

ELIZABETH CARY - EULOGY

'Interesting, and interested', a phrase that's often quoted,
To describe dear Liz - wife, mother and grandmother devoted.
These treasured words were just a few of many we received,
And bit by bit the love therein, it helped the pain recede.

So in this spirit, let us lean towards a fitting celebration
Of the life of this ever-cycling academic inspiration.
A beacon of her era - who would doubt her quiet gentility?
She was actually descended from Cromwellian nobility!

From 1933 was raised in Mayfair - quite a start!
Sired by famed George Simon, radiologist at Barts,
And graceful mother Charlotte, with Dutch bloodlines in the arts.
These gifted parents made quite sure she'd always stand apart.

They hired a Norland nanny to take care of every chore,
Those early walks across Hyde Park were times that Liz adored.
But alas, as was to befall so many at the dawn of war,
Their joyful play was broken by the air-raid siren's roar.

Thus on a train, at 6 years old, was sent to Brixham, Devon.
Despite all Hitler's efforts, this dark time was childhood heaven.
She always said the wartime years for her were full of wonder,
Seaside fun with friend Felicity kept war as distant thunder.

Just as teenage years began, the Nazis were defeated,
Despatched to Rugby Girls High School, her childhood was completed.
There, she met Peter Cary, son of Joyce the famous writer.
Skilled pianist and officer, he'd been a wartime fighter.

At sweet 16, in Oxford, close to lairs of classics teachers,
At lunch she once said, 'One does have a longing for Lucretius!'
So Peter he was smitten, soon proposed, and a Cary she became,
Creative passions shared, they sought scholastic gain.

Classical study, '50s London, quite an era for married frolics!
Smoke-filled dens and nimble pens, a feast for bookaholics.
Peter collected rare editions and Liz she trod the boards,
Aristophanes to Shakespeare, how they savoured mind's rewards.

So much so that to Cambridge, in the '60s, they did wander,
And many hours at cafés like The Whim they sat and pondered.
At Girton, she studied philosophy - Wittgenstein her thesis,
Few earthly minds had her skills at ripping him to pieces.

The coffee habit took firm hold - her daily tally ten,
Fuel for long debates where she'd more than hold her own with men.
Soliloquies with student princes, in the Footlights of that era,
She even took the stage not long ago, her diction ever clearer.

So with artistic teenage Rachel and baby Annabel in tow,
The handsome couple gambolled through the '70s in love's glow.
The dons just couldn't understand why she wouldn't join their ranks,
Despite their firm entreaties she rebuffed them with 'No thanks'.

Her dedication to her children and her husband took first place,
And many causes of the moment saw the benefit of her grace.
At Hertford Street, their home was a true temple to Bohemia,
As best befits a family with reverence for academia.

Music too, oh how oft the ivories tinkled away,
That's no surprise - the four had one piano each to play!
TV was a special treat, huddled round only now and then,
The licence was still black and white right up to 2010!

Elizabeth, what zest and energy you had, it refused to ever wane,
Those fortunate to know you never needed this explained.
With Peter's long-term illness your devotion never wavered,
Such love and patience, true virtue, your strength it never faded.

The 20 years since then, you gave yourself to life's ideals,
Criss-crossing miles of Cambridge streets upon your trusty wheels.
Whether cradling first editions wrapped in the local rag,
Or Global Warming flyers stuffed inside a Waitrose bag.

Exemplary in campaigning for CO2 removal,
Altruistic to a fault, you never sought approval.
A testament to your children and the children that they bore,
Adam, Lucas, Matthew, Charlotte, it's unlikely there'll be more.

But think from them how many more sweet souls may come to pass,
Without your time upon this earth they'd never have such class!
The endless spiral of connected souls that brought you to this earth,
Continues on eternally with every sacred birth.

So let us all give thanks to God for the miracle of being alive,
Liz, Mum, Elizabeth, Beth, Nan, Gaga, your legacy will thrive,
A full life, well lived, and one with no regrets,
We'll miss you terribly, that's sure, but never will forget.

Goodbye, for now at least, we know you are at peace,
At the coffee bar up in the sky, where the service doesn't cease.
Peter perched there by your side, a Homer text in hand,
Your aura ever-glowing now you've found your Promised Land.

Ben Hardyment, 9 October, 2014