

Lavender's Funeral

Everyone present will I'm sure miss Lavender very much, even if they have not seen her recently for obvious reasons. Her children will of course miss her dreadfully, as will Martha and Bridget who cared for her with such devotion.

As for me, I have lost the last of my three sisters, and one with whom owing to our comparatively close ages I have always had a strong relationship; this grew in later years because we lived so close, and had so much to reminisce about together, because she could remember the past, even though her memory for the present was not so good. So her passing is nearly the end of a generation of Herberts, and I will have to look around for someone else to take to the local cinema and Italian restaurant afterwards. She enjoyed those occasions as indeed I did. I will miss her very much.

In the early '30s my mother took us round all the Loire chateaux and many, many churches. One night we arrived so late that there was only

one room, and all three of us had to sleep in the same bed. A wonderful family holiday at Colioure, at the foot of the Pyrenees in 1936, the year when the Spanish Civil war began, ended badly.

Returning home third class, my mother was taken very ill. On arriving in Paris she told Lavender to show me the town, while she gathered strength to get home. I remember grumbling to my sister about her being over-economical when it came to what she allowed me to order from the menu.

Lavender lived a very full life. Having left school she went to Vienna where she played and studied the piano for eight hours a day. Her tutor, Steiner, naturally fell in love with her. She was there when Hitler marched in and sent me a set of commemorative stamps. It was obviously time for her to come home.

But before the outbreak of war I remember Dunstan Curtis, later to skipper the Motor Gunboat which lead the way into the St Nazaire raid, asked Lavender and I to crew his beautiful converted fishing smack; my father had taught all his children how to sail. Dunstan was

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obviously very attracted to Lavender, as were many men she met later during her war service. In some cases Lavender's feelings for them were just as strong.

With the outbreak of war she joined the Land Army, and milked cows and mucked out on a farm near Lewes. She then became a Wren and specialized in torpedoes. After the war she became a fully trained physiotherapist and met Pat Custance who is with us today.

With the death of her devoted husband Christopher and her children all being grown up, we come to why we are here today. I may be wrong, but I think she had a reasonably happy old age, in spite of arthritis. She read a lot, wrote her autobiography, and also poems, played chess and continued with friends to go on the canals in the summer, as she had hoped to do this summer.

Regardless of advancing years, her welcoming smile to all who came to see her was as warm as ever, and her integrity undiminished.

