away. There was no question of Husband or any other member of the family staying in those days so they had to struggle home in the fog. I was born the next day at about 6.30pm on the 13th with the most minimum of fuss so I was told, good timing as dad did not miss his regular Saturday visit to his local football team (Brentford). The nurses all loved me because I had such fair skin, they called me a princess especially when I was dressed in the layette, the long gown bonnet and booties etc. made for me by my mother to take me home from the hospital. It used to be a big occasion when a mother left hospital after 10 to 14 days; a nurse carried baby off the premises and said their goodbyes. Shortly after my birth mum was put in to a side ward but did not think anything of it at the time, the Doctors said nothing, but on looking back much later, my mother said they must have been aware that there was something which was not quite right.

Everything was fine for the first three months, I was given the usual vaccinations after which I started to develop baby eczema in the crook of my arms and the back of my knees, as it was discovered later that I was allergic to animals, I shall always believe the vaccination had something to do with the onset of this

chronic condition, no one has ever denied my theory and any way what would be the point?

At about the same time it seemed I was not appearing to take notice of objects and my eyes were not settling down as babies' eyes usually do by about three months old. So, mum and dad were just a little concerned and mum mentioned to our good next door neighbour Mrs Elizabeth Fish, here after called Auntie Lizzie. Mum said it was as if Auntie Lizzie suspected there could be something wrong, but keeping her thoughts to herself, she offered to go to the Doctors with her.

Our family Doctor who she took me to, was an elderly man called Dr. Hepburn, (in those days there were no group practises) he had a gruff voice but a gentle manner. I can say this because I do remember him slightly from when I was a little older. Mum told me he took a look at me and said "Oh, a little Albino" Mother went home not really knowing what he meant, so she looked up in the dictionary what she thought he had said and confused it with the word Armenian, but knew that could not be right, on reading the meaning. What we have to remember is that the average person was far less informed than we are today. After further visits to the Doctor, it was explained to mum and dad that the word meant lack of pigment which also affected the eyes, subsequently allowing too much light in to the pupil causing weakness, and nystagmus.

They were as devastated as any parent would be when they are told there is something wrong with their baby and while tests were being carried out to see whether I had any vision at all, it must have been very hard for both of them. Apparently, dad was unable to speak during the whole week until the results showed there was some sight in both eyes, although they could not tell how much at that stage. I was referred to Great Ormond Street Hospital, which even then was the top children's hospital. I cannot help thinking it might have been better to have been sent to an eye hospital. I was seen by a Doctor Logan-Adams whom

I believe was a female, she referred me to an ex-naval surgeon who suggested tattooing the iris to cut out some of the light which he said would help the vision and darkening the eye would be cosmetically beneficial. So, my parents being guided by them agreed to the operations taking place. They would start when I was six months old, and took place over the next six months, four operations in all, tattooing half the iris at a time. On each occasion my mother stayed in the hospital as I was still being breast fed, generally babies were breast fed much longer. The only advice they were given was to get me out in to as much fresh air as possible, so my parents bless them brought a tent and took off to the coast every weekend. I am sure it had no affect one way or the other to the results of the op. Apparently, I did contract pneumonia when I was one year old; lying like a limp rag but by the end of one week jumping up and down in my cot as if nothing had been wrong.



The Doctor said I had a good constitution, so perhaps those weekends away did help. It must have been so hard for my parents, financially as well as emotionally for there was no National Health Service at that time, so everything had to be paid from dad's wages. He joined the HSA and remained a member right up until he died. Another thing I must mention here, my mother was superstitious, as many people were. A few days before I was born, she looked out of the window at night and there was an owl sitting on their fence, its eyes shining in the dark. She said afterwards it was an omen. Of course, I was far from the embryonic stage by then but common sense does not enter in to it and mum always hated owls from then onward. Quite illogical I know but knowing mother as I obviously did

eventually, she was the sort of person who wanted, and sometimes did see life through “rose tinted glasses” so it seems such a shame she did not have the perfect baby she had dreamed of. This did not deter her however from doing her best for me, as time will show and for this, I truly am grateful.



ME AND MY COUSIN MICHEAL

From two years of age onwards I can relate many things I was told, and from about the age of three little things I actually remember, probably with a little help from family chit chat. My parents had a lot to understand and deal with in my early years, so you see why I thank them posthumously.

Moving on...



The early years cross over slightly with the early war years, as I have a few little memories which do not relate to the war, such as our holidays as I was growing up.

MORE HOLIDAYS OVER THE YEARS

I also remember when mum made my first tutu. I must have been just two or three years old and yet I can remember standing on the gold-coloured table cloth which was made of chenille which was a popular material at that time, as was shantung silk, astrakhan and horrocks cotton, which in my opinion was much nicer than the cotton of today. It was crisp with a slight sheen and came in lovely prints.

Back to my life..... I was lifted down and given some money to give to carol singers who were at the door. They asked me if I was the fairy off of the Christmas tree. Lots of memories are of outfits my mother made for me, such as a little blue silk dress with pink bows on the front, a green coat and leggings not stretch ones, there was no stretch material then, so they had to have short zips at the ankles in order to get them on. I wore a mauve knitted pixie hat and matching gloves, regarding pixie hats, mum said she was the first one to design one of these, and that someone must have seen it as they became all the rage for little girls. She also maintained that she was first to make little dresses with cap sleeves, whether this is true I don't know but she said if she had had a business-like mind, she may have made some money out of her designs, who knows?

LEMON ORGANDY



I was a bridesmaid at this age, or at least I thought I was, the skirt had panels of two different designs of self-coloured embroidery on the material, the photo does not do it justice.

Enough of clothing for the time being, although it will crop up quite a bit during my formative years as it seems to play quite a large part in my memories of that time. I have so much to thank my parents for, as from a very early age I was taken to join in with other children including taking me to ballet classes. My eyes must have been a problem though, as I can remember one incident when we were being told to do "petit jete" to the front and I did not see exactly what Miss Hetty the teacher was doing and I insisted on doing them to the back, dancers will know what I mean.

I did achieve my first exam and still have the certificate somewhere; she even took me to London, to St. James Street to be precise, for other dance classes. I can remember wearing blue tunics with matching knickers but the only thing I can recall doing is head over heels on a mat. I became quite good at chest rolls and back bends picking up a handkerchief with my teeth. Poor mum, I could not become the little dancer I am sure she would have liked me to be. When I was a little older three other girls Pat Russell, Joan Anderton, Erica Coats and I were taken around to entertain various groups, we were called "the Four Dinky's". I can actually remember dancing at a prisoner of war camp, and the men whooping and cheering and mum or someone saying they were only ordinary men and had to be cheered up. Of course, there were other entertainers including a beautiful blonde child named Margaret Cooper, who always sang and danced. It was said she was the daughter of one of the Gypsies who ran the local fair but I have always been confused about this, for if that were the case they would have been moving on. On one occasion Margaret was ill and I was asked to step in as I knew all the songs. I have always seemed to be able to remember the words of songs. Any way she allowed me one moment of glory and I cannot have been too bad as back stage they thought I was her. I will always remember that song.

*"I'm sitting on a cloud that's silver lined,
and feeling in a joyful frame of mind,
And through the blue,
I see a view,
A lovely world where dreams come
true,
I'm living in a dream the whole day long,
And singing to myself a cheer up song,
That's all I want to do,
Go sitting on a cloud with you."*



I always loved singing, and making up stories, my imagination was quite crazy, but maybe it was normal for a child. My imaginary friends were called Cushion and Stamp, I know, how silly can you get? That is not all, I had a friend and neighbour called Cherry Savoury we both had the measles at the same time, so after that we had a mutual imaginary friend named Measles. Cherry and I spent a lot of time together, she only came to live with her auntie Lizzie who incidentally I loved and I affectionately called her "auntie" too. Cherry was living there because Dagenham and London were badly bombed. Cherry and I became great friends, she was just 3 days younger than me, and we played together all the time. I wonder if any one might have an idea of her or maybe you are a relative. I would love to hear from you or her.



ME AND MY FRIEND CHERRY

The Drake family lived on the other side of us, mother and father, their children Dorothy and Freddie and a grandma who came around every day and was like a witch and was always shouting at Dorothy and forbidding her to play with us. Dorothy was so frightened of her she finished up having a form of fits which us kids could not understand. I did learn from mum after I was married that she had left home, had completely recovered and married a sailor in Portsmouth. Mum did persuade her mother to let her take part in the pantomime she put on for the victory celebrations. I can always remember mum dressing her up in a gold satin leotard and dyed muslin wings tied to her wrists it made the child so happy for a little while. I remember being taken to a Pantomime for a number of years at Chiswick Empire which is long gone, as is the famous Dame, Clarkson Rose; Forgive me if spelt incorrectly. We always had front row seats and I chatted to the people in the orchestra before the show, I have always loved chatting.

I must have been away at school by the end of the war, as I cannot remember all the rehearsals for the panto which incidentally was Little Red Riding Hood. Mum trained up all the kids in the street who had no experience what so ever on the stage, the mums dyed yards and yards of butter muslin, which was all they could get. As well as putting on the show mum made most of the costumes, dad said that everyone was amazed how wonderful it was and what a good job she had done. I was given a small part as the fairy, I can remember my first line even now, coming on stage left with that step where you jump forward kicking your leg up at the back and with a wave of my wand saying, "Away wicked wolf thou shalt not harm Red Riding Hood for her money or charm".



ONE OF MY PARTY FROCKS

Apart from the obvious things relating to the war, it is hard to differentiate just exactly when some things happened, like when I had my rabbits, the first one was brown and was called Betty, goodness knows why, it cannot have been named after the pudding "Brown Betty" as I had never heard of it at that time. I had several other rabbits over a period of time, a grey one which for some reason we kept in an old very deep wheelbarrow which my father had made. It was not like a conventional wheelbarrow, as it had a flat bottom and straight sides, it was laid on its side and chicken wire stretched across the opening, the rabbit kept burrowing out, and I was told it was a wild rabbit. After the wild rabbit escaped, dad brought home a couple of black rabbits from work, one had one eye and the other was half paralysed, coming from a medical laboratory what more could I expect? I loved them but now I look back I find the whole thing abhorrent. I continued to have quite bad asthma and eczema and probably should not have had the rabbits but I suppose I pestered my parents as kids do and I think I could be quite strong willed. The treatment for these conditions was coal tar ointment and bandages, and goodness knows what for the asthma, when I think of the treatments there are today, I wonder how sufferers survived.

I was very lucky because although there was a war on throughout my early years, I was never short of toys as most children were. My father spent many hours in his shed making toys, he made me a cot for my dolls, a round pink table with four little wooden arm chairs and a beautiful dolls house to name a few. My Mother with her needle skills made clothes and blankets for my dolls.



I can remember the smell of the glue pot heating on the oil stove in his shed. I wanted to make a toy one day, so dad cut out a wooden duck with his jig saw and helped me mount it on a block with wheels and after drilling a hole for a string to pull it along, I was so proud of it. Dad made toys so the neighbours could give their kids something for Christmas, trucks of bricks, red buses, toy wheelbarrows, to name a few even the clogs I am wearing in this picture here.

I also had a three-wheel bicycle which I apparently used to pedal at great speed, not seeing anyone in my way and swerving at the last minute. I must have terrorised the neighbours but I never actually crashed into anyone. I was always surrounded with other children, whether it was me or my toys that were the attraction I will never know. The only thing I can say, looking back, is I have always been lucky enough to have lots of friends. My first little boyfriend was Peter Richards who came with his mother to visit us in the school holidays, I think they lived in Ealing but I am not sure. Anyway, we fell out because I beat him when we raced to the top of my road. Do you know I can even remember the dress I was wearing that day, a flowery cotton in

pastel shades, and yes you guessed the ever-popular rickrack braid, I think I called it rickrack the last time I mentioned it, someone will know which is correct!

A friend I played with a lot was Janet Smith who had an older sister Doreen. They lived about four doors down. Janet tried to sit my doll with the china head on my three-wheel bike and promptly let go allowing it to crash in to pieces, I cried lots and I imagine I must have lashed out at her. That last incident reminded me of another concerning a doll and with much longer lasting effect. I was about eight with my new front tooth when I fell down the stairs with my doll in my arms and broke my top front tooth. The quite large gap remained like that until I was in my forties, when a modern method of capping made it look as good as new.

I think I was quite a normal child, I cried when other kids were told off, I liked making camps in the back garden, we could play in the street in those days as there was very little traffic then. The milk and coal were still brought on the back of a horse and cart. Some of the games we played across the street were "skipping with two of us turning a rope," "what's the time Mr. wolf" and a game where we crossed the road taking all kinds of steps such as Giant steps and Pigeon steps, to name a couple, and Hopscotch which was drawn on the pavement. I do not remember how to play them but I do remember avoiding broken paving stones. I can't say I know paths like that in Peacehaven. I only mention the last paragraph because I never seemed to be left out, despite the fact that I obviously looked quite odd, with white hair, platinum blonde as it was later called.



I ALWAYS GOT CAUGHT BECAUSE OF MY BLOND HAIR

People were more diplomatic as I grew up. I also had a cast in both eyes, which was not corrected until I was thirteen. However, I have to thank my mum for religiously curling my hair with curling tongs, otherwise my hair would have been dead straight. Mind you, all mums wanted their little girls to look like Shirley Temple in those days. I had tinted glasses but I hated wearing them and was always taking them off.

I am going to try to explain as accurately as I can something that has been with me as far back as I can remember, “thinking in colour!!” I have always thought that no one else did this. I have asked people from time to time and never found anyone else like me. I was so pleased to hear a programme on the radio recently about this, it even has a name: Synaesthesia. A lady spoke of her colour association with words but they were nothing like mine. The colours I see have never changed, none of them are positive colours but are like looking through a misty atmosphere, or a bit like in a dream, this is the best way I can describe them. I will write down what I see when I think of letters, numbers, days of the week and months of the year. These colours never change, so any one could ask me at any time and they would always be the same.

A	WHITE	1	light black
B	EMERALD	2	primrose
C	YELLOW	3	grey
D	ORANGE	4	yellow
E	PINK/BEIGE	5	pale green
F	LAVENDER	6	red
G	GREY/BLUE	7	dark orange
H	YELLOW	8	green
I	WHITE	9	dark grey
J	CREAM	0	transparent
K	NAVY BLUE		
L	CREAM		
M	MOSSGREEN		
N	NAVY BLUE		
O	SILVER		
P	PALE GREEN		
Q	LAVENDER		
R	DARK GREEN		
S	ORANGE		
T	RED		
U	LIGHT GREY		
V	PURPLE		
W	EMERALD/GREEN		
X	GOLD		
Y	BROWN		
Z	NAVY		

As you will see by the next set of colours, many of them are similar, I really cannot say why; I would love there to be a reason but I am sure it is me being odd!

