

Rosalind Herbert RIP

Rosalind was born on 6th February 1958. I was three years old at the time and dispatched to my grandmother's house out of the way. I think I was more interested in the fact that it snowed that day and that we got locked out so that my grandmother had to climb in through a window than I appreciated what it meant to have a little sister. It was also the night that seven Manchester United players, from the team known as the Busby Babes, were killed in an air crash at Munich. My mother always maintained that my father was as concerned about the air crash as he was about her and the new baby – even though he was an Arsenal supporter.

Rosalind soon made an impression, however, and won our hearts. She was a lovely baby and I can remember her bath times. It was then that my father and I gave her the nickname I've been forbidden to use on pain of death for the last forty years. So I had better not call her by it today. I remember when she learned to crawl. For a long time before that she just used to roll around the floor. I remember Christmases together when we were young children, unwrapping presents under the bedclothes in the days before central heating.

Rosalind started school in the Winter of 1963, again in heavy snow and schools in those days didn't close just for a few snowflakes. So off we went every day on the country bus. Ros only went to that school for a couple of terms and all she remembered about it in later years was the outside lavatories.

She was nearly six when we moved to Wigmore and we both went to Fairview County Primary. As big brother, I had to wait outside the Infants' school to take her home. I think she was always the last to leave!

Ros made lots of friends at Fairview. She always was a person who made friends easily, both very caring and great fun to be with. Out of school, there were games at other children's houses and in the park. In time we both had bikes, but Rosalind was a much less keen cyclist than I was and I eventually cannibalised her bike for spare parts for mine.

We were a close family and Rosalind and I were blessed with wonderful grandparents who took a great deal of interest in us and my mother's aunt and uncle who were in some ways like an extra grandma and granddad. Only our great aunt was very deaf and never quite got Rosalind's name right!

We had some wonderful family holidays, especially at Westgate when we were youngsters, and we've continued to go back there for days out with Kerry and Denise when they were girls and, more recently, with Liam and Alyssa. It is where Rosalind wants her ashes to be scattered. There are so many happy memories.

Ros and I went our different ways when we went to secondary school. I suppose I was the swat who worked hard to pass exams and go on to university. Rosalind had more important things to do with her teenage life and made many friends, some of whom are with us today. My sister and I developed very different social lives, but we remained a close family and the

Christmases we had at Wigmore with all the family together set a standard which it would be very hard to beat. Ros would always help other people – sometimes being caught out by unscrupulous individuals who took advantage of her good nature. Still, as her grandmother would have said, a grandmother whom she resembled in many ways, it is better to be a generous person and get caught out sometimes than to be a selfish person who never takes a chance on anyone.

In her late teens, she left home to live with friends in a flat in Strood. She met John, the man she was to marry, and because she lived where she did, she was able to have her wedding in Frindsbury Church, where her parents and grandparents had been married. There was thick snow on the ground also on the day she was married.

When John came out of the army, they set up home near the barracks at Brompton and had two girls, Kerry and Denise. Rosalind has always been a brilliant mother and, whatever troubles she may have faced later on, the welfare of her children was always paramount. She was a great homebuilder and did everything possible to look after Kerry and Denise and to give them the best start in life.

While the children were still very young, they moved to Eastling Close, Twydall. Rosalind loved her house and garden and kept both immaculate. The Close was a very friendly place and neighbours were good friends. Some of them had children and all the children played and went to school together.

When the girls were young, they were lucky to be close to grandparents and to their great grandmother as we all lived quite near to one another.

There came a time when, for different reasons, Rosalind and I were both unlikely to get away on holiday and our parents arranged family holidays for all of us, when we could take the children to the seaside for a couple of weeks at a time.

Later on, it became possible to go to the Caribbean and the Mediterranean and to enjoy some fantastic cruises. Rosalind loved the sunshine and the opportunity to relax in luxury for days on end.

I have mentioned how many friends she had. Rosalind developed a very lively social life. She was a lot of fun to be with. She just knew so many people. It seemed you couldn't go anywhere without running into someone she knew. I remember looking down from an open top bus in Newquay and, sure enough, there was someone Rosalind knew walking along the street.

For a long time, she was a child minder. Rosalind loved children and the children in her care loved her. She treated them like family. At other times she worked in offices and, for a time, for a firm of undertakers. She got on well with the people she worked with, but she liked nothing better than working with children.

It was a tremendous shock to all of us in 2009 when Rosalind was obviously becoming seriously ill with what was eventually diagnosed towards the end of the year as Motor Neurone Disease. I find it hard to believe how brave she has been. She carried on looking after her home and garden as long as she could. She never stopped looking after other people. As recently as last September, not long before she had to stop driving, I was briefly admitted to hospital with a paralytically bad back and it was Rosalind who came and picked me up in her car. She could hardly walk herself and, by the time we got to my house, I had seized up and couldn't walk at all. My trouble, however, was only temporary, but hers could only ever get worse, barring a miracle, which wasn't to be. Although she lost the ability to speak, we kept in touch by e mail nearly every day. Only a month ago, I tried to make her laugh by telling her I had fallen over yet again. She joked back that I must have MND. I replied that, if I had, I could never be as brave as her. This was her reply *What ever disease you get there isn't much choice other than be brave and deal with it.* And that's what she did.

As many of you know, our mother has also been seriously ill these last few months. We had a wonderful family Christmas together, but both of them went down hill quite quickly after that. They both worried that they could not do anything for each other and it was some comfort that they shared a room at the hospice during their last days. Rosalind died on the morning of Mother's funeral. Tough for us, but at least they are together again.

I must pay tribute to the way my nieces, Kerry and Denise, and her friends, especially Mel Banks, have cared for Rosalind. They have been wonderful. I also want to say what tremendous support she has had from the Wisdom Hospice and the Motor Neurone Disease Association. Both these organizations will make good use of any donations you may make in Ros' memory.

Until the very last days, Rosalind was enjoyed having visitors, smiling and laughing and putting us right by text when we got things wrong. She was a very brave and a very good person.

As a vicar, I go to church every day. And I enjoy it. Rosalind wasn't like that, but she did know what really mattered. She was always kind and generous to other people. She cared. We hardly talked about it, but I'm sure serious things mattered to her. She received Communion with Mother and me at the Rectory on Christmas Day. I believe that she is in a better place now and that, if we have faith, we shall see her again one day. I believe that she still loves us just as we still love her. Love is eternal. We are very sad to be parted from her, though we would not want her to have carried on for long as she was at the very end when things became so difficult for her. She lives on in the people she has influenced, the people she has loved. As we celebrate her life, we honour her best by following her good example and by living as she would want us to live. I know that she would want us to be happy and to enjoy the rest of our lives on earth. One day we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of God and give account to Him for what we have done with our lives. If we have faith, on that day we can trust Christ for ourselves as we do for Rosalind and, our sins forgiven in Him, we can look forward to eternity with all whom we love within the love of the eternal God.