

Archive Tribute

Lesley Margaret Williams

09/05/45 – 21/2/19

Conducted by

Steve Parry

Humanists UK

Accredited Funeral Celebrant

(Working Script)

Tribute

Les was born Lesley Little, in Cardiff on the 9th of May 1945 and she was to live here for the majority of her life. Her father Stuart was a Buyer in Wholesale and her mother Dulcie was also a Buyer until her marriage.

Les grew up with her sister Viv who has written her own tribute to Les and asked me to read it.

Viv's Tribute

The following words of my very dear friend Carol, who spent a lot of time with our family during our teenage years express how I wish to remember my sister.

'I recall first meeting Les when she was about nine and her impish, kind smile that she still had so many years later. She listened and she cared. She and Dave were very kind to my daughter, when she stayed with them for a weekend, while she was at University in Cardiff.'

Les was a mischievous small child. There are two oft-repeated tales from when she was less than three;

Mum met her one day coming out of the pantry nibbling a raw sausage with the rest of the string dangling to the floor and on another day Mum was greeted by Les's hard work, a 'sandcastle' in the middle of the kitchen floor made from all the powdered stores – sugar, custard powder, soap flakes... and this when rationing was still in force.

Les had a fun side and she was witty and entertaining. I remember someone gave us a set of Happy Family card face masks and we pranced about wearing them in the garden, making up plays; our Uncle nearly expired laughing.

That same uncle once gave her a challenge. She loved ice-cream and always wanted more. He said he would buy her as much as she wanted. But he had to stop before she did, because he was worried she would be sick. Ice cream was always Les's favourite treat even during her time in the hospice.

As children we played in the street. We would play cricket, hopscotch, touch, hide and seek and roller skating, with only the occasional car to interrupt us. Les was brilliant, me a frightened uncoordinated mess.

Naturally, there were rival groups and there was a tall boy called Tony who was feared by most of us as the local bully. One day he ran off with a football belonging to our rather timid friend David. The rest of us were too scared to do anything about it, but not Les. Not caring if he was lurking, she marched round to his house and demanded that his Mother make him give it back. He never troubled us again.

In later life, these qualities could manifest in a less favourable light. Les was a woman of strong opinions, who expressed them forcefully, seemingly with a conviction that she was always right, a tendency which could exasperate and offend.

Not that I kept it in mind when Les and I rubbed each other up the wrong way, but I do believe such insensitivity in a person who was fundamentally kind stemmed from a deep hurt. Les was deeply humiliated by a bullying primary school teacher during her first year in school and that is, I think, why, as our Dad used to say, she often 'came out of her corner fighting'.

A couple of years ago, I brought five long-term friends of mine to explore Cardiff. Les, trained caterer and great cook as she was, invited us all for dinner at her bungalow. I was deeply touched by this and we had a great evening, which they all refer to fondly in their sympathy cards.

When I was 21, so many years ago, she made me a cake and decorated it, at my request, with the quirky drawings from the Sellars and Yeatman skit on British history '1066 and all That.' She reproduced them perfectly in icing. It was amazing and so generous.

Les was very brave and very determined from an early age. These qualities were even more evident in the latter years of her life, when she faced several serious illnesses and operations.

Liz and Kate have also written a tribute for their Mum for me to read.

Kate and Liz's Tribute

Mum attended Birchgrove Primary and then Cathays High and as we have heard her school days were not the happiest period of her life.

After school she trained as a baker and chef and then took up a post teaching catering at Colchester Ave College. As a student she had summer jobs in both Minehead and Manobier.

She met our Dad, Dave in the late 1960's and they married in 1970, we soon followed, and mum gave up work to look after us. She returned to work when we were teenagers, joining Dad in working for the Inland Revenue. Mum told us of times when the whole team would burst into song her favourite being the one she chose herself for the end of this service.

We were blessed with two of the most amazing individuals anyone could have as parents. Neither could have been more loving or proud. We were taught by both about the importance of family, we were given the time and space to

decide what we wanted to do in life, were offered encouragement and help when needed and asked for and as girls and now women we were taught that we have a voice and could be and do whatever we wanted.

As children weekends always included a day out somewhere; a walk along the canal, trips to Dyffryn Gardens, Cefn Onn, Cwm Carn, St Fagans, Roath Park, often accompanied by friends from Ton Yr Ywen. If there was ever water, we would always be guaranteed to hear the still repeated refrain from mum "don't go near the edge".

One of our favourite trips would be to Penarth which always included an Ice Cream from the Thayer's window. Mum spent her last eight weeks in Penarth and we often carried on this tradition of a walk on the pier and an ice cream, during breaks away from visiting Mum. However, this ice cream could not compete with the Chocolate Orange ice cream that Mum would make herself!

