



Elizabeth Pigdon

28 September 1924 – 16 February 2014

A tribute by Andy Ross

Liz was my mother. She made me in 1949 and raised me until 1969 when I went off to university in Oxford. Since then Liz gladly suffered my intermittent visits over the years, often for weeks at a time and always at least once a year, until just recently, last year, when I finally returned from Germany to live with her and look after her for what turned out to be her final months.

Liz was as good a mother as I could have wished for. She was always sympathetic and understanding, but also brisk and critical with her support, as if to lead this prodigal son gently toward the straight and narrow path. I was not a model son, and for all my good intentions I must often have caused her pain and heartache. She soldiered on regardless: "Must keep soldiering on," she would say, and thus would steel my resolve to do better next time.

Liz was a teenager during the Second World War, and Winston Churchill was like an ideal father figure to her. She was still fifteen when Winston's bulldog spirit helped her through the Battle of Britain, and then she did her bit as a trained secretary in a big engineering company up in her ancestral territory of northern England. Although she had become proficient in German at school, her mistrust of Germany and the Germans persisted for life, and she was not overjoyed when I clocked up over a quarter of a century living there. But she bore it bravely, and celebrated my annual visits with a show of warmth and hospitality that tempted me to call it quits and come back for good. In fact she held on for long enough to make sure that I did so, and once that little victory was accomplished she let old age take its toll in a final sunset season. I like to think that my return to share

that final chapter with her began to repay the debt I owe her for those long years of British fortitude.

Liz was born and bred a northerner, and shared with other northerners a practical and stoic view of life. She was a genius at “scrimping and saving” and never liked to buy new when second hand would do just as well. This thrifty way with money served the family well for many years, as visions of future prosperity seemed always to recede into the misty far horizon. Her husband Robert, or Bob, the father of both me and, two years later, my sister Helen, was a northerner too, but somehow their shared intelligence and industry never led to the rich rewards they clearly hoped for.

Liz was by all accounts a beautiful and talented young woman. She dressed with care and carried herself with alert poise and a cultivated air. She even serenaded us kids – the piglets, as she called us – with piano recitals of classical music. As a teenager she had dreamed of one day becoming a concert pianist, and her renditions of pieces by Mozart, Chopin, Beethoven, Bach, and others made charming little interludes in the otherwise pop-heavy musical life of the piglets.

Liz was a whizz with words and crosswords too. She could polish off the Times cryptic crossword faster than I could, and even in later years, when the pleasures of life had mellowed her brain, she did the Telegraph crossword each day. And during word games like Scrabble, she was constantly reading out delightful new words she discovered in the dictionary.

Liz was unfailingly practical and sensible, often even cheerful, under burdens that would have driven others to despair. One chapter in our family life might illustrate this trait. Back in the late fifties, when the piglets were still young, Bob decided to start his own engineering business. This cost money, so Liz and the piglets moved

out from the flat to live out a romantic dream on an old boat in Holes Bay. The boat, Bellerophon, was a sturdy seagoing trawler design that had served well in the war, and its glory days were long gone. But living on it was a great adventure for us piglets, and we relished the raw delights of nautical life until we moved into a little terraced house nearby in Old Poole.

Liz soldiered on in the brick household. In the living room she reinstalled the sofa from my infant days that she called Murphy, after Morpheus, the Greek god of dreams, because all who sat on Murphy soon dozed off. Years passed, and Liz lost some of her sparkle, until the marriage began to languish. After a few unhappy scenes Bob moved out. Next to move out was my sister Helen, who met a young man and started her own family. Then it was time for me to pack my trunk for Oxford.

Liz soldiered on with undiminished fortitude. She bought a nice flat in Upper Parkstone and lived there for the next forty years. She met Don in 1985 at the local Conservative Club, and they went on to spend essentially the rest of their lives together. When Don moved in with her, they acquired a beloved cat to make a household of three.

Liz found happiness with Don. For years they played a big role in the local Conservative party. They rented a beach hut at Sandbanks and enjoyed many happy summer days there. Don liked driving and Liz liked being driven, and together they visited countless local beauty spots. Truly they found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

When in the fullness of time the dream faded and Don had to move to a care home, my sister and I stepped in to close off Liz’s life in what we hope was contentment and finally peace. We shall always remember her with fondness and gratitude.



Harbour View Woodland Burial and Memorial Gardens

28 February 2014