



A Celebration of the Life of

# Rita Ann Smith

12<sup>th</sup> December 1944 – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019

St Richard's Chapel,

Surrey and Sussex Crematorium, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019, 3.45pm

*Celebrant: Felicity Harvest, accredited by*



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## The Tribute

Rita was born in Kingston on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1944.

She grew up with sister Ina & brother Jim at Fayre Holme in Godstone, under the watchful eye of Mary & Ernest. Early life, the family told me, was “unremarkable but happy, except of course unless you were walking in front of Rita when she tripped up (as she often did) and took you with her as Ina can attest to on more than one occasion.”

Jim remembers that Rita used to make him cheese and tomato sauce sandwiches when he went out for day trips with the cubs, whereas his Mum would have just made him cheese. That and her being the best Queens pudding maker in the country bonded them together for life!

Rita went to school in Oxted, catching the bus from a young age every day from Godstone. In later years she would often comment on how different it is for children today, and how little freedom they have by comparison.

Rita met Alan, known as Rasher because he was skinny as a slice of bacon, outside Woolworths (such a romantic setting!). He was to be the love of her life. They spent a happy almost-60 years together, outlasting Woolworths by a good decade.

They courted for a couple of years before marrying on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1965 at a double wedding with Ina and Pete. Maria was born a couple of years later, and Carl a couple of years after that.

After living for a while in Salfords, they first moved to Evelyn Cottages, South Godstone and then on to St Clairs Close, Old Oxted.

St Clairs was always open house for anybody and everybody. It was a happy home filled with lots of fun & laughter. From St Clairs, Reet & Rash took on a pub in Sevenoaks, “The Man of Kent”. Rita didn’t like this much, so they soon moved on to Tandridge Golf Club, before finally settling in Benn Close.

Aside from Tandridge Golf Club, most of Rita’s working life was spent either book-keeping, or working in hospitals, first as an auxiliary nurse, then housekeeping and catering. It was the nursing she enjoyed most. She worked at the Cheshire Homes when the children were small, and later was the housekeeper at Harrowlands rehabilitation home in Dorking, and worked at Oxted hospital. Finally she worked as a cook at

Caterham Dene, where she was known as “snowball” in her chef’s whites. She would always insist on working Christmases, and would take in extra treats for patients and staff.

Among Rita’s interests were meditation (which she went onto teach with Maria for a while) and creative writing, and we heard how great she was at that earlier. She was the historian of the family, looking up the genealogy and learning all about her ancestors. She read constantly, and has left behind a Kindle with over a thousand books on it.

She also loved knitting and was an impressive seamstress – the photo of the six bridesmaids she made dresses for is quite astonishing, the little ones dressed as shepherdesses with mob-caps. Rash would often come home expecting dinner to be on the table, only to find the dinner table covered in material for her next project. She also loved theatre and music – Rasher reckons she must have been to fifty David Essex concerts, hence the choice of music as you came in.

She was a gentle character who would listen without judgement, and was kind, caring loving. She was always there for the family & friends in difficult times.

She was also pretty sociable, and had what the family describe as a slightly bonkers sense of humour. You’d have to watch out if you were having a party (or a wedding) as she could be known to turn up as a Bill or Ben, or maybe a bridesmaid if you were really lucky... they have photos to prove it.

Few people ever saw Reet without a smile.

The best times for Rita were those spent with family, be they holidays, meals or just time together. Jim remembers playing cards and singing silly songs in the Swan at Godstone, family teas, Christmas, and just going out for meals. She always enjoyed these events, especially if her four grandchildren, James, Daisy, Thomas & Oliver were there. Because they were her favourite pastime. She and Rasher would take them to the cinema, take them for holidays in Hastings – and of course she’d knit for them

As many of you know the last couple of years were tough for Rita. Her health declined and she missed Carl terribly. But of course she still had that family support, and Jim in particular was, I’m told, an “absolute hero” throughout her treatment.

We often think of death as a cruel enemy, taking away those we love, but for those who are suffering or who have reached the end of their endurance, it can come as a quiet friend, closing the curtains, blowing out the light, and settling us into a last sleep, free from pain and weariness.

I hope it was so for Rita.