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
Creamy	Lavender	Moss green	Emerald	Dark green

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
Yellow	Cream	Navy Blue	Faded white	Orange

NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Dark blue	Opaque

It was not until quite recently I happened to be listening to the radio and learnt that I was not the only one seeing colour when thinking of certain things, and that it has a name (Synaesthesia) I will interrupt my life with information for anyone who knows a little about this pheromone. No two people see the same things in colour or indeed more the same colours as others, so for those who have not heard of this strange phenomenon I have included an explanation here, if you know all about it just skip this piece?

Synaesthesia is a neurological trait or condition that results in a joining or merging of senses that aren't normally connected. The stimulation of one sense causes an involuntary reaction in one or more of the other senses. For example, someone with synaesthesia may hear colour or see sound.

People with synaesthesia related to music may also have perfect pitch because their ability to see/hear colours aid's them in identifying notes or keys. The colours triggered by certain sounds, and any other synesthetic visual experiences, are referred to as photosynthesis.

Grapheme-Colour Synaesthesia is a neurological phenomenon of seeing letters and numbers in colours. Graphemes such as letter "A" or number 3 elicit the perception of colour. This colour does not usually change over time.

Remember I have seen Letters, Numbers, Days of the week, and Months of the year in colour, and until a few years ago I told no one in case it made me odd, until I heard a programme on the radio, talking about this and giving it a name.

I am intrigued to find out how common this condition is and does it indicate any particular trait.

Is there anyone out there, either with the same condition or knows more about it?

Something has triggered off my thoughts about my exposure to religion during childhood. My parents did not attend church but mum used to read to me little pieces from the bible at bed time for quite a while, which must have been before I went away to school and maybe in the holidays, we always had lovely holidays and I have very fond memories.



Me on a bike
On a caravan holiday



Me and my mum at
Ventnor Isle of Wight



ANOTHER COUPLE OF HOLIDAYS

Before I went to Boarding school I felt very secure, snuggling in my bed at night under my green blanket, which became the hills and dales of my imagination. I remember being taken to Sunday school by a man who taught there, I do not recall anything we did but I do know it was a Tabernacle, just a small church in Bedfont, I wonder if it has survived? I doubt it. That was about the extent of my religious upbringing. At school of course assemblies were the norm for all children as was going to church on Sunday. One incident I have never forgotten was when I went with my friend Kathleen Philips to her church, not understanding at the time why the Nuns told her to take me out as I was not a Catholic, another example of how things have changed; I have not trusted Nuns since. Having said religion was not a big issue in our family, I was always encouraged to say my prayers and to say Grace, I cannot remember the one before a meal, or even if there was one, but after I had eaten, I sat sideways on my chair and had to say, "Thank you God for my food ...etc, etc, please may I get down."

FUNNY FAMILY SAYINGS and BEHAVIOUR

There are a few expressions I think were unique, anyway I have never heard them used by anyone else, other than my family.

When I was a little girl, my grandma used to try to encourage me to have a little rest with her after dinner, “never lunch in those days, unless you were gentry, and then it was luncheon” I digress, she would say, “let’s go and have 40 winks”

Do we wink in our sleep?

When we were rushing about in the house, Dad used to say “don’t kick up the Brussels” referring to the rugs on the floor. I wonder where that saying came from; the only theory I can think of is, mats used to be made by threading pieces of rag on to a canvas or sacking and knotting them together in clumps, which made them look a bit like Brussel tops. I wonder if there was another explanation?

Mum was the sort of gentle woman who welcomed everyone and anyone with an offer of a nice cup of tea. It was not so much sayings, I remember her for, more about innocent remarks.

A couple of examples;

Sitting in a car waiting to drive off in convoy to a family christening, mum looked in the car following us and then looked in front, saying, “Oh look, that lady’s hat is like Mrs. Wilson’s behind”!

There was the time when a neighbor’s husband died, mum wanted to offer her condolence but not go empty handed, so she made a selection from our green house and took it along, as Mrs. Nixon opened her door, mum said, “I’m sorry to hear you have lost your husband, would you like a cucumber”

She must have had a thing about cucumbers, for in a dress shop one day a lady came out of a changing room in a green sheath

dress, they were dresses which did not nip in at the waist and to no one in particular she asked how it looked? "You look just like a cucumber" says mum. The lady promptly took it off in disgust. Poor mum, we all know what she meant.

My favorite uncle Con, always used to repeat a silly little rhyme to me, it goes...

Little fly upon the wall,
Ain't you got no clothes at all?
Ain't you got no shimmy shirt?
Lummy aren't you cold.

It does not even rhyme and is there more? Who knows?

I remember when I was a little girl, calling on my friends to come out to play. Often their Father's would be in the kitchen, stripped to the waist having a wash and shave, no showers, even though bathrooms were customary in all homes by then. As the room was small and aptly called kitchenettes, I wonder why so little use was made of the bathroom. Bathing was still mostly a once a week affair, usually on a Friday night and mothers and daughter were told it was not good to bath at the end of the month as you might get a chill. How things have changed!

We also had a family 7 note whistle that my dad would do when looking for me (often!) and I would know it was him by the unique tune. If you have a keyboard, it's G, up to A, back to G,F,E,G, then middle C. I was always wondering off as kids do, so it was very handy for my parents. I can remember being at the seaside when Victory was announced, although I did not understand the magnitude of that evening. I was 8, we were at Bognor Regis.

I remember so much! Is this normal?

THE WAR IN FELTHAM

I gave this title some thought and the reason I chose it is because, apart from rare occasions, this suburb of outer London must have been quite a difficult area in which to be during the war. Situated on the fringe of where most of the bombs dropped, the occasional one that hit near home must have been unnerving.

It was a pleasant Sunday morning September 3rd, 1939 of course. I was still too young to remember anything of the early part of the war and from what I have been told for everyone in our avenue it all seemed unreal. Apparently dad was taking me to the park in the car, by the way the park was always known as the wreck in those days. An Air Raid Warden with his new found authority stepped out into the road flagged the car to stop, he jumped in and told dad to drive, after a couple of 100 yards down the road, he ordered dad to stop the car, he jumped out and then stood to attention on the pavement. Dad found this quite funny a bit like a gangster film. It seems everyone did quite bazaar things; a neighbour shut their Canary in the larder and frightened it to death.

Anyone who had a spare room had to take in a lodger. Our first one was Fred the soldier, he must have been waiting to be posted, as he was not with us very long. Long enough however to crash through the iron bedstead. Mum went rushing in to discover him with his legs in the air and nothing on but his socks, that sets the pattern of how mum used to be always dashing everywhere.

We used all three types of air raid shelters, the first one was built down the middle of our road, made of concrete with a door at one end and benches along each side. Very basic, but most people were glad of them at first as they had nowhere else to go.

The roads were very quiet as there were still very few vehicles and cars for private use were banned, so no more trips to the coast. I remember fairly well the other two types of shelters we had but not in which order they were. One was a Morrison shelter, which was a huge steel table that practically filled our dining room, we all slept under it; myself (presumably tucked up in one corner) mum and dad and when there was a siren the lodger, who by the way was a Welsh school teacher, had to join us. Her name was Margaret Jones, surprising name for a Welsh lady. She was very highly strung and one evening she was sitting at the "table" marking work, no biros in those days, one bottle of ink and a nib pen, siren sounds loud and haunting, bottle of ink all over table cloth. Just one incident of many but I got the impression she was thought of quite affectionately by my parents and after the war I remember visiting her home in Wales.

The other shelter we had was down the end of our garden, this type were called a Dug out or Anderson shelter, which is self-explanatory, it was quite a drop down in to it, so I would imagine dad must have had some form of digger to excavate this temporary dwelling. I do remember, the corrugated iron sheets on top were our camouflage. Although we had bunk beds in our Dug Out we only went down there during a raid. Our neighbours shared it with us, that is Auntie Lizzy, Uncle Tom, their daughter Kathleen and their niece Cherry who I mention in "The Early Years".

Just one little example of how ordinary folk made light of what must have been a frightening situation; we had a gate half way down the garden which was always kept open at night for easy access to the dugout. One night it was accidentally left closed, on the first note of the siren everyone duly ran down to the shelter, needless to say mum was first, with me in her arms. As everywhere was in complete darkness, lights not being allowed, she flopped over the gate and everyone piled on top, they all got the giggles; a sense of humour must have been a blessing during that time.

The only couple of incidents I actually remember about the bad side of war myself were my dad holding me up on his shoulders and trying to point out what must have been a Doodle Bug. Another time when I was about four, I was playing at the bottom of the garden,



A TYPICAL SUBURBAN
BACK GARDEN IN THE 40s & 50s

It was a lovely sunny day when a bomb struck quite close over the back a couple of streets away. Mum whisked me up and ran indoors, I was quite indignant and said "oh mummy don't make such a fuss" how differently we see things as a child. Sleeping on the bunks in the dugout was just an adventure to Cherry and I but to the adults it must have been a constant worry. Everyone knew each other and there was camaraderie between them, they made their own entertainment, whist drives and musical evenings being most popular. Some of those I do remember as it seems they each had their own particular party piece. Grandma donned a hat and cane and sang "The man who broke the bank at Monty Carlo". Uncle Tom sang "My old Dutch". For the benefit of anyone who has never heard of it goes something like this...

*"We've been together now for forty years,
And it don't seem a day too much,
There ain't a lady living in the land,
That I'd swap for me dear Old Dutch"*

My song was "Sweet little Alice blue gown". Mum and Uncle Con, who I have mentioned and will figure again in my middle years used to dance a comedy tango, he was always game for a laugh. Another thing they did was a "Wilson, Keppel and Betty" routine, which was the sand dance wearing a fez and white face make up and dead pan faces. Dad made a sand board. Uncle Con, Uncle Rolle and Dad were Wilson Keppel and Betty. Mum used to do the dance of the seven veils, they had a lot of fun.

I do not know how I came to be at Bognor Regis when victory was declared; I know Aunt Zena, Mum's sister, and cousin Michael were there but not our fathers. They would still have been on fire-watch duty as both were in a reserved occupation. My cousin and I were allowed to play on the beach and needless to say we wondered like kids do, no worry then for our safety. We joined in the cheering and singing round the bonfires, everyone was very happy. War was over and I was just eight years old so obviously school life for me was well under way, and therefore some things I remember about the early years and school days must overlap.

1945, and I was definitely home for the victory party, there were great celebrations, pianos were dragged into the street. Mr, Hales a neighbour who had an open back lorry spruced it up, as it was high enough to be used as a stage for entertainment. An upright piano was wheeled out which Mrs Chapman played. You are probably wondering how I remembering all these names, people knew most of their neighbours by name. Tables were placed in a line all along one side of the road and every one made as much as their rations would allow for food and drink. We all wore something red white and blue and had Union Jacks to wave. To us kids it was just a great party but to the grownups it must have been such a relief. That is about as much as I can recall regarding the war. I was too young for it to have any impact on me, except staying up late and playing outside, as the government decided to order double British summer time and I remember what seemed to be permanent blue skies.

One thing I have just remembered having written this chapter about four years ago. We also had a party in our garden before dad demolished his shed in order to build a garage, now that he could have a car again. He removed the whole of one side of the shed and as it was on a raised floor, it was used as a platform. Whether the party was for victory I do not know but any way it is a happy memory in my mind. We always had Birthday parties too.



When you are a child you are very lucky in many ways, you do not feel the hurt and your parents protect you, or you just do not understand enough for things to affect you in the way they do when you are an adult.



I LOVED MY SWING

I remember my mother telling someone about an occasion when she was waiting in a bus queue with me and someone said "Fancy dying her hair at that age". Knowing mum as I do, she would have been very upset by this. Ironically in today's society probably no one would take any notice. If TV and radio have done nothing else it has enlightened the man in the street far more than they ever were before.

MY SCHOOL DAYS

I stayed at Collegiate a local private school in 1942, until I was seven. I remember the uniform: brown gym slip, brown knickers with a pocket for your hanky, a brown blazer with a gold badge, cream blouses, brown and gold striped tie, a brown beret in the winter and a straw panama hat for summer. I even remember what the school was like, there were just two classrooms with a partition to separate the infants from the juniors I even remember the names of the only two teachers, Miss Eileen who taught us infants and Miss West who taught the older pupils. I must have learnt the alphabet there, for one day my mother and I were at a bus stop after school, when dressed in the posh school uniform I spoke quite loudly in my squeaky voice, 'what's S. H. I. T?' mum said, you mean ship, that was the extent of my learning to read and write. I was taken from there just as the war ended. I would imagine things were happening on my behalf of which I was unaware, for I remember one day being introduced to a man called Mr. Kingsby. He seemed a jolly man to me because he talked to me a lot. The only question I actually remember was, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" to which I replied, "a nurse". As I had only 3/60th vision and wore tinted glasses, I wonder what he made of that. I suppose he must have been some sort of school board/social worker and obviously sending me to a school for children with sight loss was discussed. This caused more upset for mum and dad, saying "I'm not having my daughter sent to any institution" but my mother realized the only way I might receive an education would be to go to the boarding school recommended, which was not too far away, at Sunningdale in Berkshire. I received the news

with great excitement, which might have made it easier for them as children can be so cruel.

Any way I think a great fuss was made of me when I was taken to my new school. Yes I would be sleeping there, I was told but it would soon be time for mummy and daddy to visit me.



Undeterred I was dressed in my best outfit which I still remember today, red polka dot dress which buttoned down the front and edged with, yes you've guessed it, white rick rack braid. I think it must have been mums favorite trimming, or maybe there was not much else to choose from. I digress, I wore a beige top coat, I can remember mum knitting the hat, a beige beret with red fairisle dogs all round it, I am sure there would have been gloves to match but I cannot recall those. I wore red bar shoes and immaculate white socks. I know this would have been so, as socks were always changed when grubby and when white shoes were worn, they were whitened every night, a bit different from trainers in the washing machine.

I was given a tuck parcel by Auntie Lizzy and we went on our way. On arrival at the school I can remember going in to a bathroom and I suppose I was changed in to some sort of school

uniform but I am blown if I can remember anything about the uniform at all, which I find very strange, since I recall so much of what I wore at an early age. What was imprinted in my mind was the first night at that school, there was a thunder storm and I woke up and wondered wherever I was and I wanted my mummy, which I guess was when it hit me that I was away from home.

The little I recall of my time at Dalton house which was the name of the School will not take too long to tell. To me it was a place where everything changed as far as I was concerned and for the first time some bad memories rear their head, like having to weed the terrace which surrounded three sides of the house. We had to get down on our knees using god knows what to pull weeds from between what seemed miles of crazy paving. It is surprising that it did not put me off of gardening for the rest of my life. On looking back it was quite a magnificent house with sweeping lawns to a sunken garden with a pool, very much neglected, but now, I realize it must have been a grand property once lived in by gentry. The head of the school seemed very posh; perhaps it was once her home, her name was Miss Dalton, a similar name as the school. Another thing imbedded in my memory was going out for walks crocodile fashion feeling very cold and bursting to go to the toilet long before we returned. I don't expect the walks were that long but when you are a child of seven, eight and nine and uncomfortable it seems like miles. One of the nice things I remember was sitting on a bank, and picking tiny wild strawberries, funny the things that stick in your mind, I have never come across any since.

At some point between the age of seven and nine Dalton house in Sunningdale closed, I'm not sure why. We were then transferred to an already established school for partially sighted children. The school was in yet another country mansion,

apparently it was one of Guinness's old homes, so I was told; out in the country was an understatement, to me it seemed right out in the wilds and I hated it. To reach the place, we had to take a train to London change, on to Princes Risborough, then on a steam train, which was brown at the bottom and cream at the top (G.W.R). We used to call it the coffee pot. This train took us to our destination; Little Halt, called Dorton Halt, one stop after Halton Halt. I may have spelt these names wrongly but it was a long time ago and when I tried to look those places up, they no longer exist, the stations that is. Dolton was a village situated six miles from Aylesbury, I suppose it was more of a Hamlet as there was nothing else there. Inevitably the school was called Dolton house, there was a large quadrangle at the front, which now I would be able to imagine carriages sweeping up to the front door and gentry gliding in to the huge entrance hall but to us kids it was a cold and spooky place.

After all this time I find it quite difficult to differentiate between what happened at which of the two schools, some things are obviously clear, like the time I ran away from Dorton House. I was with a girl called Enid Bailey, we took ourselves down to the railway embankment. We thought it was the best way to find our way home. We had the princely sum of eight shillings and six pence, and a bag of apples; we must have gone quite a distance because we were picked up when we climbed up the embankment on smelling a chip shop and feeling hungry. I did not go back to that school, but more about that later.

I will call to mind a few things that happened at Berkleys School and Dolton House school. We none of us can remember everyone from our past but there was one girl that stands out, not just her name, Judy Tressider, but her address too, which was:

Little Basset,
Glen Road,
Deal near Dover
Kent.

I wonder who lives at that address now, or whether it even exists. I was in Dover in 2002 so we looked up the house, and it was still there but needless to say the owners knew nothing about the Tressider family. I was directed to an elderly resident who may have known about them but unfortunately she was out, so that was that.

Judy wore a dressing gown which was red at the top and blue at the bottom, or maybe it was the other way round, she slept in the bed opposite mine in a dormitory with about eight beds, in a room which would probably have been a bedroom for a lady or gent on their own. There was a high mantelpiece over a covered-in fireplace on which some soft toys sat, my favorite was a rabbit and when one of the girls would not let me have it, I grabbed it and threw it out of the window. I was always in trouble and a bit of a ring leader, but I can never remember not having friends. Like most kids I had lots of nicknames like, snow ball, snow white, and the Nunn from the Nunnery, as my surname was Nunn. When we ran away hopefully to escape trouble, I was always spotted because of the colour of my hair.

I am finding it hard just for the time being to continue this part of my memoirs due to the fact that my brother took a detour on his way home this week to find out if Dorton House is still there, and it is, what is more, he made enquiries and learned that the school closed as a school for blind and partially sighted kids 50 years ago and there is to be a reunion next July. I rang the contact number my brother John was given, and put my name down to attend, who knows whom I may meet and as result may be able

to fill in some of the gaps? So I will leave this section until after the reunion.

AFTER THE REUNION

Going back to anywhere after nearly 60 years, you would not expect to see very much you remember or think you remember. So it was a great surprise to find not only the building was more or less as I pictured it but the oak paneling in the main hall and the entrance and the wooden floors still remain. I did not meet anyone I could recall, but two or three ex-pupils remembered me. They said I used to sing and tap dance to the song Cruising down the River.

The property is still a private school in a very classy area of Buckinghamshire, no longer for children with visual impairment. It was the last reunion they were arranging, so it was quite ironic that it was that very year I made contact with the school.

After I ran away from Dorton House I stayed at home for what must have been quite a while because I had a home teacher named Mr. Carr who came from Ealing, London. He only taught me once a week and all he did was make me read Braille and set me a passage for me to read during the following week. I was never taught to use a pen or pencil so it has always been a handicap, and due to my limited vision I could not teach myself. I loved drawing but that did not matter how bad it was. I quite liked Mr. Carr and mum took me to his home and I got to know his wife.

I obviously can't remember what I did with myself all of the time but I was trusted by my parents to go out alone despite my poor vision. I visited local shops where everyone knew everyone. I walked across the park and over the level crossing to the town. I took two buses to go to my Auntie Lily, the one who could not walk. I joined a local choir with my friend Kathleen Philips, she

was an Irish girl but you would never have known, unlike her mother who had a broad Irish brogue. The one thing I remember most about Kathleen was her one tune she played on our piano; “When I grow too old to dream, I’ll have you to remember”.

I saw her many years later, she was very sophisticated all in black, She told me she always wore black. She married the radio comedy script writer Alan Simpson of Ray Galton and Simpson fame.



The part I liked most about that time was walking home with my friends and buying chips and a penny worth of crispy bits of the batter. No one seemed to mind us kids walking home in the evening, not like today. Thinking back now, I realize how lucky I was that mum and dad encouraged me to integrate. I suppose I must have looked different, with my white hair, which was dead straight when mum was not around to curl it which luckily for me was not very often. I spent many hours in all, standing by the gas cooker, being primped and crimped with curling tongues heated on the hob, mum testing they were not too hot by holding them near her lips, she must have had it to a fine art.

I suppose I digress slightly from school days but I just know mum always tried to make me look my best. I was always being told to keep my head up and I guess if I had worn the dark glasses I was supposed to wear, I would have been able to keep my head up, as the bright light has always hurt my eyes. I hated my glasses and was always taking them off, which meant I squinted or looked down to avoid the light, we do not know what is best for us when we are young. A few years later I was fitted with tinted contact lens, I got on with them very well and remember putting them in after filling each one with some sort of liquid and removing them at night they made my eyes look better as I could keep them open. I cannot remember when I no longer had them, which is quite odd.

After I ran away from school, I was taken to see a man in a large room. I can remember sitting and talking to him by a fire in and he spoke very gently. I suppose staff at Dorton House thought I was a bit of a rebel. I do remember having a fight with Enid Bailey and pushing her glass eye in, but I can also remember being beside myself with remorse when I realized what had happened, I did not expect something like that to happen. Anyway the nice man told me and my parents that there was nothing wrong with me. I assume he must have been a Psychologist. Another reason why I must have made the staff cross, may have been because I used to tell stories to the other kids in the dorm, about a pink ghost that stood by the toilet door, next to a dumb waiter and we were all reluctant to get out of bed to go to the loo, which by the way, was a word not heard of at that time. We must have coerced a member of staff to accompany us to the lavatory, so I was always getting told off.

To continue, I do not know the real reason why it was so long before I went to another proper school. During the period I was being taught at home, I had operations on my eyes to correct a

squint. I was eleven or twelve, I have no idea why they waited until I was that age to do them. I was beginning to be more self-conscious and aware of my appearance. Being infatuated with my Ophthalmologist, I was so upset when I saw what I looked like after he had removed the bandages from my eyes, I burst in to tears just knowing he had seen me like that. Growing up is such a painful business.

I did not start school again until I was about twelve, the timing here is a little vague. My brother was born when I was that age and I find this time quite confusing as I remember Mother bringing him home from Hospital, and me hiding behind the door when she brought him in. I wonder what I was thinking at the time? I spent many happy hours with my baby brother and I know I never felt any jealousy after being an only child for so long, in fact I loved being a little Mother to him. During that period, we spent many a weekend enjoying days with the Jenkins, friends of my parents, we always went to West Wittering. I mention this for two reasons, just in case one of the Jenkins family may be aware of this regular trip to that coastal spot, and also, I returned there a couple of years ago, and was delighted to find it had not changed, thanks to the National Trust.



My brother



As at that time we could not have furry pets due to my asthma so we always had budgerigars over the years, I still have one to this day.

BUDGIES ARE FUN

My last three years at school, I think were reasonably happy. I had to travel from Paddington station to Bristol Temple Meads alone. My mum took me to London and made sure I sat in a carriage with a responsible person. I'll never know if this was arranged, or whether mum trusted to luck that there would be a responsible person around, no one thought of it as a risk in those days. I know once I was put in with a group of Nuns and, as I have already mentioned I took a dislike to Nuns when I was quite young. I was met at the station in Bristol by a member of staff and taken to an area on the outskirts of the City called Westbury on Trym. This school was yet another large old house but it did not feel as unfriendly as Dorton. The building was oblong with the main door in the centre and facing fields and I remember there was a donkey in one of them which we loved to go and make a fuss of. A little story about the donkey; we had pinafores made out of the old blackout curtains, which we all hated, so one day I let the donkey eat mine, needless to say I was in trouble.

Looking back, I do not really think I learned a great deal, even in the last three years at school. Math's or arithmetic as it used to be called, was done on steel boards with tiny holes all over them, into which we would insert pegs made of the same metal. We would use them to form Braille numbers, how primitive that

seems today. Although some of us had some residual vision, we were never taught to write normal writing with a pen/pencil. I hope that this is not the case today where visually impaired children are concerned. I have honestly found this a huge handicap, all my life, not being able to form words together correctly, the little I knew was picked up at odd times along the way. Sports and PT were good, we had a fully equipped gym, wall climbing bars, parallel bars, vaulting horses, rope ladders etc. There was a full-size swimming pool with diving boards, which I loved; I did quite well in the swimming events. Our Headmaster was named Mr Getliff.



MR GETLIFF HEAD MASTER

I think I got on pretty well with him and the school teachers in general, I suppose I was growing up a little by then and could cope better with being away from home. Speaking of growing up, I was not without my admirers while at that school, probably some of which were exaggerated in my head. There was Mr. Haden our music teacher who sang "Unforgettable" to me while I was standing by the piano and the Welsh history teacher who

we all thought was dishy, I do not remember his name, probably Jones, who said I had good legs. I must point out that I was wearing sparkly tights and a short ice blue tunic at the time as I was Jack Frost in the school Christmas play. Then there was the father of one of my friends, Pat Hanmer was her name, she lived quite close to the school and I used to go home with her some times. Her dad said I was like peaches and cream. When you are a teenager, you take it all in and are so intense. Just a little about Pat, she had epilepsy and I used to look out for her when she had a bad turn, as she called it. Luckily for her and us she would have warning signs, like flashing lights, so she was able to lay down rather than fall and bang her head. I carried a spoon to put in her mouth so she did not bite her tongue. Pat was eventually sent to a sort of commune at Chalfont St. Giles. I wonder what the objective was and whether this type of set up still exists. I was taken to see her once; the place was not too far from my home and I remember there were individual houses dotted about the grounds and a main building which was the school. I wonder what they trained her to do after school? I say this because Bristol prepared me for nothing! Neither academically or a vocation. There used to be a college at Chorley Wood, where the bright kids went to at the age of eleven, but as I was not at school at that age it was never considered. The seniors at school learnt basket making. Girls could learn machine knitting; they had a work shop with straight knitting machines for jumpers and circular ones for sock making. There was also a shoe repairing work shop where some of the boys learned the trade, would not be much good today. I think they were sent to work in sheltered workshops on leaving school, definitely not for me. The only other trade that was taught there was piano tuning; boys only as I can recall. So, as you can see my school days did not equip me for the outside world.

WITH PUBITY COMES REALITY

My teenage years obviously blend in part with school. The physical side of growing up was probably similar to most teenage girls. I can remember having the most chronic tummy aches, almost doubling up with pain and going to bed with a hot water bottle. Incidentally hot water bottles were rubber by then but I can remember our first one was a metal cylinder with a black screw top, which you had to wrap in a towel or you would scold yourself. On the emotional side, it was a time when I began to realize my limitations, a time when your dreams are not quite enough. An eye specialist corrected my squint, I believe this is carried out when children are younger these days. So when my eyes were uncovered and he had left, I looked in the mirror and cried because he had seen my puffy eyes. Those sorts of things are heartbreaking at that age. I started to become aware that I had a disability; I had many a moment feeling sorry for myself and sitting on the stairs having a weep.

Life was not all doom and gloom by any means, we had Saturday night dances at school. We danced with boys, waltz, quickstep etc. I don't remember ever being shown how to do them, the only dancing I remember being taught at school was country dancing. We also did dances like the Palais Glide, St. Bernard's Waltz, The Valletta and one called the Paul Jones, in which the boys danced round in a circle facing the girls who danced in the other direction on the outside facing inwards or it might have been the other way, so that each time the music stopped you had to dance with the person you were in front of, got it? I do not remember any boy in particular at school except Peter White because he played the piano by ear really well; he came from the Isle of Wight. There is a Peter White who is blind and has been working for the BBC for years, he started on Radio Solent which covers the Island, and I wonder if it is the same Peter White. Back to

those dances, I must have been quite vain, because I can remember getting in to trouble for being late on one occasion when I could not get my hair right and getting upset, but those sorts of things are most important to you at that age. We had quite a few laughs during my teenage years at school and although I still missed mum and dad and of course my little brother and always had an upset stomach on returning to school each term, I soon got over it. Girls growing up, lots of late-night chatter and feasts, we used to call our monthly's Archie, I wonder if the teachers new what we meant when we said "Archie is due"?

My first boyfriend was called David.



I think he must have been the son of one of mum and dad's friends, any way we were both very shy so never got further than holding hands. I suppose my first snog was when a boy I knew took me to the Castle Ballroom in Richmond Surrey, sounds grand but dance halls were often called ballrooms and most dances had a live band, or if they were small affairs a wind-up gramophone. My friends and I used to go to the Castle Richmond quite regularly, I suppose the boys could not make me

out and thought I was aloof because I did not make eye contact but I do not ever remember feeling left out. I was lucky to have fairly long hair by then and regular home perms, Tony was the most popular make and home perming was the "in thing" at that time. Clothes were very feminine in the 50s; full skirts with tight fitting tops, shirt waister dresses and voluminous stiff petticoats which stood right out.



SOME DRESSES MY MOTHER MADE

Shoes could be bought in lots of bright colours with gloves and clutch bags to match. Hats were still worn quite a lot, I remember one in particular, it was pink felt, shaped like a teddy bears head but without the ears, it had a sort of cone shape piece at the back with a tassel made from the same material coming out of it (the mind boggles). I left school when I was sixteen having absolutely no idea what I was going to do. I can remember going to the labor exchange which was situated on a trading estate just off Feltham high Street. I hated going there and standing in a queue to sign-on every week. I also went to the local youth employment office which was a small office situated in a row of shops just outside the recreation ground. I can never remember being frightened of going out on my own, as long as it was somewhere I knew, but

if it meant going to strange territory I would never go alone. Finally, I was given a temporary job in Woolworths, a huge chain of shops that no longer exists preparing Easter novelties, putting straw into baskets with chicks and little easter eggs, and larger ones in to egg cups and the next size into mugs, then tying them up in cellophane and ribbon. This job only lasted until Easter of course. I suppose the management were pretty good for those days as they let me stay on and gave me a job in the stock room. I guess I was there until they realized I could not read the labels, that was the first time I can remember being aware of bluffing my way through by looking inside the boxes to see if I had the right product, but it did not always work. I suppose as a teenager of my time I accepted what I was asked to do without questioning it, even if I had the right questions to ask about my future, I would not have questioned my peers and with no experience of life would not have been able to come up with any realistic suggestions for my future. I was starting to learn how difficult it is to make your way in the world with a disability and it was a real shock when I was sent home in tears after being at my next job for just three days. The company I went to was Champion Sparking Plugs which used to be on the Great South West Road, not far from London Airport. I was given an easy job just putting the plugs on to pegs as the conveyer belt moved round, I was getting on very well, because I can remember being told so by the supervisor but on day three, Dr Gemma, the factory Doctor came to me and in no uncertain terms said I was to leave at once. So, one of the girls took me home. I was bewildered and distraught. My poor mum wondered what ever had happened. So that was that, the Doctor's word was final, there was nothing the company could do about it. I do not know what went through my mind after losing this, my second job. I do know that I used to hear my friend Beryl next door trotting off down the road in her high heels to catch the bus and then on the train to work in

Selfridges. How I envied her freedom of movement. I knew then I would never feel at ease, if ever I had to go to a strange place on my own. Having said that I know many totally blind people who have no qualms about going out alone using a white cane or with a guide dog. I am my own worst enemy as I hated using a cane, and my allergy to fur, meant I could not have a dog. I think I thought it was the end of the world for a while although I must be an optimist because although I can remember some of the bad times, it is the good times which are clearer in my mind.

When I was fifteen, a year or so before I left school, Dad brought our first television, a 9-inch Ferguson. This kept me amused during the times I was at home twiddling my thumbs. At that time, they had a test programme on each morning, it was always the same; fishes swimming around in a tank, a potter working at his wheel and part of the puppet Muffin the mule who always stood on the piano that Annette Mills sat at while she played and talked to him. There was also a short piece of dialog by the first announcers Mary Malcombe, Sylvia Peters and Macdonald Hopley. They all spoke perfect English. Our TV was purchased in time for the Coronation, we must have been reasonably well off as far as our street was concerned, because I can remember half of it squashed in to our dining room that day. I sat at one side close to the screen and watched it with my good eye, I mention this because we tried a magnified glass which could be strapped to the screen but as it was oval, unless you sat directly in front of it, the whole picture became distorted. Television was only on for a few hours a day, I watched the children's programmes, thinking how wonderful it would be to introduce and take part in some shows as children like Janet Scott the daughter of Thora Herd and Elizabeth Cruft's daughter of the famous original dog show. It was about this time we acquired a car again, after the war. It was a Ford Popular and with my

brother now a toddler we started to go down to Wittering for the day on Sundays. We often went with the Jenkins family; that is mum, dad and Angela with boyfriend in tow. I did not have a boyfriend at that time so I did not enjoy myself very much feeling like a gooseberry. Angela and I got on well enough she had a beautiful singing voice and won the Kathleen Ferria Award and subsequently went on to the Royal College of Music. We used to sing on our way home. She said I had good pitch and could tackle the fast parts better than her. The one thing I would really liked to have done was to sing and entertain. It must give you a great feeling, hopefully putting a smile on people's faces. I never fulfilled my dream, but ironically it was my voice that earned me some sort of a living. Someone somewhere said I could train to be a Telephonist. So, Dad duly took me to Pembridge Place off Holland Park, Notting Hill Gate, London to learn how to use the switchboards of the day. I stayed there during the week and Dad was always there to take me home at the weekend. This went on for about three months, during which time I learned how to operate boards from tiny little two, or three-line jobs which had to be operated by turning a handle in order to make it ring, right up to three position boards with hundreds of extensions where you sat with other operators. Messages were taken on a sort of braille ticker tape machine, which meant you had streams of paper on the floor. During my stay in London, I met some very strange people, most of them were blind of course and I can honestly say, I never felt a part of that community, always looking at them as an outsider. Seeing how they did not think that sighted people could be watching them. I hope this is clear, I am sure now, I must have done the self-same thing at times as you are not aware of any one watching you, so one must obviously seem odd at times. Around this time, I went on my first holiday alone with a friend.



PAT & I ON HOLIDAY – in Great Yarmouth

We used to get out a bit to the local café. I met an Egyptian man who said he could read palms, so being curious I let him read mine. He said I would marry more than once, have three children and I would never be well off but would always be comfortable, time has proved him right. I soon became employed once I left London; I went to a local engineering firm known as W.E. Bray, a private company, later changed to Bray Construction Equipment. It was there I met my future husband and although I was only 18, I feel my teenage years are very much linked with my relationship with Colin Eugene Parker, so I will save this for the next chapter. Brays was not far from home situated on Faggs Road just a little further than the local shops across a traffic lights. On a dull day I had no problem seeing the traffic lights but on a bright day I relied on crossing alongside other pedestrians. The trouble is that people with all their sight, take chances and my pig headedness in not asking for assistance, meant I often took my life in my hands. I was guilty of that sort of thing most of my life and the Gods whoever they are must have been with

me. Ironically, when we had thick fog, like pea soup, I found no trouble finding my way.

LOVE OR WHAT?

Now, about my relationship with Colin. As I said we met at work, although we spoke on the phone quite a while before meeting. He certainly had a way with words and when one day he caught up with me on my way home I was very disappointed and when I got home, I said to mum "I'm not going out with him, he has bright red hair and was wearing a navy-blue school raincoat". However, in due course his sweet talk won me over, the red hair did not seem so red and it transpired that the rain coat turned out to be his Air Force blue great coat.

We started to date, either going to the cinema or a club to which he belonged or just for rides on his Sunbeam motorbike. I shall always remember how he remarked on how nice everything looked on the tea table, when I took him home, he appreciated higher standards than he was used to. I should explain, he told me about his life, his mother left his father when he was five, due to his father's behavior caused by drink. Colin spent the next few years being put in one foster home after another, seven in all. So, it is quite understandable that he would want to feel settled and make a home for himself, and to attack life in a very independent way.

Our relationship grew to more than just girlfriend and boyfriend, and I fell in love, so it must have been a shock to find he already had a wife, even though he had been spending so much time with me. Looking back, it became a very bizarre situation. She was living in a flat in Cromwell Road, incidentally not many doors away from my Aunt Zena. I think she knew the family, but how I learnt about him being married I cannot remember. Colin may have even told me himself; I am sure it must have caused upset at the time both for me and mum and dad as they welcomed him into their home. Seeing it now as I think they might have thought

that here was someone who would look after me, because I know now that they worried about me far more than I ever did. I was such a different person then as was Marilyn his wife.

Colin took me to their home, he ran her down in front of both of us but I am ashamed to say neither of us did anything about it, he said he was getting a divorce and I was too much in love and too selfish to consider calling off our relationship, despite pressure from my parents and my best friend Beryl Skilling. He told me his marriage was never consummated and I believed him. My parents must have accepted that he cared enough for me, I am sure there was a certain amount of upset but gradually they must have realized we planned to marry. After a three year wait, on June 3rd 1961 we were wed, at the Methodist church Hanworth Road Feltham.



At that time, it was only the Methodist church would allow a divorced person to marry. Mum made my simple but beautiful wedding dress, the weather was perfect, dad had made a special effort with a garden full of flowers and our house was full of silver

and white decorations for all our guests to enjoy after a wedding breakfast at the local hotel, The Crown and Sceptre, which is no longer there. I still remember being in a daze, like it was happening to somebody else and I was looking through a window. On arriving in Llandudno on the first night of our honeymoon, I cried saying "I had not said good bye to my parents" when are we truly grown up?



Colin



ME WITH MY HUSBAND'S SISTER PENNY

(We are still in touch)

MOVING ON

The next stage of my life certainly included a few moves. Our first home was a bungalow not far from my parents;
43 Horsham Road,
Bedfont,
Middlesex.

At the time of our marriage, I was working at Ashford hospital, a short bus ride away, I had left Bray Construction some two years previously, I believe it was for more money, but the job at the hospital entailed doing shift work, including nights, so I left when I became a housewife, that sounds old fashion today. A few things that stick out in my mind about those early days; our first meal of mushroom omelets which Colin made, saying I could not cook, I just accepted this statement even though I had never tried. This seemed to set the pattern from then on, if you are told you are useless, you believe it. Do not get me wrong, everything was fine in the early days. Mum used to come and do some cleaning, goodness knows why, my new neighbor Edna with whom I became good friends, reminded me how my mother was always washing the dusters and hanging them on the line before leaving. Another thing Edna told me many years later, was how she saw Colin handing me out of the car, holding my arm and carefully guiding me through the rubble outside our new home, she said she thought I would be stuck up, the sort who would lounge about with a long cigarette holder. Of course she had no idea at that time I had poor vision. I loved our first little home, even though we did not have much, in fact one party with all the women in stiletto heels, was enough to put little dents all over the cheap linoleum.

On June 26th 1963 Tracey Jane was born in Bearsted memorial hospital Kingston, I was so elated; my uncle Con said my eyes looked brighter than he had ever seen them. It was a very happy but at the same time quite a lonely period, everything is different, I can remember finding it hard to get out for a walk much before

mid-afternoon, because everything has to be by the book, when you have your first child, but when the next one comes along you are much more relaxed. Colin was a perfect father being totally involved in the care of our baby even putting her to the breast, mine of course at night, as I kept falling asleep, and holding her upside down seemed a good way to bring up the baby's wind, when I just could not wake up during the night.

Our social life at that time mainly consisted of visits to our friends, the couple I remember the most were Anita and Johnny Kendall, they had two little girls Zahra and Rae, and they also fostered babies, I only remember a little black girl named Oderie who they had for about two years. It was quite unusual to see many Africans in the sixties.

We liked a drink or two or three when we got together and thought nothing of driving home with a skin full. I can remember one occasion when whoever was driving was practically asleep in a drunken stupor and drove us home and at another time when Colin was so drunk, he got into the back seat of the car to drive, and on realizing proceeded to get out of the car, cross the street and back again in order to sit in the front, then drove off. What a thought, to realize now, that we thought nothing of it! Anita and John took advantage of the £10 immigration package to Canada, John was a policeman and so transferred to the force in Ontario, we missed them but it was not long before we moved to Hook in Hampshire. I can visualize the area but cannot remember the address. It seems of little consequence, as we were only renting a house owned by the company Colin joined in Basingstoke, while we looked for a place of our own. We were there about a year, and nothing very eventful happened other than little Tracey wondering off and me frantically trying to find her someone kindly walked towards me with my little girl; I subsequently learned her name was Carol Plackett, and when we moved to Basingstoke some two or three years later, I discovered she had taken a house just a couple of streets away. We became firm friends.

In the meantime, we bought a home near Southampton.
1 Loral Road,
Locks Heath,
Hampshire

It was a new chalet quite spacious, but strangely I cannot remember the garden knowing my love of gardens, it is quite surprising. I expect I was too busy looking after my babies, as I had Shelley Sue soon after we went there, on 18th March 1966 to be precise.

I guess I must have missed my mum being close by, but it is pretty easy to make friends when you have young children, plus Auntie Ivy happened to live quite near, and I think she took on the roll as substitute mother. I can call to mind one occasion when pushing the babies in the pram to visit Auntie Ivy, some workmen called out to me in urgent tones to look out! I narrowly missed pushing the pram in to a hole in the ground, just another time when the Gods were with me.

I honestly cannot remember how long we lived in Locks Heath, this time is the hardest so far to recall, I suppose life was a little humdrum around this period, although quite happy. The people I remember most were the Button family, mum and dad, real Hampshire people and their adopted Son and daughter named Gill and Nigel, "The Button's". They grew strawberries, as did many folks in that area, we certainly learnt a lot about that fruit and their many types. We often took the children to a beach at a place called Hill Head which was quite close by and when we had visitors, we took them to Warsash a charming little village by the Hamble River.

At this point I think it is appropriate to mention Colin's family. His father died around about this time, Colin had very little to do with him, and I have to say on the one occasion I went to his father's house and met his slovenly step mother and saw the mucky state they lived in I could understand why. When Colin was working

at Brays he was reunited with his mother, and I know that meant a lot to him, we all seemed to get on very well, she had a partner Bill who was lovely but sadly he died soon after the death of Colin's father. Shelley was two, Doris, Colin's mum brought her a birthday present and with her 13-year-old son Philip, she promptly disappeared, never to be found again. I know this affected Colin and he was to be admired for trying so hard to be a family man. I think this could be a lot to do with his determination to be famous in industry. Both our lives were mainly centered on bringing up the girls. We were lucky enough to be able to encourage them in many pursuits, and had modest holidays usually in caravans.



MY TWO LITTLE GIRLS



THE PONCHOS I MADE

On to our next home which was
176 Pack Lane,
Kempshott,
Basingstoke Hants.

We lived there until about 1978.

This period was varied and far from dull, what with taking the girls to dance, drama, music and riding lessons, there was the

inevitable festivals and exams to take part in, and to which both of us took an interest. An offshoot of that, for me, was that I made lots of friends and we had many a laugh together, waiting in dressing rooms etc. Also, Kempshott was a newly developed housing area, although our house was old and set in a third of an acre, this is when I started taking an interest in gardening, and we even grew our own vegetables. An elderly neighbor used to give us lots of plants, and taught me quite a bit, but looking back I can see why Colin might get a little cross when I was not all dolled up when he came home from work, because I got carried away in the garden, his enthusiasm waned, he preferred socializing. I have always enjoyed company too as I am an extrovert, but I also enjoy my own company especially when I am busy.

In my early twenties I had an overpowering feeling that I wanted to do something to prove my worth and help people in some way, this did not plague me so much after my babies were born. I think I have always had an enquiring mind and I remember when the girls were young getting involved with members of Jehovah Witness's, simply because someone was prepared to sit down and read to me, but I questioned so many issues, it was not too long before I broke away, but as a result of my confusion at that time, we nearly did not have Shelley baptized, I and so glad now that I came to my senses. The awful thing about that occasion was, coincidentally we do not have any Christening photographs, due to them being ruined at the developers, how ironic.

Coming back briefly to the matter of reading, in the early days Colin used to like to read the Readers Digest, and in particular I remember an item which appeared each month called "It pays to improve your word power". I am sure this helped me to understand the meanings of words, I have always found the English language interesting.

Apart from a couple of temporary jobs after I married; Greenham Equipment on Hounslow Heath, Savill Tractors Stains Road

Ashford and Pioneer Plastics on the Great south west Road Bedford, where I used to take my life in my hands getting across a very busy road. I lived on my nerves, but it was entirely my own fault, I have always wanted to appear independent and yet I was really scared stiff, to coin a phrase I was my own worse enemy. I have always avoided going anywhere new on my own and indeed I have seldom had to venture forth alone, which I suppose is a strain on your partner. Luckily, I did a number of things with my many friends, who treated me as just me and did not even mention my short sight. The Basingstoke years were probably some of the best times in my married life.

