

A celebration of life

Ron Wilson

30 September 1948 – 25 January 2021

2-3pm, Monday 8 February 2021
South Oxfordshire Crematorium



a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

Ron's life

Ron was born at home in the village of Shilton near Burford on 30 September 1948. He was the third and youngest child of parents Joan and Isaac, completing the family with his older siblings Les and Patricia.

So what was the world like back then? Britain was still in the grips of post-war austerity with food, fuel, clothes and other essentials still rationed. And across the world the Cold War was starting to hot up, with nuclear tensions running high. A few days after Ron's birth, Rick Parfitt, (the Status Quo guitarist whose work we just heard) was also born.

Ron attended the village school in Hailey and then Wood Green secondary school – some of the time at least... Mark – you put it plainly when we spoke: the young Ron was “*a scallywag; a loveable rogue*” who wasn't so switched on by learning and who just wanted to get in with life. I think you can see plenty of that in his smile and the glint in his eye in the photo on the back of the order of service.

Ron began an apprentice as a toolmaker, then moved on to work with the Precision Fan Company, which became part of Smiths Industries. In the late 1970s he was made redundant from his job there and decided to put his severance pay into a heavy goods vehicle training course – a decision that changed the rest of his life.

However patchy his school attendance might have been, there was no question about Ron's work ethic as a driver – first for Parker Knoll furniture, then Cotswold Building Supplies, later onto car deliveries for Honda and MG, West Oxfordshire Motor Auction and ASDA.

Before all that, Ron also worked as a gardener at a large house in Hailey where the owners also employed a young woman from Switzerland as a nanny. She came to this country to learn English, but stayed for love and a career as a teaching assistant. Margrit and Ron met in 1966 and married on 19 October 1968, aged just 22 and 20.

Tina will tell us about her memories of family life in a moment, but they sound like a happy days. As you put it Tina: “*We had no money, but we had love and fun.*”

The list of things that Ron enjoyed and was good at seems almost endless. A gifted footballer as a youth and in adulthood, he also did karate, played golf pretty well, enjoyed fishing with his workmates, and then as Mike has described, discovered a considerable talent for bowls.

He was also a fabulous cook – a passion kickstarted by getting a book about sauces that saw him able to pinpoint flavours and ingredients by taste alone, then recreate the dishes he enjoyed in Cyprus or one of his and Margrit’s weekly restaurant outings. Whether it was a summer barbecue or one of the family’s New Year Bake-offs, Ron was never happier than when he was making something delicious for others to savour.

He was good with his hands in many other ways – putting his *very* extensive collection of tools to good use, and tending the herbs and hanging baskets in the garden.

And he loved theatre – London musicals especially like *Jersey Boys* and *Million Dollar Quartet*, recreating the famed, impromptu 1956 studio jam session between Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins. Imagine that...

During the 1980s, Ron brushed off two encounters with cancer, not letting quite major surgery get in the way of him living life as he wanted. But the disease returned in 2013. After being given just a few months to live, he spent the next seven years defying the odds.

I sense that Ron just looked his illness square in the eye, accepted it for what it was, and opened himself up to whatever treatments (proven or otherwise) that would give him a few more precious weeks or months of life.

Ron showed incredible courage and resilience while he was unwell. During this time, the company of dogs Teddy and Olli was a great comfort to him. But by last summer, as arthritis and dementia also began to take hold, he was ready for it to end.

Death held no fear for Ron. With the expert help of his MacMillan Nurse Donna and her colleagues and other professionals, he was able to spend his last days in dignity and peace, at home with his family around him.

One of the carers who visited regularly in this final part of Ron’s life put her finger on it exactly. One day she said to Tina and Margrit: “*There is so much love in your house.*”

She was so right.