

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF

ALLEN MILLER

3rd October 1955 – 3rd June 2019

**Friday 21st June 2019
3.30pm**

**West Norwood Crematorium
London
SE27**



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Allen was born on October 3rd 1955 in Plymouth, Devon, the first son for Grace and Walt. Younger brother Geoff was born four years later, in 1959.

Theirs was a happy childhood: dad Walt was a fireman, who had risen through the ranks – the boys were proud to visit him at work at the fire station on the Open Days; mum Grace had been a nurse, and then trained as a primary school teacher when the boys were young.

Geoff recalls family holidays in the caravan on the Devon coast, and camping in Northern France and Holland. There was a package holiday one year to Lloret de Mar. But generally the holidays were active, outdoors and fun: hikes on Dartmoor with cousins Sharon and Helen and Aunt Audrey and Uncle Ken, Walt's brother, exploring the coastline, the cliff tops and the beaches.

Mum was a good if traditional cook, but every now and then ventured into an exotic Vesta curry. Allen was particularly close to his Mum, and inherited her artistic streak – they seemed to understand each other. Dad was very practical – and this didn't rub off on Allen at all! But Allen also inherited from his parents strong values, and respect for all people, whatever their backgrounds.

Allen and Geoff were regular brothers as kids, knocking around playing football together, and with some mates in common, though mostly they had their own friends.

And Allen was a bright lad, with a real aptitude for maths – he won a coveted free scholarship place to independent secondary school Plymouth College. He did well in his exams and, when he was 18, he left Plymouth to go to university in Manchester to read Economics.

This was 1973 – the year when the UK joined the European Economic Community, our fishing vessels were deep in Cod Wars, inflation was at 8.4%, Sunderland beat Leeds in a shock win in the FA Cup final at Wembley, Princess Ann married Captain Mark Phillips, *Don't Look Now* and *The Wicker Man* were released in cinemas and Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* was first broadcast. And it was an extraordinary year for music – in fact, it's considered by some to be the greatest year ever for album releases. One of Allen's favourite bands, Led Zeppelin, released *House of Holy*, and the Rolling Stone's *Goat's Head Soup*, Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*, The Who's *Quadrophenia*, Genesis' *Selling England by the Pound*, Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* and Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* are just a few of the other LPs that also came out that year, now considered masterpieces. It was a great time for a music fan - Geoff remembers Allen going to gigs, including Roxy Music at the Guildhall, and being introduced by him to the Moody Blues, Santana, Paul Simon.

Allen graduated in 1976, but something seems to have happened at university, which increased his mental health difficulties afterwards.

However, he worked for a time as a programmer for the North Western Electricity Board. And then he moved to Hamburg in Germany for two or three years to work for his friend Geoffrey Cole, who had set up a language school. Allen taught English as a Foreign Language. This seems to have been a happy time for him.

He returned to London and there met a German girl, Silke. Together they had a baby boy, Laurenz. But Allen wasn't able to support them, living in a tiny flat in Bayswater, and eventually Silke returned to Germany with the baby. Allen lost touch with his son. It was a great sadness to him, which he felt acutely, but he was unable to do anything to rectify the situation. He kept a photo of Silke on his PC, and did manage to track down Laurenz on Facebook, but did not make contact with him.

For a while, he worked as a mini cab driver in South London, and then as a courier car driver. His most recent job was at an antique coin dealership in Russell St in Bloomsbury. Sister-in-law Nicky noticed the ad in the Evening Standard, and Allen applied for it – and just clicked with the owner. He really enjoyed it – he was able to talk knowledgably about the coins and liked dealing on the phone with contacts. But he began to feel the pressure as his role expanded, and he stopped finding it pleasurable. He left about 4 years ago.

He enjoyed cricket – the One Day test, and he and Geoff listened to the Cricket World Cup together over the last weeks of his life – and football, and always watched the Champions League final. And Plymouth Argyle was his team – he and Geoff went to watch the home matches regularly in the 70s. He remained a fan and followed the results.

Allen was intelligent and intellectual and had a sharp brain, His mathematical skills meant that he was very good at probabilities and could work out betting odds in his head, whilst everyone else was still scribbling them down.

As well as fluent German, he spoke French and Italian, and he was excellent at cryptic crosswords. He had a keen interest in astronomy and the night sky – and Nicky recalls being dragged outside at midnight to look up at the stars more than once. And he was a serious chess player, playing at a high ranking with the Dulwich Chess Club, in the Croydon and District Chess league, and London leagues. He did this right to the end, latterly playing online and maintaining connection with the huge community of chess playing friends and acquaintances that he had made over the years. And he sometimes played with his nephew Daniel also when he visited.

He enjoyed literature and had in his book collection, as well as the *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, some of the most popular American novels from the late 20th Century, such as *The Dice Men*, *Catch 22*, *Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance* – and a particular favourite of his – Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. He also liked philosophy, popular science and linguistics.

Although Allen didn't always find relationships easy, he had kept in touch with friend Malcolm from Plymouth and had good friends from Peckham and Camberwell, from the Wishing Well Inn, from the 80s and 90s, and neighbours from his housing block

It goes without saying that it is very sad, for Allen himself, and for the wider family, that his son Laurenz has not been part of his life over the last 30 years. There is a little comfort in knowing that he is there, and that a small part of Allen lives on.

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