It was not too far for my parents to come and visit, I did not see much of my brother, he was at that age when he was out having a good time with his mates, and he would have been in his early 20s then.

We had our share of parties, each month taking it in turn to hold them in our houses, loud music and dancing and plenty of food and drink. In fact I shall always remember one occasion when the buffets were becoming more and more competitive, so Colin had the bright idea of asking the local fish and chip van to turn up and present everyone with fish and chips in paper. It certainly went down well and brought things back in to perspective. At the end of the night whoever was left had a cooked breakfast before crawling in to bed, and there was always a few who got together for an autopsy the next day.

It was the era of the home party shopping plan, where the party holder received commission on what was sold. I remember Butknit Clothing, which was the bee's knees in fashion at the time. Then there was Coventry Jewelry of which I still have a couple of necklaces. We had lingerie parties, children's wear and the inevitable Tupperware. I understand they are still trading; I wonder whether any of the others still exist?



I took up Yoga when the children were young and even got my picture in the local paper, Yoga was quite a novelty then, when we no longer had the hall, I believe it became too expensive, so I used to clear my lounge every week in order to hold a class.

I suppose I have always been fairly extreme; I prefer to call it positive. However, inwardly I was far from comfortable with myself, I often had collywobbles but I so wanted to prove I was like everyone else, I can see now why I must have been hard work for someone who is not on the same wave length as me and looking back Colin and I were never on the same plain.

Some of the things I tried and succeeded in to a greater and lesser degree were a touch typing course at the local Tech. I did not get on too well, very little help was offered, unlike today there was no D.D.A - Disability Discrimination Act, so you were very lucky if you were even accepted on a course, I think it was down to the course tutor. I had done a little touch typing when I trained to be a telephonist, so luckily it came fairly easy, I certainly find it useful now I have a computer.

Another year I went with a friend Jean, to Tech and did a course called Food and Family that was great fun. I actually learnt how to make proper bread and some fancy dishes. I mentioned the friends name as I think I may have helped her a little at that time as I met her through a social worker, as Jean had two little girls

Jane and Anne, one totally blind and the other very short sighted; I hope I helped her to see they could have a full life. I often wonder how they got on. Jane the eldest, was a very bright little girl.

Back to the cooking; I went through a period of wanting to try every recipe in the book. Maybe it was because I found a new hobby after being told I could not cook in the early days. I suppose looking back I have always been a bit of a fanatic I like to call it enthusiasm but, in some ways, I must have been a pain as I always had to involve others for things like reading or taping recipes or any other information for that matter. The thing is, if it had been at this time, I could have looked everything up on the computer. Knitting also used to be a passion of mine; I cannot believe I even used to knit on the bus, in the car, while waiting for the girls at dance classes etc. I shall always remember when Tracey and Shelley were little, I was sitting in the garden with my needles clicking away and they both said "sit and knit" when I look back now I think how boring, but I guess it was useful to the family budget at the time. I made the girls some pretty jumpers and ponchos, I even knitted a white leotard and bonnet once, for a winter number in a show, but again I relied on Colin to sew garments up, he always did his best for the girls, but he often felt stressed, I know he wanted to be recognized for what he did, especially at work, when he worked for a short while for the D.T.I. he told me he might be up for a Knighthood! the thing was, he really believed it.

In the early days I joined the Mothers Union, then after a new village hall was built in Kempshott, a number of us started a Ladies Club and I was asked to be chairman, or chairperson as it would be termed today. It was the first time I had done any public speaking, I can remember my mouth going completely dry, now you cannot stop me having my say at any meeting.

I did pluck up the courage to join an Operatic Society; I went with a friend who worked in the local Post Office. It was fun being in

the chorus, even though I had to wear a dark wig on stage as my hair was so fair it did not show under the strong lights. I must have been in the group for a couple of years as I was in The Gondoliers, which my parents came to watch, only to be worrying that I might fall off the stage, as I was so near the edge. The following year we performed Merry England. I managed to pick up all the words by listening to the others and I did not find the melody difficult to pick up, I guess I am lucky that I can hold a tune, as I was obviously not able to sight read.

I have many good memories and some bad ones, one in particular; which I shall keep for another chapter. A couple of things stick out in my mind, A girl named Angela gave Colin a tale about how she had nowhere to live, so Colin decided she should have our spare room, she was a “dumb” brunette but not too dumb to walk around in pelmet length skirts, and find any excuse to come and sit on our bed whenever she could, she said “for a chat” how soft was I? As on top of that I was shouted at when the next electricity bill came in when the excess use of her hair dryer was obviously the reason for the increase. In the end I believe she left without letting us know. A bit vague, but it was something like that.

On one occasion I was putting on a concert on behalf of a disabled group, my parents came specially to see it. The whole morning my husband did his best to make an atmosphere as he always did when ever my parents came. On this occasion they became so distressed that they did not stay to see the show. Colin did not come and I had to hide my upset but there was one little girl who even at her tender age was really sweet and told me how well it had gone. I am afraid to say, for some reason Colin resented mum and dad and considering how generous and understanding they were towards him in the beginning, a little unhappiness started creeping in and we could not discuss things in a civilized manner.

There were lots of good times while we were living at Basingstoke, it was the girl's formative years, so there was lots of play, activities, outings and sleepovers, sometimes in their Wendy house in the garden, which they loved. During the summer holidays we had other children from less fortunate backgrounds to stay, I also looked after my friend's children after school and in the holidays. I will always remember my friend Freda's kids, Nichols and Susan and friend Julie's, Susan and Janet. Janet used to walk around with her head under my arm, reading a book to me.

I must say thinking back, the children seemed to play outside far more than they do today, but then again, we did have a large garden a 3rd of an acre, with sand pit and a large paddling pool in the summer. We had fields and crops nearby. One day our eldest came home leading a donkey, it nearly walked in to our lounge, but she was never afraid of animals and she let it know she was in charge and insisted on putting a red bow in its mane. Because of my allergies we could not have a furry pet in the house, so we bought a pair of Guinea pigs and eventually finished up with 27! I suppose they must have all died eventually as there were none when we moved on. Budgerigars figured in our lives, having had them when I was living at my parents, I found them easy to tame and to talk, we had one that used to sit on the end of my knitting needle while I was knitting, I had to untangle it every now and again, if they are tame, they can be fun.

There is one episode in my life I find quite hard to write about, when the girls were 8 and 6 respectively which would be 1972, I found I was pregnant, although this period is all a little vague, I will try to be as clear as I can. I remember my friend Carole Plackett coming to the Doctors with me because I was feeling bad, not ill but upset. Colin was not pleased as he was just getting on in his job and another baby would hold him back, so he thought. I do not think I was myself, or maybe it is just an excuse for my lack of "backbone". Colin saw our Doctor with me and said I would not be able to cope with another child, and I let

him talk the Doctor in to admitting me to hospital to have an abortion. Even writing that word make me feel horrible. While decisions were being made time was moving on, and I finished up having a hysterotomy at 16 weeks, an operation to open the womb and remove a fetus up to 24 weeks, a procedure which is seldom carried out today. By then my hormones were all over the place and for a couple of months I was not in the real world, dreadful nightmares even during the day, very tearful and just not with it at all. The worse thing of all was letting the girls think I had a poorly tummy. I shall always remember coming round from the anesthetic, crying and full of remorse, and the nurse saying "you're not like some of them who could not care less" I did care very much and I often wonder if it was that little boy I never had. Of course, we do get over things and dwelling on them has never been my way. I was 35 and had been married for 11 years and the happy times overtook the difficult moments, but I believe it was roughly around that time I started to feel oppressed and not able to discuss anything with Colin, it was more of a manager talking to his office junior my feelings seemed to be ignored, but the girls were still young and as I have said before, we were both very involved in bringing them up.

We rubbed along, Colin joined the Masons, I think he thought it would help him get on in business, there is nothing wrong with that I guess but his work dominated his life, the main topic of conversation with friends and acquaintance used to be how much money he had made or saved the firm. I tried to talk about how people were really not interested, as it meant nothing to them, I tried to do this in a subtle way partly so as not to be hurtful and partly because I do not like a bad atmosphere, but then who does?

The time came when a job opportunity presented itself in Leeds West Yorkshire, neither the girls or I wanted to move right away from all our friends and I realized now how much my mum and dad worried about me and how sad they were. I can honestly say I do not remember my feelings being considered. So, the

moving day arrived and the start of that horrible feeling of not belonging anywhere. You must bear in mind my sight difficulty, I know couples do move to the other side of the world away from family, but I could not just go out and find my way about as others are able to do.

I remember so well the day we drove to take up residence at,
5 Halcyon Hill,
Chapel Allerton,
Leeds 7
Yorkshire.

LIVING IN YORKSHIRE

We drove to Leeds several times to view properties, the journey seemed endless at first, but the more times you cover the same ground, the distance does not seem so great. Believe me once I was ensconced in that large cold house it felt a million miles from everywhere.



The move to Yorkshire was the loneliest I have ever felt. If you have all your faculties, and confidence it is easy to get out and make new friends, but when you have fear not knowing the area and a husband who spent quite a considerable time away during those early days in Leeds, it is not easy. I left many friends as did the girls. I shall never forget my 40th birthday not long after we moved, I must have been very upset, because Tracey then age 14 and dealing with her own teenage years and adjusting to a complete change of environment, suggested she should take me out for a drink to cheer me up on my birthday. Needless to say, we did not go, but I have never forgotten the gesture. Strangely enough, Tracey showed another moment of compassion a few months later, when I had spent nearly a whole week in bed, not eating a thing and sleeping most of the time and by the fifth day she cooked a meal, insisting I ate something, without success, the next day I was admitted to hospital with peritonitis. It must sound as if Tracey seldom showed her softer side, I think she would be the first to agree, she found it hard to talk to us and certainly found it hard to give me hugs, which I

used to find difficult to understand. One observation regarding my illness, when you are that ill, you just want to be left alone, so I realize when you are close to dying, it is the people around you who suffer, not yourself.

Tracey kept her feelings to herself, so it is always hard for any parent to know what is going on in their head, it culminated with her taking 30 paracetamol one Saturday, which we knew nothing about for several hours, as we asked her to come out with us but she declined, we did not take too much notice of her refusal to join us as at that age children do not always want to go out with mum and dad. The whole week after that was a nightmare, at the hospital they said keeping her awake was vital and when we were not at her bedside, I can honestly say it is like being in a dark tunnel, you cannot concentrate on anything. Luckily, she made a full recovery with, I hope, no long-term liver damage.

I have jumped forward slightly in order of events, but I felt I should mention the above while showing how hard it was, not only for me. Shelley was eleven when we moved, and started at a Church of England middle school, St. Mathews. As the school was just over the back of our house, she was able to come home for lunch. She used to get so upset, as some subjects they were learning she had not even started. The reason for that was the system in the south is junior school to the age of eleven, then on to high school. Middle school starts at nine years to thirteen in Yorkshire. What with that and the other kids taking the mickey out of her southern accent, I used to have a miserable job making her return after lunch.

The one consolation was that the girls could pursue their various activities, Tracey with her swimming and horse riding and Shelley dance, music and drama.

Going back to my first few weeks in Leeds, with the girls in school and Colin full of his job which took most of his time and interest, the days seemed very long and I felt empty. Physically I was

very busy cleaning what turned out to be a very dirty house beneath the surface, there had been a fire in one of the bedrooms therefore there was black soot inside all the cupboards and drawers etc. After about a month of cleaning, I began to think I must try to get out and somehow meet people.

There must have been a church magazine delivered, with a contact number for the vicarage, saying come and meet for tea and a chat, I met the Minister's wife, who made me very welcome. She was quite young as was her husband; they invited me to tea, where I met my soon to be good friend Anne Fairy, who turned out to be a bit of a fairy god mother to me. With her help and also meeting some of the other mums at ballet class it helped a little to get to know my way around. At about the same time, I did make contact with Social Services, to see whether there were any classes I could attend, as a result of that I was picked up one day a week and taken to a day Centre, where I did handy crafts. I know it is wrong, but I have never felt comfortable around other visually impaired people, I suppose I never really accepted my limitations, and I guess being around blind people brought it home to me that I was like them.

After a while I signed on and got a part time job in the mornings at John Curtis shop-fitters needless to say as a Telephonist. So with a job and running the home I was pretty occupied. Eventually the company folded due to the fact that they relied mainly on their Woolworth contract and it was in the 80's when many of the stores closed down and we were all made redundant.

I picked up on my Yoga once again, which took place in the church hall. I have practiced Yoga on and off through my adult life. Anne whom I have mentioned turned out to be a very good friend, we joined the mother's union as we were both new to Leeds and it was a way of meeting people.

The girls were still young and we spent much time fetching, waiting and picking them up from their various activities. Shelley went on to an Arts Education school when she was 13 and always showed an aptitude for drama, she was always determined to try to obtain a place at drama school, she did not get a place at the age of 16, and looking back, she was not ready, so she stayed on at school and took a couple of A levels and at 18 went to work for a year at Pontins holiday camp. I will always remember how homesick she was and how I missed her, but you have to let go, her time at Bracklesham Bay West Sussex, prepared her for life in London when she acquired a place at London Studio Centre to study an all-round theatre course.

Stepping back once more to Yorkshire, and the early eighties, life was becoming more and more strained between Colin and I, the tension was building up and we just did not communicate with one another. To cap it all, he took me one day to meet some woman he worked with and it was obvious he had turned on the charm, just as he had done with me, and probably Marilyn his first wife. Sadly, Colin thought his employers could not do without him but having his first heart attack not long after starting a new job he was allowed to recover, before being made redundant. He soon got another job, however, by passing on information about his previous employers, which was useful to them. I tried to tell him that once they found out as much as he knew; they would not want him anymore. By this time Tracey had a regular boyfriend and his parents let us use their apartment in Spain for a holiday; to help Colin recover because after quite a long period at home suffering shortness of breath he had to have triple coronary bypass surgery. It was a very hard time for him, not only as a result of the surgery, but also coming to terms with not being invincible. He seemed much calmer for a while and the girls and I commented on this fact to each other, but sadly this did not last and I spent many meal times staring out of the window during some altercation or other that was taking place and wondering what I was doing there. I suppose as the girls were growing up, I realized that we had nothing in common, and

worst of all we just could not have a peaceful discussion, we really did not communicate with each other. I have to say from my part I felt there was no respect as I was spoken at, not to! In spite of what used to come up about my not being severed from my mother's umbilical cord, which automatically made me resentful, I did try very hard to make a life in Yorkshire and made a number of friends, especially when I took a job at Trinity and All Saints college in Horsforth an area of Leeds. It was quite a distance from where we lived and as it was again a part time position, I used to take the bus to the city, go for a workout at a fitness Centre called Butterflies, then take another bus to the college.

