

Record of Remembrance for Judy Hicklin Barrow

Tanya Garland writes:

Judy was one of four children, all of whom had suffered from serious mental and physical conditions which put a great strain on the family - all suffered from anxiety. Her elder brother had cerebral palsy as a result of suffering anoxia at birth and her sister was later diagnosed with schizophrenia. Judy herself knew severe depression and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis as a young woman before her marriage. However, she always said that her parents remained devoted to all of their children and she often spoke of her love for her gentle father who, she said, *'adored us.'*

At the age of ten, Judy was sent to France on her own as an 'en pension' to learn French, staying with a Catholic woman, who cared for children whose parents were absent. Judy said she cried every night, although she said the woman was nice to her and took her to the Latin Catholic services. After returning to England at the age of twelve, having learnt to speak French, Judy went to a very strict and academic school where the tears continued. She said she was very miserable there, crying in prayers every day for two years, "Even though I was a day pupil." By the time she was a teenager she recognised that she was definitely depressed.

Judy was good at languages and, although she had wanted to study medicine, to her great surprise she was offered a place at Somerville College, Oxford to read Zoology. She used to say with a laugh that she couldn't remember studying much as she spent a great deal of her time at Somerville with a boyfriend and a friend from Judy's student days said that she envied Judy's free spirit then and remembers her dashing about on a motor scooter and wearing the latest fashion Mary Quant clothes. Judy went on to complete a PhD at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School in London. There she worked on the spatial pattern in the hydra – as she thought that this simple organism would be a good experimental system to work on fundamental problems in developmental biology. Her professor was the eminent scientist Professor Lewis Wolpert, Emeritus Professor in Cell and Developmental Biology, who kept in touch with Judy. He came to her funeral at St Matthew's Church, Grandpont, in Oxford and spoke in praise of the scientific work she had done.

However, in 1971, while researching the history of medicine at University College, London, Judy landed in her GP's surgery seeking help with her depression. She often expressed her gratitude for this very spiritual Jewish man whose father had been killed in the Holocaust and who felt she was worth saving. She said, *'It was he who was responsible for helping me get over my depression without medication, giving me his time weekly to talk. He focused on improving my morale.'* Judy had not yet been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, but suspected she might have it. In spite of this she pushed herself to take a new job – this time as an editor of a teaching medical journal and ironically, the first paper that she proofread was an article on MS. By that time she had had other symptoms including temporary partial blindness. Her neurologist, who gave her the diagnosis of MS also attended her funeral and told us that when he examined her x-rays all those years ago, he saw a large white area in

the brain that should not have been there. He expressed his amazement that she was able to achieve all that she had done. As well as working as the editor of the medical magazine, Judy undertook the move of the paper's premises to Oxford with all the organization of setting up the new office. It was during the work of preparing doctors' manuscripts for publication, that she finally finished her thesis and presented her doctorate in 1975 - an enormous personal achievement.

Judy's first marriage was to Peter Jay, whom she described as a free spirit and poet. They had two daughters together, Laura and Miranda, but the marriage broke up after the birth of the second daughter. As a single parent, Judy moved to Grandpont and joined the St. Matthew's Church community of young mums. But in 1984 she became very ill with MS and was hospitalized for four months leaving the girls with her parents. This MS attack was like having a right-sided stroke. For a time one side was paralysed and she was unable to speak. Judy's speech gradually returned over several years, but she still had trouble with articulation, finishing sentences and remembering words, up to the time of her death. Judy grew to be a very spiritually aware person. When she was most ill in hospital, she had a transforming religious experience which left her conscious of being a 'spiritual' being.

Judy had not previously thought much about life after death, but while she was in hospital, one night she had, what she called 'a vision' which is included here told in her own words. *'Although most doctors would say the cause was pathological due to the huge lesion in my brain, to me the vision was very real and very beautiful. My surroundings of the hospital ward changed, and I found myself sitting naked and surrounded by a dark sea – like a negative with dark and light reversed. I became conscious of moving away from my body and across the hospital corridor towards a very spiritual Being of Light. I was in awe and yet he was familiar to me and he knew me. I fell on my knees terribly afraid realizing I must be dying. I was having flash-backs of all the pain in my past life and suddenly this figure was beside me radiating the most wonderful Love. The love was maternal and paternal, the healer, wisdom and everything. Then I found there was love in me too, love that I didn't know I had or could feel. I was in a state of 'all-loving' and it made me strong and raised me up. I felt I was being drawn upward – pulled towards the source of Love and Light. I passed people I didn't know and felt such joy and friendship as love flowed through me. The light was broken up into light particles of different colours. I felt I was being drawn to the source and passing through higher levels of joy as we went. Then suddenly the picture changed – we were on an even surface, we were in heaven and there was a 'God spot' from where all the Love came. The few words that he said, 'This is my Father' didn't seem strange. I was learning. It was as though I was seeing things in the way God sees them. I was given understanding and funnily enough, I remember seeing an older Laura, as a young woman surrounded by friends. I saw how many relationships are travesties of love and are lost by trivial concerns and desires. People just don't realise what is important. I saw that the love that does so much on earth is often blocked off from us. We walked onto an escarpment, and looked down into a valley. I saw history laid out in a sort of procession and had a sense of all knowledge and a maturity of human affairs. I saw the puerile, dishonest dealings that mankind fall into, the diseases, plagues and wars and I didn't want to go back but it wasn't my time. I knew that in God's view time does not exist and I also knew that nothing matters*

more than loving God and being part of that Love. I had to go back to my life and when I returned to the hospital room I was struck with the realisation I had been with Jesus and I kept repeating, 'I had no idea! No idea!' I felt so overcome, for days and days I wept.'

It was after her experience that Judy turned to the Quakers as she needed silence and meditation to come to terms with her vision. Although she still occasionally attended a church service, where she was very moved by the words of some hymns, her most committed religious practice was with the monthly Quaker healing Meeting. She also attended a local church group which discussed theological issues and when together, Judy and I often turned the conversation to spiritual and religious experience. She told me she had read the King James Version of the Old Testament before she was nine, skipping only a few bits and knew well the stories of Jesus from a child's picture book.

Her second marriage in 1994 was to Richard Barrow, an academic and neighbour in Western Road, Oxford, who was 30 years older than Judy and who died after six years of marriage. She spoke of him as the love of her life.

I shall remember Judy for her very positive outlook and the way she was always thrilled to make contact, often on the phone. She loved her family and grandchildren, conversation, music and literature; she wrote poetry and sat in a favourite chair looking out at her garden, expressing much pleasure in these things and her plants. In spite of all her difficulties, walking and learning to speak again after her crisis, Judy was always able to enjoy her friends and would laugh at the mad situation she found herself in and the frustrations of all she had to put up with. Even the mourning of Richard and her anger at having lost him was expressed with a little smile. I never heard her complain. Judy's unexpected death was caused by falling backwards and hitting her head badly, while she was visiting Laura and her two beloved grandchildren in Brussels. Miranda had accompanied her there, so Judy was with all her family when she died in hospital later that night. A few years before her death she had said to me, *'I have learnt through all of this that God and Divine Love are outside of time. We need to take the long view of things, not get stuck in everyday trivia, and that relationships are all-important. On reflection, mine is a story of triumph and of being looked after, but it didn't feel like that at the time. It often seemed unbearable, yet all my life I've been moving towards becoming a more loving person. Therefore it has been a journey of salvation.'*

Judy Hicklin Barrow - Born 10 September 1945 and died 12 June 2016: