

HAROLD LEO RHODES DOB 16-03-1923 – DOD 03-10-2011

It has been my privilege to speak to Judith to learn something of Harold's life and the kind of person he was. From her I gained the impression of a very intelligent, bright and high-achieving man who reached a high position in his chosen profession. He was always very interesting and interested in everything around him and loved discussions on all subjects and had a keen interest in politics. Harold had a kind, loving and gentle nature and was admired, liked and respected by many. His humour, his quick wit, his love of puns and wordplay, of crosswords and music reflected his keen brain but he carried his gifts and talents lightly and was approachable and funny. Harold led a full life for as long as he could and made the most of his opportunities. He was caring and supportive of those close to him and loved his family and was proud of their achievements, as they are of his.

Harold was born in Walker, Newcastle on the 16th March 1923 to Charles and Mary Rhodes and his sister Maureen was born four years later. The family moved around in the 1930s but Harold had fond memories of his childhood in Newcastle and also of the year he spent in Barrow with his paternal grandmother and he spoke of her later with great affection, only recently sharing his recollections with his cousin Ron.

When Harold was about ten the family moved to London and he completed his education before studying Engineering at the Polytechnic at the outbreak of war. He was called up and instead of serving in the armed forces worked in the mines in the Potteries as a Bevin Boy.

It was shortly after his twenty-first birthday that he met Ursula Michel, a refugee from Germany, at a Labour Party meeting. They started courting and married in 1946 and were to be in a long and happy partnership for over sixty-four years.

After the War, Harold moved to Leeds University to restart his studies although he changed his course to that of Mining Engineering and it was here that he met Tony Comber who is now going to give a tribute.

Tribute: Tony Comber

When Harold had finished his course, he went to work for the National Coal Board; he and Ursula moved back to the Potteries and thereafter they moved around with Harold's job.

Judith was born in the Potteries in 1953; in 1963 they went to South Staffordshire where Harold worked in Cannock and the family lived in Stafford. Despite Harold's hard work there was still time to socialise with the family and Harold's nephew Bill Worth will now tell us some of his memories of his uncle.

Tribute: Bill Worth

Harold's career was highly successful and in 1966 he was moved to Leicestershire and by the late 1970s transferred to London, where he worked at a Senior Level at the National Coal Board Headquarters as Director of Overseas Mining. He continued to enjoy his job and travelled abroad a lot and sometimes Ursula went too.

Harold also enjoyed the walking holidays in Germany when Judith joined them and he could be close to his family. On his retirement from the National Coal Board at sixty Harold immediately started work again to set up a Consortium of Mining Equipment Companies and became a Director of British Coal International. He worked in this position very successfully for three years before taking his final retirement in 1986.

Then he and Ursula moved up to North Yorkshire to live in Pannel in Harrogate and to be close to Judith. Harold was very contented to spend more time with his family and listen to classical music, read the newspaper, do the crosswords and in fact he became a crossword setter himself, 'Fettler' of the Financial Times.

Harold also gained great pleasure from becoming a more active member of the Labour Party of Harrogate and Knaresborough and was active in meetings and campaigns.

He and Ursula also loved their regular walking holidays, going to Majorca each Spring and to Spain each Autumn. At home he enjoyed socialising with their neighbours who have always been supportive, kind and helpful.

Judith remembers as a child how her father always read the Guardian newspaper and took a keen interest in politics. He would sit for hours doing the crosswords in the Guardian and the Observer and had a real love of words and the way we use language.

When she asked him how to spell a word he would always encourage her to look it up for herself since he was very keen for her to appreciate and love language as much as he did.

The Guardian is often known as the Grauniad because of all the typos in the paper and with all his love and appreciation of the newspaper, Judith feels her father would have been highly entertained to know that when a notice of his death was sent to the Guardian, they managed to print his name as Leon rather than Leo! This was corrected the next day, but nonetheless Harold had been a Guardian mis-print, and this he would have relished!

Over recent years Harold had become frailer and over the last two years his health had declined. Sadly he fell and was admitted to Harrogate District Hospital on the 15th September, where he died peacefully on the 3rd October with Judith close by.