We did have some good moments in the Dales like the day of Charles and Diana's wedding when after watching it, we went up on Ilkley Moor, which was covered in heather. Our visits to Roundhay park a really nice green space, Golden Acre Park, especially lovely in spring with rhododendrons and with the azaleas reflected in the lake, and the Canal gardens, all free incidentally.

Shelley and I joined the Leeds playhouse theatre club and went each month to see the plays, on reading an advertisement requesting for accommodation for artists in the programme; we agreed to give it a try. It was fun; we had a good relationship with all of them, it made life more interesting.

Just a minor thing I will mention, as we all know science is coming up with new and better treatments all the time, and one of the things that stick out in my mind is having an artificial piece of tooth fixed to my upper front tooth as it had been broken since I was eight years old. I fell down the stairs with my doll in my arms and knocked it on its head. The only alternative previously was to have your tooth filed down to a stump, and then a cap fitted over it, but they sometimes came off, so I decided not to go for that. This little snippet of information may hardly seem worth

mentioning, but it shows how things improve as I will relate later in this life of mine.

Coming back to the sequence of events; Tracey went to live with Steven, whom she later married, Colin said he understood her better than I and that they were close, and that I favoured Shelley. I will not elaborate on that as I am trying to keep this totally objective and sticking to actual happenings, suffice it to say as most parents know it is not possible to treat siblings alike, no matter how hard you try.

When Shelley went to work at Pontins in Bracklesham Bay, my friend Anne, her daughter Jayne and I had a holiday there. I shall never forget it, so relaxed and such a laugh, as it was the following year when I went to visit Shelley in London, she was in digs with her friend Rita, such fun and again I felt so relaxed.

Sadly, it made me feel less and less able to keep a still tongue when provoked by Colin and he pushed me away metaphorically speaking and I was never relaxed in his company. One particular occasion was when my mother and father came to stay for a break for Dad and a rest for Mum, as it would appear that she had not been coping for some time and Dad had been doing all the chores. The Doctor told him Mum was suffering from mental exhaustion. During their short stay Colin decided to take up the floor boards on our landing and start banging down floor boards. As he was never really keen on DIY, it made us all on edge. I loved my parents very much and they were very kind they were to Colin, especially in the early days, knowing what a hard home life he came from. When someone insults anyone, you care for, it hurts you. One day when Colin was being particularly rude about my mum, he bent down to find something in a cupboard, I jumped on his back and pummeled him until my fists hurt, it did not make much difference but it made me feel better, as I seldom let my feelings out, for if I had I am sure life would have become one long shouting match. I am sure I am not the only one to experience that kind of thing but I have to mention it to illustrate

how bad things were becoming. The girls said we were bickering all the time and that we should seek marriage guidance, which we did. The man we saw was a psychologist at Leeds University. After one visit he handed Colin a paper to study, more or less saying "no man is God and it is the way you speak to someone that earns respect". The saddest thing of all was my husband could not see it. I was moving towards my fifties, so the menopause was blamed for my more positive approach, whether it was, or just coincidence, I will never know. All I know is that I felt there must be a less tense way of living than the way we were, so believing we only get one life, I decided to act.

During this time Colin was made redundant and with his medical history he did not think he would get another job in industry, so he put our house on the market and said he was going to be a shop keeper down south. The strange thing is that he knew our separation was inevitable, but things could have been a lot worse, he must have been making sure I had someone down south e.g., mum and dad. It must have been a subconscious act by him. Our relationship did not improve, so I decided to engage the help of a solicitor after Colin had left for the southcoast, leaving me to sell our house. He took on a small supermarket in Longridge Avenue Saltdean. I use the term "took on" advisedly as he could not afford to employ any staff, which it most definitely needed as he opened seven days a week as well as needing time for doing the accounts and ordering. Also, it is not a good idea to use the same accountant as the previous owner, especially if the accountant is covering the true value, as was later discovered, when my husband could no longer locate him. I am afraid it was another example of Colin thinking he knows best. The shop had living accommodation above, and the whole purchase took all our money, especially as he had to obtain a bridging loan until the house in Leeds was sold, we all know how costly that is. I had to change the estate agent. I only mention this because he used an agent based in a student bed-sit area, which I tried to point out. However, when Tracey suggested a more appropriate area he agreed to change, yet another

example of him undermining me. The most worrying thing of all was, if the business failed, he would also lose his home, which was exactly what did happen around two years later.

In the meantime, back in Leeds my dear friend Anne let me live with her when our house was finally sold. My brother, who incidentally had been coming to Yorkshire regularly delivering and collecting merchandise for work, helped us save the cost of a removal company by using the firm's lorry and taking all our belongings down south to the shop.

I continued to work at the college. Then when all the family came together for Mum and Dad's golden wedding celebrations, I stayed for a week and made a few enquiries about jobs in the Peacehaven area, bearing in mind my job limitations, I did not expect anything to come up very quickly, if at all. However, a couple of weeks later, I was asked if I would start at Butlins Hotel Saltdean the following week. I did not hesitate and my dear brother drove up the following weekend, loaded his car with me and the rest of my belongings and back to the south I came. Poor mum and dad had me and all my stuff crammed in to their little bungalow. We spent ten years in Yorkshire, it is a beautiful County and we saw more of it by living there, than we would otherwise have done, for that I am grateful, but I was thankful to be where my roots lie; especially now I was on my own.

MADNESS SADNESS AND INSECURITY

My new job was fine, everyone was friendly, and the only thing was that like most telephonists I had a little office apart from everyone. It was fine during the day as there were two of us, but on the evening shift we were alone and most of the staff were in the ball room. Sometimes people came to the office to make enquiries and that is how I met a certain John Maloney. He worked at St. Dunstan's, a home for war blind men and woman, which is just up the road, he used to cheer me up and help to pass the time and looking back I was very vulnerable. I was fifty by this time, so possibly the menopause did not help, although the Doc did prescribe estragon patches, which you stuck on your body anywhere below the waist, these were the early days of H.R.T.

I had no idea what the future had in store. Shelley and Tracey, I believe, suggested I give my marriage another try, so I went to the apartment above the shop, and moved in, with neither acceptance nor refusal on Colin's part.

It was the summer holiday, so Shelley and her friend Rita came to help me get the flat in to some sort of shape; it was in a dreadful state as Colin literally had no time at all. He opened every day, even Sunday mornings, then there were the books to do, the shop to clean and ordering to be done, crazy for one person, especially having had heart problems. The girls and I had to bang a little to repair the floor, but Colin used to shout at us to stop, so it made things very difficult. I could not plan meals because we always had to have food which could no longer be sold. After being ignored even when I tried to get in to our bed. I finally decided to seek the services of a solicitor and once again commence the divorce. I moved back to my parents.

In the meantime, John Maloney paid me attention giving me little presents and even coming to see me at home when I was off sick, it was he who suggested I apply for a council home, he obviously knew more about the system than either myself or mum and dad, they were really not very worldly wise.

During this time John M took me out and about, we used to go off to here there and everywhere, finishing up in some café somewhere, maybe a dive in Brighton, but the food was wholesome, or Gatwick airport, and even on one occasion Lyd airport in Kent. One day he drove all the way to Blackpool just to see the lights. We went dancing in Brighton and on one occasion it snowed so hard I could not get home and genuinely had to stay at 5 Chichester Place Kemp town where he was living. He was a wild Irish man, but I must say at that point in my life I was a bit crazy myself. Anyway, after about six months I was offered a flat in north Peacehaven, 58 Cinque Foil.

Yes, you guessed it John moved in. Looking back, I believe he came along by fate, and although he turned out to be a bit of a rogue, he helped me furnish the flat and knew all the things I was entitled to. We had holidays in the Isle of Wight, Scotland and Jersey. I knew deep down he was restless and was not the settling type. I knew it must end sometime and he was not good for me long term, but when you are on your own, you push thoughts in to the background.

Mum and Dad were rubbing along ok as I thought, we used to drop in and see them. On Saturday 5th September 1987 we called in on our way home from Eastbourne, Mum was in bed, she said she was tired, Dad told us he had called a doctor because she had fainted. The Doctor told my father to give her sweet tea and left. So, it was a total shock when the phone rang early the next morning and Dad crying "she's gone". Needless

to say, I had an altercation with her doctor the following week, but it does not bring them back. My concern for Dad took precedence, especially when one month later we had the famous Oct. 7th hurricane, the power went off and when in the morning we tried to get to him, there was a tree across the road. The whole area looked like a war zone.

On top of the death of my Mother I had to face unemployment, as Ladbroke's took over the Hotel, and quite a number of us were made redundant. I decided I must do something, so I contacted the WRVS. As a result, I went to help with the meals on wheels, cooking and packing them. It was there I met Connie, who turned out to be a really good friend to me.

By the following January, John Maloney left for Australia, I knew he was going and I also knew it was the right thing to happen, in order that I can move on, but move on where? I still felt very low, I still felt we only have one life but what to do with mine? I had a very good social worker, who had known John M. and through her I saw a counsellor. I do not think she helped very much, but I did learn through her that there was a class for people who just wanted to improve their skills, whether it was to read write or even just wiring a plug. The tutor helped me with my spelling, but most of all she took me shopping for a dress when I had a surprise invitation to Tracey's wedding. I had very little money, because Colin hung on to the shop until he could no longer afford to buy any more stock, so after the sale my half from 25 years of marriage and the up-market properties we had lived in was about £11,000.

During the time the shop was sold and Tracey's wedding, Colin met and married. His wife was pregnant. Shelley did visit me and warn me of this, before I went. On top of this I was informed that I would not be in the car as the bride's mother, as his new wife

would be taking precedence over me, bearing in mind Tracey was still living in Leeds, my dear brother and Gerry came to give me moral support.

I continued to keep as busy as possible. I made myself a little garden. One thing I was so glad I did, was to contact the local W.I. one lady lived just nearby and picked me up and took me to their meetings.

The Tender Years

I wasn't here when you were one, or two, or three, or four.
When you were five, I did arrive, please let me tell you more.
I'm sure you know of what I speak, the good old W.I
If only people realised how much there is to try.
Just come along and sing our song for fun and relaxation, or join in many other groups for sport or education.
They even have a college in the heart of Oxfordshire where you can learn all sorts of things - too much to mention here.

We know all this, I hear you cry, you preach to the converted.
If only we could get through to the lonely and deserted.
We're not all pompous or all good at jam and cakes and sewing,
Some like a chat- what's wrong with that? - reason enough for going.

This helped a lot I made lasting friends, a couple I still see today.

In fact time flew. SO I WROTE.....

We're ten today, that is to say this branch where we belong.
A decade passed, yes, we will last- we're small but we are strong.
So happy birthday and good luck
Let's give ourselves three cheers.
The past has gone and we move on beyond the tender years.



THE DRAMA GROUP

It led to other activities, such as a drama club, a flower arranging class, and various competitions.

When I had been there a while, I wrote a little poem on how I felt about the W.I.

This is it...

Peacehaven evening W.I. is six years old today,
It helps especially if you're shy to find an easy way,
Of joining in and making friends as part of a community,
I'm sure like me, you'll all agree, there's nothing quite like unity,
We learn a bit,
We earn a bit,
In an atmosphere convivial,
And at parties we play games,
pursuits, who says there trivial,
But jokes apart, a club like ours, cannot run on its own,
It's thanks to our committee, folks,
From strength to strength it's grown,
So happy birthday W.I. we're glad of your existence,
And hope that you will grow and thrive,
Way on in to the distance.

I will pop in here a couple of verses I wrote while I was a member;

When Jenny called me up and said our group is 25,
I was amazed cause I joined in when you were only 5,
I didn't know a soul back then, you made me feel a part,
of something really special, I mean it from my heart,
I met my future husband Ron, we moved away from here,
when we returned, I met Pat B, and she was so sincere,
she said come back and so I did, so many friendly faces,
At drama club and monthly talks and visiting nice places,
I know I'm not a member now, as I have so much to do,
thank you again for inviting me, good luck and God bless you.

We all have a time when we despair, and what with losing mum, losing my job, and a divorce, I believe if it had not been for friends, it would have been the Samaritans. Amidst all this I had been applying for a position at NatWest bank, I had an interview but not receiving any word from them for ages, I thought I had not been accepted, but one morning, months later I had a phone call saying I had been offered the position. I rang dad in tears, he obviously thought something else was wrong, but was relieved when I told him my news. I enjoyed working at North Street Brighton branch of NatWest bank, most of the staff were Brightonions with a great sense of fun, rather like the true Londoners, and another plus for me was that the switchboard was in the machine room where quite a few staff also worked, so I was not on my own. Things went along ok. Before starting at the bank, my friend Connie and I used to go to the local market where a stall holder named Vickie kitted me out with skirts and blouses suitable for my new job, for just a few quid. Connie used to wear a red hat, so that I could find her if we got separated.

Later we were provided with uniforms. So, things settled down nicely and I became involved with a photographer who is a lecturer at Brighton University along with some folk who were

residents to gather what little amount of history there is on this area.

MY TOWN

My town was once a haven of peace,
On the south coast where downs and cliffs meet,
There was just a rough track, called the main Dover Road,
Which now is a wide busy street,
Once Down land was the only sight,
Between Brighton and Newhaven port,
Then dwellings sprang up as the Down land was sold,
Willy nilly without too much thought,
This place was then called Anzac on Sea, after brave men who fought
in the war,
But the people decided to vote for a change,
And Peacehaven came top of the score,
So Peacehaven it is, grown from village to town,
With new homes mixed in with the old,
Five Churches, a Precinct, some old shops, some new,
And good Hostelries, so I've been told,
Because it's so new it's a good place to be,
There is still much to look forward to,
For the old folk it offers a pleasant retreat,
And the young still have much more to do,
Do visit Peacehaven if you get the chance,
Take a walk on the cliff tops or Tye,
Or visit our market, there's bargains galore,
Who knows we may meet by and by.

TWENTY YEARS LATER

Now years have gone by, a generation or two,
And hopes we all had have been lost,
The only trunk road which I mentioned before,
Without safe crossings cannot be crossed,
We know homes are needed it's been made quite clear,
Population is growing so fast,
We have more than our quota of homes as we fear,
Soon emergencies will not get past,
We have lost the few shops in the precinct we had,
And are waiting for something quite new,
But houses come first and its really quite sad,
Because Shops there are only a few,
They say the people of Peacehaven should be glad,
They got what they chose, is this true?
Education and health seem to have been forgotten,
So how far will we go if we are feeling rotten?

The previous February when Shelley visited me, she filled in an application form from DateLine International and told me to post it, I put it in the drawer never dreaming I would ever send it, but about six months later, when I was feeling particularly lonely, I posted it off.