Mum and Dad were members of the Cardiff High School Old Boys Rugby club for many years, up until Dad's death. Dad initially played cricket for the club and Mum helped with the teas, then later as a couple they followed the rugby team to matches throughout Wales. They spent most of their free time at the club with friends, attending quizzes both there and at The Royal Oak in Whitchurch, presided over by either Clive, John or Ken.

Mum lost our Dad in 2001, this was an incredibly difficult time and a massive shock which represented a huge change in mum's life. She left the Inland Revenue and took a voluntary job at Cancer Research Wales' charity shop, with Mags.

Although having different interests, she and her sister Viv became closer, going on several holidays together, including Turkey and Madeira. Mum's last holiday was with Viv to Devon in October where they spent five days, as mum

described in her own inimitable fashion, “walking up and down hundreds of steps” leading to the house where they stayed. They also spent time working on their family history and were delighted to discover interesting facts about their grandparents and great grandparents.

Around eight years ago mum became a member of Rhiwbina Ladies Bowls club becoming captain for a season of both the outdoor and indoor bowls. There she made a wonderful circle of friends who became a fantastic support to her. In particular Margaret, Ali and Pam.

We have received a lovely card from the Bowls Club written by Pam Gough which contains the following lines.

“Your Mum was an integral member of our bowls club, always willing to help, participate and take on responsibility. She leaves a large void in our little community. Mum joined some years ago with three other ‘newcomers’ Mary, Margaret and Edna and they became known as the ‘fab four.’ As you can imagine, the remaining three are devastated at the loss of one of their gang.”

Mum’s regular visits to Bridgend with Ali always led to a new purchase of something that Mum would say she didn’t need, usually another handbag. She would often have lunch with Margaret at the farm shop as well as regular Sunday lunches with “the girls”. She really enjoyed the two tours to Torquay she did with Pam and thoroughly enjoyed all the social events at the club. Mum also introduced and ran a monthly whist drive which became very popular.

The note in the Order of service illustrates how important bowls and all her friends there were to her.

Mum was a woman of wide-ranging interests and skills. She was an amazing cook and as a family we were spoilt by our daily meals. As children bread was always home-made, the airing cupboard was regularly filled following a mammoth baking session of iced buns, and other such treats, proving before baking. In recent years her signature bakes were lemon drizzle cake and bara brith. Ironically this Christmas when she first became unwell she produced the best Christmas cake ever.

Mum was always immaculate, smart and incredibly stylish, she was also an amazing seamstress, something she inherited from her own mother. The sewing machine always buzzing away producing dresses, trousers, shirts and costumes; with material bought from the latest trip to Caerphilly, Treforest or City Road.

Her last big sewing project was when she made Kate's wedding dress, hand sewing hundreds of pearls, which with significant arthritis in her hands was no mean feat.

In the winter the television would be accompanied by the clicking of her knitting needles, getting ready for the cricket season making dad's sweaters or the infamous stripy jumpers, made from whatever bits of wool were left over.

Mum was also an amazing gardener she turned both her gardens in St Gowan and the bungalow from jungles, to a sea of beautiful plants as well as crops of fruit and veg. Rhubarb however remained her nemesis. She could turn her hand to anything building walls, erecting fences, reupholstering furniture to name just a few of her projects.

Mum loved to drive and always made sure she had the least practical car she could find, which had to be a convertible.

Politics and current affairs were always of great interest to Mum and in the last few years having always been a supporter she finally became a member of the labour party, frustrated by the increasing injustices she saw and the gap between rich and poor. She was genuinely upset by the homelessness situation she witnessed on her weekly trips to town, hence her chosen charity.

Her family was hugely important to Mum and we have always spent a lot of time together. She loved nothing better than a trip out on Rhys and Kate's boat or a whizz around in the Caterham. Regularly on a Sunday we would arrive to find mum, just about to start a DIY job, which inevitably Rhys would end up finishing, with the understanding he would be rewarded by having his favourite tea prepared for him.

She regularly visited Liz and David in their home in Warwickshire, where she loved to watch the chickens and ducks roaming free in the garden and waking up to the bull outside her bedroom window. With evenings spent in front of the open fire she would swap baking and gardening tips with David.

Mum loved us girls and also loved her boys, Rhys and David, who she was so proud of, she was always delighted when they arrived to see her in Holme Towers. She was also incredibly fond of David's daughter Marleigh, taking great interest in her riding and adventures with her horse Maggie.

Mum had great affection for Dave's brother Gareth, his wife Daphne and their sons, Philip and Richard, visiting them as often as possible at their home in Oxford.

Having been unwell in the run up to Christmas, Mum was admitted to Llandough Hospital and soon after transferred to the Marie Curie Hospice in Penarth. Mum coped with her illness as she always had, with bravery and a

sense of humour. During her time at the hospice we had some very happy times reminiscing, doing crosswords, watching the boats and simply enjoying spending more time with each other than we had since our childhood. The staff at Marie Curie were fantastic and as a family we are all very grateful to them and everyone that visited her.