



# A View from the Beacon

17 March 2022

## Special edition to celebrate Ray's life

### Bryan Woodward writes

This special edition of *A View from the Beacon* is produced as a lasting tribute to Ray Keating.

By way of preparation, I spent an afternoon with Richard who related his life with Ray in detail and showed me certificates, memorabilia and photographs while he opened up proudly and often amusingly about his beloved wife of fifty-eight years.

I also asked Neil Rowbotham if I could use some of the words from the inspiring eulogy he gave at the service to Celebrate Ray's Life at St Mary's Church, Wymeswold on 21 February.



My task here has been to stitch together what Richard and Neil have said about Ray. The words are mainly theirs; I have merely been the facilitator, enabling family, friends, neighbours, former colleagues, and the wider readership of Friends of Beacon who may not have been able to attend the service to read this tribute.

We all knew her as 'Ray'. Following her mother's French leaning, she was born Raymonde Wendy Dorrington on 10 January 1940.

From the age of five, she attended Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Girls' School – and woe betide any girl who got those apostrophes in the wrong places or omitted them! She left in December 1957 with a school leaving certificate for 6<sup>th</sup> Form pupils after gaining seven 'O' Levels and having studied Physics, Pure Maths and Applied Maths in the Upper Sixth Form, but without taking 'A' Levels, because the school “did not do A-Levels”.

Instead, she was indentured by Boots in Sidcup, while attending an evening course at Norwood Technical College. After two years, she was awarded an 'Article of Pupillage' by Boots Cash Chemists (Southern) Ltd, which offered a salary of £3.13.0 a week, increasing to £4.3.0 at 18 and £4.8.0 at 19, “so long as she is able to perform and actually performs the services required from her under the Articles.” (Younger readers may need a translation of these amounts in pounds, shillings and pence!)

Next, she gained a place at the School of Pharmacy at Manchester University, where Richard first spotted her, sitting in the front row of the class. He remembers, over 60 years on, that she was wearing a grey coat!

Apart from his obvious attraction to a glamorous girl – “*her happy smiling personality caught my attention*” - Richard was bowled over by her outstanding knowledge of chemical analysis; she was the star student, several grades ahead of the plodders! She analysed compounds so quickly the lecturers gave her a particularly challenging task one day to

slow her down, but she eventually solved that, too, and told them “*I know you've given me asbestos*”, to which they smiled. (Asbestos tests negative to all normal inorganic analysis tests, which is why it is more difficult to prove!)

Not to be completely side-lined, Richard realised he had something to offer Ray when he found out that she had not done organic chemistry, so he offered to tutor her on Wednesday afternoons, when there were no lectures or laboratory classes, not entirely for philanthropic or academic reasons.

He had found a way to her heart!

As Richard said: “*A class trip to Derbyshire to discover wild orchids brought us closer. We had a picnic lunch by a small stream and it became very tempting for the boys to splash the girls for fun! I must confess I was over-vigorous and dowsed Ray, who responded: I will get you, Richard Keating!*”

Just before Finals, Richard asked Ray what her plans were after graduation. She said she had a work offer in Germany through a friend and also one in Canada.

He realised that he was on the verge of losing her, so after a pub meal at the Rising Sun near Buxton, he asked her if she would come and live with him at Hoylake on the Wirral.

She replied: “*I would like to, but first we must get married!*”

Fortunately, her parents agreed, and they announced their engagement just before graduation in June 1963.

The problem of where to get married arose because Richard lived in Hoylake and Ray lived in Orpington. They chose Holy Trinity Church in Sloane Street, Chelsea for the wedding because Ray's father knew the Rector, who was Chaplain to the Air Training Corps, London Wing, and they were married there on 2 November 1963.

When Ray expressed her preference for one special hymn, the vicar who officiated announced "*Jerusalem is not sung in my church at weddings!*"

But the Reverend Carver had not reckoned with Ray's resolve: "*I think it is a glorious hymn!*" she retorted, and she got her way, which is why *Jerusalem* was also sung at the service to celebrate her life.

The newlyweds first lived at Hoylake in the previous home of Richard's parents, who had both died when he was twenty. They lived there for three years while Richard worked for Boots at nearby Moreton, dispensing from a pharmacy on the first floor of a corner shop.

At the same time Ray was appointed as a lecturer at the Liverpool University School of Pharmacy, not least because she excelled at practical dispensing. She held the post for two years until the birth of their first son, Andrew, on 13 June 1965. Later came Nicholas, born on 30 December 1966, and Philip on 7 February 1970.



Richard's career took the family around the country to many postings as he was promoted through the Boots empire. They moved to Liverpool where he was relief manager for three years; then Southport as assistant manager for two years; Westminster as manager for two years (with prime ministers as clients); Edinburgh as department store manager (staying in a caravan while their house was being built); Gloucester, where Ray worked part-time at Boots while the children were at school; Wood Green Harringay, when Ray worked as a

locum pharmacist in Potter's Bar near their home and in Barnet; Hampton in Arden between Birmingham and Coventry as senior manager, with Ray as locum; Edgbaston Birmingham as 'Regional Manager, Common Stock Rooms'; Belfast (during the Troubles), to organise training for a new audit and stock system; and finally Nottingham as regional manager, where Boots owned Children's World, responsible for stores from Nottingham to Croydon.

THE ECHO, Friday, 16th May, 2003 7

**MEMBERS of the Loughborough Inner Wheel were out in force at the weekend running a stall for charity at the town's market. Pictured are (from left) Ann Price, Ray Keating, Julie Smallman, Joyce Bracegirdle and Rosemarie Kaiser. ATDSC-5387.MO20**



Richard and Ray moved to Wymeswold in 1989. Soon afterwards, Ray was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) when aged fifty, but this did not stop her enjoyment of getting involved in village life, including Wymeswold Open Gardens. Nor did it affect her long involvement with the Inner Wheel of Loughborough (following her membership of the Inner Wheel Club of Henley-in-Arden), which of course has close links with Beacon Rotary, which Richard joined.

As Neil related: *“My first Rotary memory of Ray was during a visit I organised to Welbeck Sixth Form College. Whilst there, I was chatting with her when the fire alarm went off. Ray’s first thought was that as I had the list of attendees I should organise the escape. Only when I dashed off did I realise that I had left behind a lady with walking difficulties to handle the fire and smoke on her own!*

*“I handed over the list and shot back inside on a heroic rescue mission, only to be told by Ray that she was perfectly capable of looking after herself. There was no fire, but the experience was an indication of Ray putting others before herself.”*

As Richard put it so touchingly: *“Our lives together have been full of fun, love, passion and excitement. Ray was a very caring and practical mum and I now appreciate more than ever what she achieved to bring up our three sons.*

*“When our sons got married, she always reflected on how fortunate we were to have such gorgeous and charming daughters-in-law Leigh, Sarah and Shona.*

*“The arrival of grandchildren Owen, Alexander, Rory, Felix, Hayley and Karlie has brought us extra joy and happiness and she was so proud of all the family.*

*“Our 32 years of living in Wymeswold have been wonderful. We have made many friends and Ray has enjoyed developing the garden from a paddock with waist-high grass and thistles to the garden we enjoyed in later years.”*



Most of the following words are from Neil: *“She designed the garden and tended to it to her own high standards until in later years she was physically prevented from doing the work.*

*“In line with the garden theme, one of Beacon Rotary’s projects to raise money for charity has been our plant sales scheme to deliver bedding plants to the door to support charities. Richard was closely involved in the organisation, which requires a demanding effort over several months, but Ray knew a lot about plants and what might be popular year by year and was a good source of general wisdom. She knew what needed to be done and made sure that it happened.*”

*“She led the Inner Wheel on international business for many years and encouraged the continuing support of Aquaboxes, WaterAid, Lepra and Save the Children. She was elected President in 2003 and in her presidential year she persuaded the club to raise money to support a whole raft of charities from Rutland Mobility, Dyspraxia Foundation, Charnwood Shelter, Rainbows and many more, including one of her Favourites, the Ear Foundation. This organisation sponsors cochlea implants in young deaf people and Ray was instrumental in getting Inner Wheelers and Rotarians to pay every year to eat and dance at Prestwold Hall to support the charity. She seemed to know a lot of the implant recipients very well, since she cared about them and their progress.*”

*“One of her later pleasures was a canal boat trip that Inner Wheel organised and the last one before the coronavirus ‘lock-down’ happened to fall on her 80th birthday. She loved moving on the water surrounded by her Inner Wheel friends and hence why Richard suggested the Peter le Marchant Trust for receipt of donations in Ray’s memory.*”



*“Ray was a sociable person and loved occasions. She liked cruising and had fascinating conversations around the dinner tables on a whole host of ships, mainly of the P&O line. She loved going out for meals and was happy whether it was the Hammer and Pincers, the Time and Place in Rothley, the fish and chip van that tours Wymeswold or the Arden Hotel in Stratford.*”

*“Whenever Richard and Ray went to a Shakespeare play in Stratford, they stayed at the Arden mainly, it seemed to me, so that they could pop out of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre*

*at the interval, cross the road to the hotel and partake of a glass in peace and quiet before returning to the bard.*

*“Ray loved entertaining and was forever inviting people home, whether it was to barbecues or afternoon tea or tours of the garden for Wymeswold Open Gardens.*

*“She liked people and people liked her. She loved her family and spoke of them all often and with pride. She was so disappointed when she wasn’t well enough to go to her granddaughter’s first pantomime starring role.*

*“Until she fell, Ray seemed to have just one day of rest, perhaps an indication of how formidable she must have been in her earlier years.*

*“Until recently she loved swimming at Burleigh Court where she could walk faster in the water than her friends could swim and all the while chatting. She enjoyed ballet and music and trips to Birmingham Symphony Hall as much as those to Kilworth House, she enjoyed the luncheon clubs, the book club, the Women’s Institute, visits to garden centres, Rotary walks and Chatsworth at Christmas.”*

Ray was a wheelchair user for the last three years after she fell at home and broke her right shoulder and hip. This was particularly challenging, but she continued to adopt a positive approach to life and make the best of what they could do together and reflect on what they had done.