I had made friends with a lovely family through a guy named Tim, who I know was keen on me, but it was not reciprocated, we were as they say, just good friends and I got along well with the whole family, but you still come home to an empty house. So, I took the plunge, luckily for me contact was made by phone, not the web. I met a few quite pleasant men in the local pub, my friend Connie used to hide round a corner in order to see that I arrived safely, and then used to give me a ring later to see I had come home safely. Until one evening in November, when I was supposed to meet someone, I was held up by helping a neighbor

and he was on his way from Eastbourne, so I let him meet me at my home. When he arrived, I had my hair in rollers, we just talked all evening and he asked if he could see me again. His name is Ronald Albert Fry. I had already arranged to spend Christmas with Tim and his parents, as dad was spending Xmas with John, my allergies to dogs prevented me from staying there. Tim and family had also bought tickets for a New Year dance, so having made arrangements I did not see Ronald again until after the New Year 1990. Our relationship as far as I was concerned grew very slowly, perhaps this is the better way, he finally came to stay, but he was not comfortable with this arrangement, and after about a year, he said it must be marriage or nothing. I came to my senses at last and said yes.

So, we had a lovely wedding on Saturday 25th April 1992 at Lewes registry office, with a reception at the Ship Hotel Newhaven.

RONALD AND ME



This is part of my life I never thought would happen, but what a silly thing to say, because none of us know what the future holds. I suppose I mean I never dreamed I would find a partner, let alone one as caring and naturally instinctive to my sight restriction, as he had never had to deal with anyone like me in all his 65 years. Of course, this made me very happy and more relaxed. I can only speak for myself,

but with lack of sight, I live on my nerves, never knowing what I may be confronted with. My ex always said I would never manage on my own, but I did. Prior to meeting Ron I explained my situation to the bank manager, who dealt with all my financial affairs, bills etc, and with good friends, I got along fine.

Just a little about Ron's background;

He had been married for nearly 40 years, until his wife died two years before he and I met. He has two offspring Adrian and Marilyn. Ronald had retired by the time we met, so he used to take me to work and meet me at the end of the day. He let his house in Eastbourne and we lived in my flat for a while, but by December 17th that year we moved back to his home in Eastbourne, 5 Thornwood Close, Willingdon Trees.

I managed to get a transfer to the branch of Nat West at 96 Terminus Road in the town centre. So not only did he take me to the bank in the morning and pick me up at five, he used to come and take me out at lunch time so that I could get a little exercise. You see apart from one or two exceptions, the staff there were not very friendly and I always felt very alone. I was

starting to become very bored with being a telephonist by this time, the frustration and lack of stimulation was really getting to me.

In the meantime, Ron and I enjoyed our life; we joined the friends of the Devonshire Park theatre. The committee asked me if I would advise the volunteers who were training to audio describe the productions, which I did, I have always believed that only people with a particular need can truly know what is required.

**Our Devonshire Park is a treasure,
Its value is so hard to measure,
By Being a friend,
We keep up the trend,
To continue a future of pleasure**

I was so pleased to hear they are still audio describing where appropriate. You see it is a very old Theatre and funds are always needed to keep it going.

We had quite a few holidays including one to Florida before we were married, “nothing in that” you say, except it was my birthday soon after we returned and dear Gerry that is my brother’s partner made me a Mickey Mouse cake, but I was so drunk I only saw a photograph of it later. As Ron does not like alcohol, it’s a wonder we ever got married. Do not think I was a drinker, but at parties I have been known to become quite uninhibited, but I can honestly say it is just fun as far as I am concerned, I believe everyone should let their hair down occasionally.

Dad came with us on holiday a couple of years running, first to Austria via France, Germany, Luxemburg, and across the border in to Hungary, just to say we had stepped on Hungarian soil. You see dad always wanted to travel, so he made up for lost time.

The following year 1994 the three of us went to Cyprus and from there; we went on a mini cruise to Egypt and Israel.



A COUPLE OF HOLIDAY PLACES

A year later after a short illness (cancer) dad died. I am so glad he managed to fulfil some of his dreams. I also know he used to worry about me, as did mum. I have learnt since that parents worry about their children far more than the children worry about themselves. So I know he was relieved when I married, because just before he died he asked Ron to take care of me, and he certainly has.

So much has happened since I met Ronald. Tracey had a baby, and when Freddie came along, we took a trip up to Leeds, and Tracey and I were reconciled. Although things shortly after when Shelley was married, were still not good. She sat at a separate table with her father and his new wife, with their three-year-old Son Ashlea. By the way Freddie is a girl and now is a young lady.

I had not seen a great deal of Shelley either during this period, in fact my soon to be husband took me to London to visit her and her partner in their house they had recently moved, we had a job to find it as it was thick snow, quite unusual for Middlesex. Shelley was married just one month before we were, very posh Greek wedding, in London. Our reception was at the Ship Inn at Newhaven and we did our own catering. I used to love cooking and with Ron's help I made and decorated trays of cakes of every flavour you can think of, it was all good fun. Our wedding cake was made by Gerry.

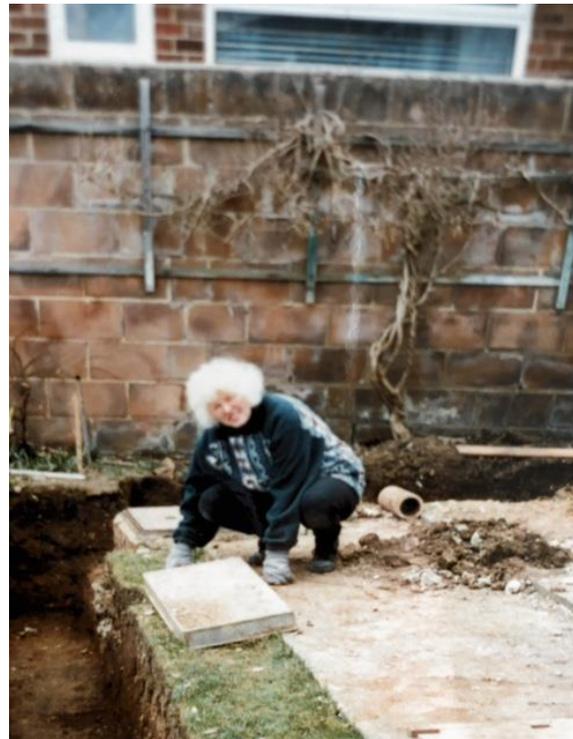


OUR WEDDING CAKE

We lived in Eastbourne until 1996, a year after the death of my Father. My brother and I inherited dad's bungalow, we both agreed to sell it and share the money, but as the local council had done quite a lot of work on it free of charge, due to its age, built 1924, we learnt that if we sold it, we would have to pay for the improvements. There was a slump in the housing market around that time and as there was still a lot more needed doing, we could not realize a good price. I am a great believer in fate, we nearly sold the bungalow, but three days before contracts

were signed the buyers had to pull out, and with John's blessing we decided to take it on.

The following year was quite manic, because we put in for planning permission to enlarge the property, as well as completely gutting the existing rooms partly because everywhere needed re furbishing, as well as to remove all the polystyrene from the walls and ceilings, as it was all the rage in the 1960s to 70's but we know now it is a fire hazard. Fortunately, Ronald was able to do most of the work himself, as he had been a builder with his own business, so with a little help from some of his work colleges and me as labourer we built our new home.



I was still working during that period but had reduced my work time to three days a week. A little about my job at that time in the bank; the reason I asked to cut down my hours was the pressure from management to re-train, but as I pointed out I only had just over a year to go before I retired. It was hardly worth their while spending money. I mention this small point because

today as I write this, any training regarding answering the phones is not for the better. We telephonists used to be admonished if we did not answer the calls within three rings, now, not only are you kept waiting, you are lucky if you speak to a real person. When I look back and think of the stress, I felt trying to achieve the impossible, I know why I enjoy my retirement so much.

Back to the building work, it took all of a year, but it was very exciting. We both said we would not like to do it all over again but it was very rewarding. We finally moved in on my Tracey's birthday June 26th 1996. The work was not complete, but Ronald had sold his house and the people wanted to move in. All the rubble from the building we used as hard core to make a slope from the back door rather than steps down to the patio, because during this period my eyes were deteriorating and while we were still living in Eastbourne, I remember coming home from work one Friday afternoon and being in tears calling the local hospital, and telling someone I can hardly see. They were brilliant, a specialist saw me without the usual Doctors letter, it was suggested I attend Moorefield's as Eastbourne did not have the equipment to see behind my very scarred cornea.

I was very nervous, and looking back I think my brother was anxious too, he lived in Shepperton at that time, so we went there as he wanted to come with us. I really thought I was losing what little sight I had and I had been so looking forward to making a proper garden, how would I manage?

I saw a Professor Buckley, after having had scans of the back of my eyes, he said it was difficult to see behind the cornea but he offered to try grafts and also lens implants if they were needed, they would not be able to tell until the cornea had been removed. Needless to say, I accepted, there was no other choice. On the day of my first operation, this was to be on my right eye, the one

which was the best of the two, although by now of very little use. My left eye was always lazy, even though I had squint correction at the age of 13.

I was naturally feeling anxious and Professor Buckley asked me if I would take part in a clinical trial, using an anti-rejection drug called Cyclosporine, I agreed even though I knew nothing about it. I think anyone would have done the same at the eleventh hour.

The following day, when the pads were removed from my eye, I was so surprised and elated, as the result was instantaneous everything was so bright, I expected it to be a gradual process, but of course it was silly of me to think that way, when obviously once a healthy cornea is in place my vision would be clearer. I returned home the following day, armed with packets of the anti-rejection drug, which I took as prescribed. It was not long before I began to feel quite unwell, which detracted from my joy at being able to see even the veins on leaves and the beautiful colours all around me.

I remember one occasion when I could hardly put one foot in front of the other, I was on my way to Shelley's, by the evening I felt so ill she contacted the hospital and they said to stop the medicine immediately. I was subsequently put on a lower dose and remained on it for a whole year, after which I was told to stop the drug, of course I did so and during the following three weeks, the slight hint of eczema I had, built up to a point at which I was covered from head to toe with burning full blown attack. When our G.P. came as I felt too ill to attend the surgery, he said he had never seen such a bad case as mine. I subsequently had to go on another dose of steroids to dampen the attack. On further enquiries I was told Cyclosporine or trade name Neoral is a treatment for severe cases of eczema, and although mine had

not been very bad, by suppressing it for a year, it had caused a full-blown attack. My immune system was all over the place, I had a stomach ulcer, which I was told was a side effect of the medication, as was shingles which developed soon after, a large hole appeared in my left calf, which I treated myself with Hypericum. I was very angry as not only did I feel my slight eczema was not taken in to account, therefore not making me a suitable patient for this particular trial, I am sure my medical history was not considered and on top of all that I discovered there is no need for anti-rejection drugs for that type of operation. I was so incensed about the situation, I tried to make a complaint, first to the hospital, then through a solicitor who specifically dealt in medical claims, but all I got told was “this drug is used for suffers of eczema”. I kept saying mine was not bad before I was given the drug and any way, I was not being given it for any skin condition, just for a trial. It was like banging my head against a brick wall and I did not feel well enough at that time to bother any more. The legal profession seemed to all understand what I was saying but the medical profession closed ranks. Despite all that in between the setbacks, we made a cosy home for ourselves.

I retired from the bank on November 31st 1996, three months before my cornea graft. I just hated it at the Eastbourne branch of the bank, it was like I was on my own, never a part of a team, not even when it came to the social side. They never asked me to join them in the pub on a Friday lunch time, and I will never forget the Christmas party before I left. We were all asked to buy a cheeky present for a particular person in the office, the guy I had to choose something for was in the same office as me, and I had heard some of his jokes, so I knew he would have a laugh when he opened my gift. I I asked my butcher to shape a joint of beef to look like a bum it was very realistic. Everyone had bought something cheeky or sexy, and what did I get, a set of

knitting needles, I felt so upset, not only because of feeling left out, but my idea got a good laugh but not a word was said to me, even though they knew it was my idea.

So, you can see why I was so glad to leave. I can honestly say I have never been treated that way in my entire career. Another reason I was glad to retire was, that I had to sit for hours every day and it was getting me down, I wanted to be more active.

The next few years saw Ronald and I becoming more involved in activities, classes, holidays, and keeping very busy. Starting with a course on garden design, the following year we took a horticulture course at the ecology centre Brighton, which I enjoyed very much and it certainly helped with our developing garden, which still remains my favourite hobby. The next year I joined an open learning class, to help me with my spelling. You see when you are unable to see well enough to read much you do not visualize the spelling in your mind's eye. The tutor was very good and at the end of the course I had a short story and limerick published in the college magazine. I've popped it in at the end.

Joining the local horticulture club was a whole new experience for us, the meetings are very interesting and we entered the annual shows and won lots of prizes.



A picture of our garden featured on the cover of the Peacehaven horticulture show prospectus, for a number of years we opened our garden for charity.



A couple of Halloween photos

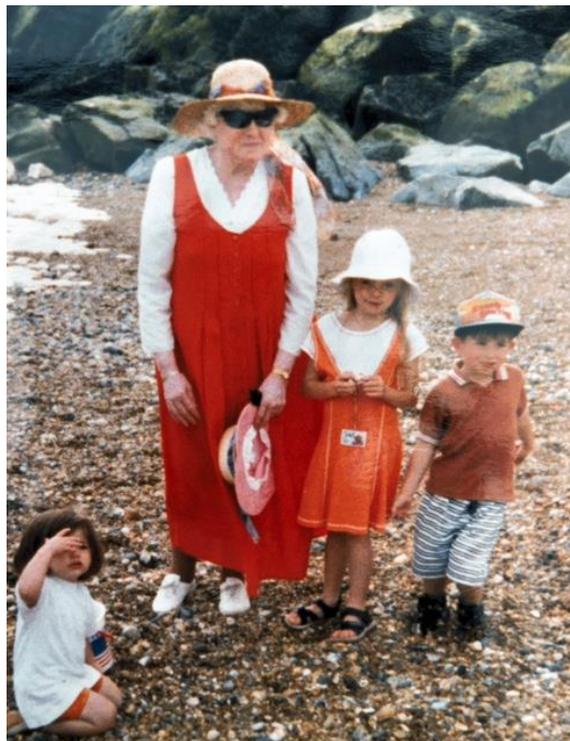
We had lots of fun too. I joined the Peacehaven, Telscombe and East Saltdean Access Group after I retired. This is a group working in conjunction with the council to improve conditions in the environment for the public, especially the disabled. There are branches all over the country. I chaired these monthly meetings, and we also had promotion days such as coffee mornings, exhibitions and fetes. As a result of our activities, we have made many friends.



When the U3A hit Peacehaven, that is the University of the Third Age, I left the W.I. as just as its name suggests Ron and I could take part in a diversity of activities together.