As Richard said: *“I was extremely fortunate that fifty-eight years ago she said YES.”*

From the many letters of condolence that Richard received, he summed up how people felt about Ray by reading an extract from someone who used to live in the village but who could not attend the celebration service.

*“We have the fondest memories of Ray, and those memories are just full of love, friendship and the greatest admiration. She was unfailingly cheerful and a convivial friend. The fortitude and strength that she showed in adversity was nothing short of amazing!”*

When Richard told their home-visit hairdresser Christina that Ray had passed away, she spontaneously exclaimed: *“Ray will have the best hair in Heaven!”*

I leave this tribute from Neil: *“Ray had good taste and high standards; her walking sticks were always colourful as was the shellac on her nails. She was always smart. She enjoyed colour. She had an infectious giggle but never laughed at anyone. I cannot recall her ever having said anything nasty about anyone. Ray was a lovely person who enjoyed a laugh with others and who lifted us if we spent time in her company. She had so much to trouble her but never complained and showed tremendous strength of character. We will miss her but will remember her.”*

In Loving Memory  
of  
**Raymonde Wendy Keating**  
**'Ray'**

10<sup>th</sup> January 1940 - 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022



Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022

12.45 pm

St Mary's Church, Wymeswold

Service conducted by Reverend Simon Richardson

Processional Music  
'Finlandia'

The Gathering

Welcome and Introduction

Prayers of Penitence

Collect Prayer

Hymn  
'Jerusalem'

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold:  
Bring me my arrows of desire:  
Bring me my spear: O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire.

I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

Tributes and Memories for Ray  
Richard, Andrew and Neil

Musical Tribute  
'The Sun has got his hat on' sung by Alison Matthews



Psalm 23

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; he leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again,  
And me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E'en for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear no ill;  
For thou art with me; and thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnishèd  
In presence of my foes;  
My head thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me;  
And in God's house forever more  
My dwelling place shall be.



**Reading**

John 14: 1-6 and 27 read by Alexander

**Sermon**

**Poem**

'Remember Me' read by Owen

*Speak of me as you have always done.  
Remember the good times, laughter, and fun.  
Share the happy memories we've made.*

*Do not let them wither or fade.*

*I'll be with you in the summer's sun  
And when the winter's chill has come.*

*I'll be the voice that whispers in the breeze.*

*I'm peaceful now, put your mind at ease.*

*I've rested my eyes and gone to sleep,  
But memories we've shared are yours to keep.*

*Sometimes our final days may be a test,*

*But remember me when I was at my best.*

*Although things may not be the same,*

*Don't be afraid to use my name.*

*Let your sorrow last for just a while.*

*Comfort each other and try to smile.*

*I've lived a life filled with joy and fun.*

*Live on now, make me proud of what you'll become*

*by David Harkins*



**Hymn**

'All things bright and beautiful'

***Refrain:***

*All things bright and beautiful  
All creatures great and small  
All things wise and wonderful  
The Lord God that made them all.*

Each little flower that opens  
Each little bird that sings  
He made their glowing colours  
And made their tiny wings

***Refrain***

The purple headed mountains  
The rivers running by  
The sunset and the morning  
That brightens up the sky

***Refrain***

The cold wind in the winter  
The pleasant summer sun  
The ripe fruits in the garden  
He made them every one

***Refrain***

He gave us eyes to see them  
And lips that we might tell  
How great is the Almighty  
Who has made all things well.

***Refrain***

**Prayers**

The response to the prayers is:

Lord in your mercy

All: Hear our prayer.

**The Lords Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.



Ray's family would like to thank you for your kind words along with your attendance here today and you are warmly invited to join them after this service at  
Wymeswold Memorial Village Hall

**Commendation**

**Farewell**

**Blessing**

**Recessional Music**  
'You'll Never Walk Alone'



*( Inner wheel Day & Ray's 80<sup>th</sup> 2020 )*

Donations in Ray's memory are invited for  
The Peter Le Marchant Trust



may be left in the collection box as you leave the service or cheques payable to

The Peter Le Marchant Trust  
may be sent via  
**G Gamble & Sons (Quorn) Ltd.**  
101A Meeting Street, Quorn, LE12 8AQ  
Tel: 01509 415415

From Richard, with his final words at the service:

*"Thank you for all the love, condolence cards and letters, and for coming today to celebrate the Life of Ray."*