A SUMMER SALE

In 2001 Shelley and the children left their home in Enfield and came to live with us, she was very unhappy. She had not really told me too much about what had gone on prior to coming to us, those first few weeks with us were not easy. We eventually found a school which would take both children. Another reason it was difficult, Ron found it hard having three extra people in our bungalow, you see, he always wanted me all to himself, and he certainly let us know it, but I have to say he was extremely helpful in a practical way over the next few years. After about two months having proved they needed a place of their own and knowing that it had to be done the hard way, because of course, I had personal experience of being homeless. Eventually they had a house nearby it was good in many ways having some of my family living close.



MY 3 GRANDCHILDREN

While they were settling in, I was asked if I would spend a week or so in Bart's Hospital for some tests. I believe more for the benefit of science. I do not remember my skin or eyes actually

being given any new treatment, I know there are photos of the back of my eyes somewhere which have been used for training purposes.

Briefly returning to September 1999 I had my other cornea graft. I insisted on no steroids and luckily everything went well. My first thought when I wake in the morning is how grateful I am to have that little more sight, it makes so much difference to my life.

A strange phenomenon occurred in 2003/4 on one occasion when my brother was visiting us; I happened to mention my old school Dorton House and wondered whether the old house was still standing and if it was still a school. It was in what was then a hamlet with just a church nearby; apparently it used to be one of the Guinness homes. I think I mentioned where it was in my early days, set in the Chiltern Hills. My brother said he would take a detour on his way back to Wales where he now lives. I have talked about the outcome in an earlier section of my life. It was odd that it was to be the 50th, year, how strange was that? If I had thought about it a year later, I would have been too late. Needless to say, I attended, it was a strange experience, there was so much of the old, like the wood carved panelled walls, the main hall still had the old fire place and the creaky floor boards, from the outside it looked just the same with its circular lawn at the front, and the terraces were just as I remember them, where we once sat on the lawn below watching the older kids performing a production of (The Merchant of Venice), while us younger kids sat on the lawn below.



I did not get to meet any of the ex-pupils I remembered. There were a couple I vaguely recalled, they said they remembered me tap dancing and singing Cruising down the river. I do not think I was any naughtier than the others, but I could always be identified because of my fair hair. While I am writing about going back, Ron and I took a trip to Kempshott, Basingstoke to visit friends where I lived. I felt very odd, after 20 years obviously the trees had grown taller, and on peeping in at 176 Pack Lane the house I used to live in I was sad to see they had destroyed two silver birch and a mountain ash tree. They say you should never go back. I know now I would never come back to where I live now, if, or when I ever leave.

In 2005 I moved into the computer age, the year before I saw a sales man selling a make who specialize in computers set up with speech and or large print, I said I would never have a computer. However, I am so glad I changed my mind, for I have found it quite liberating. Not only can I write and know it will be readable, but my spelling has improved greatly with the help of Ron and the spell checker. I can look things up for myself. I am sure if computers were the norm when I was younger, I might have achieved greater things, hey-hoe. I took a beginner's course at the Brighton College and the following year I continued with another at the Connaught Centre Hove. They were most helpful, but there is still much I do not know. At as I write this on

the 16th day of February 2008, I will be starting another class in Eastbourne in the Autumn. It is as a result of using a computer; I am able to write this. I know it will be of little interest to anyone, but perhaps when I am gone my Grandchildren may find it of interest, even if it is only to compare their life with ours, and pause to think on the changes that will inevitably occur.

ROCK AND ROLL



When I was 70 and Ronald was 80, we held a 1960's themed party for all our family and friends. It was a highlight I shall never forget. My brother sorted out all the music, Shelley arranged for Batman and Robin to arrive, courtesy of two of her friends. My two girls decorated the hall 60's style, and most of us dressed up, it was brilliant. Just one thing, my other Granddaughter Freddie was missing. She has a hard time getting on with her Mum, such a shame I pray that one day they will be able to be close again, because there is nothing better than a close Mother and daughter relationship.

It transpired that Ronald and I had another 9 years together. As my Husband was getting a little weaker, we were lucky enough to live next door to my daughter, as our garden was getting too much for us, although we still made a pretty little garden at 10 Firle Road, Shelley and her partner were at No.8 with a gate between the two properties.

We still made the most of our time together, visiting nice places, until I fractured my femur in Italy. After which we kept closer to home. In 2016 May 31st, to be precise we had found a house with Shelley which had our own private apartment downstairs.

However, we still did many things in those precious years, our last European holiday was to be Venice but unfortunately, that is where my accident occurred I fractured my femur, so it obviously had to be curtailed.

A carcrash on return from a trip home from the beautiful Sheffield Park mid Sussex where with other members of U3A we learnt a little about photography and trees. We still continued with

singing on a Monday, we were at the archives of the Senior Citizens Association, as well as being involved in research in order to piece together information on the area between Brighton and Newhaven, now called Peacehaven, there were no proper archives, so it is good to feel you could contribute in a small way.

I also attend my Patient Participation Group in order to pass any help to the disabled.

Ronald was always there for me, even the reunion at Dorton House school which I mention in an earlier section. He was always by my side.

As I write this, I now live in 37 Cairo Avenue, still in Peacehaven.

Sadly, we had only been living here four months when Ronald passed away, he saw I was safe but like others when you lose someone you love I shall always miss him, but we certainly made the most of our time together. Colin my first husband died a couple of weeks previously, sadly he did suffer; cancer. So Shelley was not only supporting me but rushing to the hospital each time she was called for day and night as well as going to work.

ANOTHER CHANGE - Not quite 80

That was my age when my husband died. The next year was a bit of a haze but I felt very well supported by my family. They who gave me a great 80th birthday the following year, with a present of a piano which was a total surprise. I do have time on it when I am on my own, it gives me pleasure, but I also feel a bit sad, wishing I could have had lessons when I was young. I know many people say this but for me it is a real regret. Learning braille music was beyond me.

I continued with all my activities. One thing I must mention here, the family have a dog ,so I kept my distance due to my allergies, but after Ronald's funeral she came to me putting her front paws on my knees and giving me a kiss or should I say lick and I seem to be desensitised. Since then I have been close to cats, petted rabbits and even stroked a skunk. So anybody out there who is allergic to anything have faith, you may become desensitised from the thing that has bothered you.

I have been helping at the dementia coffee morning and joined two clubs, which encourage people to keep as active as possible. I still attend the Access group, although I'm finding it disheartening, there is very little done by the council to help the disabled. I have joined a fortnightly Film group and a monthly Knit and natter group, so I was feeling fine.

The Christmas a year after Ron passed away, I developed an infection with a high temperature. I made a full recovery but a check over at the time showed I had a blocked heart valve, so, as I was pretty fit otherwise, I was offered an operation. Although I felt perfectly well, I agreed to surgery and was put on the waiting list. In October I was admitted, and was only in Hospital for a couple of days, but from that day everything became vague. I developed Charles Bonnet syndrome do you know what that is?

my family had no idea! It appeared I behaved completely off my head and was taken back to Hospital, apparently the cardiac team stood round my bed saying I did not have dementia, even the medics were at a loss, so needless to say I was back in Hospital with my daughter literally doing everything for me. I gradually returned to normality. One thing I was told shocked everyone was as Shelley was leaving the ward I said “what do you want for fucking Christmas” Shelley is the last person I would say such a thing and the F word is not in my usual vocabulary. Obviously everyone looked up the cause. It would appear that it is most common in people with sight loss although others can be effected, usually when a patient has been given strong drugs. I was surprised I had never heard of it considering I have been registered blind all my life.

Like most people at the age I am now I had a few health issues treatable with medication and I am the proud owner of seven pretty coloured plastic boxes each divided in three sections; morning, noon and night, keeping me alive. I feel quite well, which is lucky because as every knows 2020 was the start of the Covid pandemic and like many people I missed seeing my friends and going out.

This is where I am now on a sunny day in April 2021 feeling optimistic.

As I write this, I am now 83, and still looking forward to, who knows what? A few months ago, my daughter presented me with a Budgerigar, it was a total surprise. Throughout my life we have had Budgies but sadly the last one was eaten by the dog, so we were reluctant to get another. I only mention this because they are such fun when given time to play with them out of their cage as well as relaxing to listen to.

I have reached the time in my life when I have interest and get out, luckily I can afford. The lady I have had to let go, as she could only do a short time, the help just a walk for example, when I told her my age, she genuinely was surprised. I Gotta keep moving.

I will continue with my Journal for as long as I can.



As I write this closure, I shall be 84 tomorrow and I guess if changing the colour of your hair was as easy as it is today, mum and dad would not have to face the looks and comments like when I was young. You see children who looked different years ago were not encouraged to mix. So you see why I thank my parents posthumously.

FOOT NOTE

If my life story were made public and any relative or friend were to read this Autobiography and recognise someone I knew, or maybe a relative or friend as I know some of the folks mentioned are no longer with us, I would so love to hear from you.

I am hoping to be around for a few years yet.

I still live in Peacehaven, at 37 Cairo Avenue

BN10 7PX

My email address is

Jillfry123@btinternet.com

Finally, my very simple effort of writing

Not Shakespeare nor (Mills & Boon)

A Sonnet to the Seasons

**I love to wax poetical,
April and in May.
These days it sounds theatrical
What's wrong with that I say?
And then in June
I almost swoon
At nature in its glory
And what about the harvest moon?
If that could tell its story
The beauty of an Autumn Day
With colours swiftly changing,
The leaves have barely blown away
Then Winter's rearranging.
With magic powers it gives us flowers
That bloom again in Spring.**

A PARODY ON WORDSWORTH FAMOUS POEM

I struggle madly through the crowds,
To buy the food and pay the bills,
The noise of traffic oh so loud,
I must get home and take some pills,
I'm sure you see,
This parody,
Is on Wordsworth's poem based,
If he were here,
I'd make it clear,
By showing the beauty beyond all the haste,
In town and country garden still,
Whatever the season, there full of surprises,
Even the famous daffodil,
Comes in all shapes and sizes,
So much has changed, but not all bad,
Developed by nature, God and man,
We can spend hours,
Enjoying the flowers,
Even more lovely,,
Since poems began

CINDERELLA IN SHORT BUT NOT FOR LONG

Cinderella isn't a fella
As all you good people must know
Her ugly sisters are a couple of Misters
But when dressed for the ball it doesn't show
They were rotten to Cinders
Said "get on them winders
To the ball you are not going to go"
Footman Buttons did luv er
Just like a bruvver
Said "Cinders you'll go to the ball"

And while they were dreaming
An old lady was scheming
To be a fairy and come through the wall
From rags, pumpkin and mice
With her wand in a trice
Changed to carriage and all brand-new clothes
She said "now then deary, although I'm a fairy
At midnight the magic all goes"
She met her Prince Charming
But aint this alarming
He fell for that woman that night
But the Prince in his splendour
Is the opposite gender
Cor isn't she in for a fright!
Soon midnight was chiming
(And is this still rhyming)
As she ran her shoe fell on the stairs
The prince picked up her slipper
Said "I'll marry this stripper"
So, both sisters said it was theirs
With hairy legs showing
They just got one toe in
Then Buttons appeared on the scene
Said "Cinders must try it
You cannot deny it"
It fitted and now she's his queen
Boom boom!

A Short Story

I woke with a start and sat up before I had even opened my eyes, thinking, “Where on earth am I?” As I came to, I could hear a scratching and yelping noise at my door. It soon came back to me: I was back at home and that was my dog Molly waiting for me to let her in. I quickly scrambled out of bed and opened the door and she threw herself at me. Even though she was quite old, she was still very active and loved to go for walks. I had really missed Molly. She had been bought for me in my early teens and I had just returned from studying for a degree in law. I loved being back at home; I really am a country girl at heart. I’d been at Birmingham University for three years and had hardly left the campus except for the odd visit home.

I looked out of the window and decided it was time to get up and make the most of things before I went out and found a job. I threw on jeans and an old t-shirt, pulled a brush through my long blond hair and Molly and I crept downstairs. A voice called out to me.

“Is that you Virginia?”

“It’s alright mum, I’m just taking Molly for a walk,” I replied. We went out of the back door. It was a beautiful day, absolutely wonderful, the sort of day that reminded me of childhood. We went down the path through the copse at the bottom of the lane and out towards the stream. I strolled along and let Molly off her lead. Being a golden retriever, she loved the water and, although quite elderly, she quickly ran to the stream and got quite muddy in the rushing water.

As I ambled along watching Molly having the time of her life and enjoying the peace of the morning, I noticed a man walking towards me on the other side of the stream. He was tall and in his late twenties, seemingly in quite a hurry as he walked very

quickly. He had a springer spaniel with him who waded through the water to play with Molly. He was a fit and spritely dog, white and liver. The two dogs appeared to know each other and, as they played, it gave me a chance for a closer inspection of the young man. He was muscular and very good-looking. He called out a 'good morning' to me, but soon passed on his way, the dog quickly following, darting in and out of the trees as he went.

The next few weeks were my own. I was really enjoying my time in the countryside and wishing I could stay. Every morning I woke early and Molly and I took our walk by the stream. Each time the same man passed by. He always said good morning and sometimes waved in a friendly gesture but he always seemed in such a hurry and he never stopped to pass the time of day. As I walked, I often fantasized about talking to him – he really was gorgeous.

One morning I decided to take action and cross through the stream to talk with him. As I stepped off the bank, I lost my footing and fell. The bank was very wet and faster and faster I slid, further down, flaying about, trying to no avail to grab something that would stop my fall. Suddenly, with a huge splash, I hit the water. My head hit against something hard.

I woke up. Ouch my head hurt. I couldn't think where I was or what had happened.

"Hello Virginia," said a deep soothing voice.

I opened my eyes.

"Am I dreaming?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "You're in hospital. You've had a nasty bump to the head".

"Are you sure I'm not dreaming?"

“No, Virginia, you’re not dreaming”, he assured me. “In fact, I think it must be me who’s in a dream. It’s wonderful. I’ve been wanting to speak to you since the first time I saw you on the other side of the stream but I work such long hours that I never have the time in the mornings. I only just about have time to take the dog for a walk before work. It’s great to have the chance to speak to you at last,” he said. “You’re ok, just slight concussion. We’ll have to keep you here for a couple of days for observation.”

“But....”

“That’s right”, he said, “I’m the houseman here at the hospital”. I was in a daze. “Gosh,” I said, “Gosh, I’ve bumped my head, how wonderful.”

My mother was sitting beside my bed waiting for me to wake up. She laughed, “Well, I’ve never heard anyone refer to a bump on the head as wonderful before!”

I didn’t reply but smiled to myself as I lay there thinking what a great opportunity to speak to that gorgeous man from my early morning walks. He really seemed to like me too. He was very attentive during my recovery. Two things I already knew we had in common: rising early and or love of dogs.

An effort without education. Didn't even know the meaning of the word onerous, however writing my life story was not onerous for me.

By Jill Nunn/Parker/Fry.

A big thankyou to Shelley Sue my daughter for rescuing whenever I get stuck on my computer, and a lovely new friend name Tracy who helped me insert the photos.