

# Wendy and Martin's Memories



This is Wendy and Martin's story. They met when they were both still at school and have been together more or less since that time, recently celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. During those 60 years they have travelled, housed numerous friends and some strangers too, helped to run a sports charity for disabled people and had a family of their own whilst both still working. Their lives have been rich in family and community, which they have been willing to share with many. Martin is fondly known in the family as Steve, this has been a nickname of his throughout his life. But with anyone outside of the family he has always been Martin.

## Wendy's Childhood

Wendy was one of three children born to Horace and Marcella Taylor. Her parents met when her mother was in service at a house that her father Horace was painting and decorating. Marcella was originally from Ireland and had come to Gerrard's Cross in search of work with her two sisters Kitty and Lily. It is thought this was in the late 1920s, early 1930s. They had had a very poor life in Ireland and Wendy thought this was why her mother was always very frugal throughout her life. Horace was born in 1909 and became a successful builder and decorator. By the time Wendy was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1938 her parents were living in Boundary Road, Chalfont St Peter and moved to Gold Hill where she lived until getting married. Wendy had an older sister, Pat and a brother called Colin who was seven years younger.

Wendy went to primary school in Chalfont St Peter before moving onto Dr Challoners School in Amersham, which at that time was boys and girls. Wendy enjoyed the mixture and still supports an integrated education. During World War 2 she recalls air raid shelters at her primary school, particularly the smell, her family did take in evacuees, but she cannot remember them. Wendy would describe her mother as being the strong force of the family, her father was more easy going, he would speak to anyone. She does recall that they did allow a vagrant to spend a

winter in their shed one year. The house she grew up in was shared initially with her father's parents, until their death when Wendy's parents took over the whole house.



A photo of Wendy with her mum, sister Pat and brother Colin in 1946

Wendy left school at 18 and spent a “gap year” working in schools in Whitehill and Waterside in Chesham. Following this she realised that she would like to teach and at the age of 19 she started at Trent Park Teacher Training College, near the northern end of the Piccadilly line. She had to live in digs locally and lived with another girl from High Wycombe. They each had a room and food was also supplied. Wendy even received a grant from Bucks County Council. All living and teaching costs were paid for by the Local Authority. Drama college was Wendy’s thing and she loved it. As part of her course she was expected to go to the Theatre a lot and she had no problem with this, as she really enjoyed it. She also visited Pinewood Studios. College lasted for two years and she used to return home most weekends when not going to the theatre in the West End, always in the “Gods”.

## **Martin’s Childhood**

Martin was the eldest of two sons born to Eric and Annie (always known as Anne) on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1936. As Martin’s mother had lost her first child, it was decided that Martin should be born in hospital. This was St Bartholomew’s Hospital, so he is a cockney by birth. Martin had a younger brother called Peter.

When Martin was born his parents were living in Higher Denham. His father had responded to an advertisement looking for aeronautical engineers to work for James Martin, this was the late 1920's/early 1930s. Initially they and James Martin had to live in a converted army hut, named Hilltop on the factory site, as they did not have any money to buy a house.



Martin at Hilltop

James Martin was an inventor and started designing a plane on similar lines to the Spitfire and building other aeronautical aids. Because of their work they had protected jobs and did not have to join the forces once WW2 started. They did not complete the plane by the end of the war and so they started to work on an ejector seat. This came about following the invention of jet engine planes. The aim was to save pilots lives who could not parachute out of planes due to the speed they were travelling at. So, the idea of an ejector seat was born. This was what Martin's dad worked on. His father would often work 6 and a half days a week and was passionate about his work. This was at the Martin Baker Factory which still exists today.

James Martin became a close friend and was Godfather to Martin. His dad became a director of some of the smaller subsidiaries to do with the company and he continued to work up until his death aged 81 years.

Eventually the Stevens family moved to a proper house in Lower Road, Higher Denham, but Martin and his brother spent a lot of time at the factory. Their house was just 300 yards from the Martin Baker Factory. Martin remembers being allowed access on Sundays, when they would play billiards in the Canteen. He remembers seeing his dad and James Martin testing the first ejector seat.

Chalgrove Airfield in Oxfordshire was the location for a lot of the ejector seat tests. It was here that Martin and Peter as young teenagers learnt to drive in an old ambulance that was left on site in case it was needed, they took advantage of its availability!

The young boys also used the carpenter's expertise at the factory to make their own things, one of which was a canoe, which they took down to the River Misbourne to use. He also remembers picking up all the dogends to roll his own but being sick soon stopped that!

Martin left school at 19 as he had to sit his A 'Levels a year late due to illness. Following this he went into National Service joining the Navy, the year was 1955.



Eric Stevens in the seat, Martin's Father,  
with Sir James Martin

## **Martin's Time in the Navy**

Initially Martin had to undergo training on an aircraft carrier designed for young trainees, this was in the Mediterranean. Following this he was drafted onto HMS Superb, which was a large cruiser. This was apparently the last ship to go through the Suez Canal before it was closed due to the Suez Crisis.



**Martin in Navy uniform**

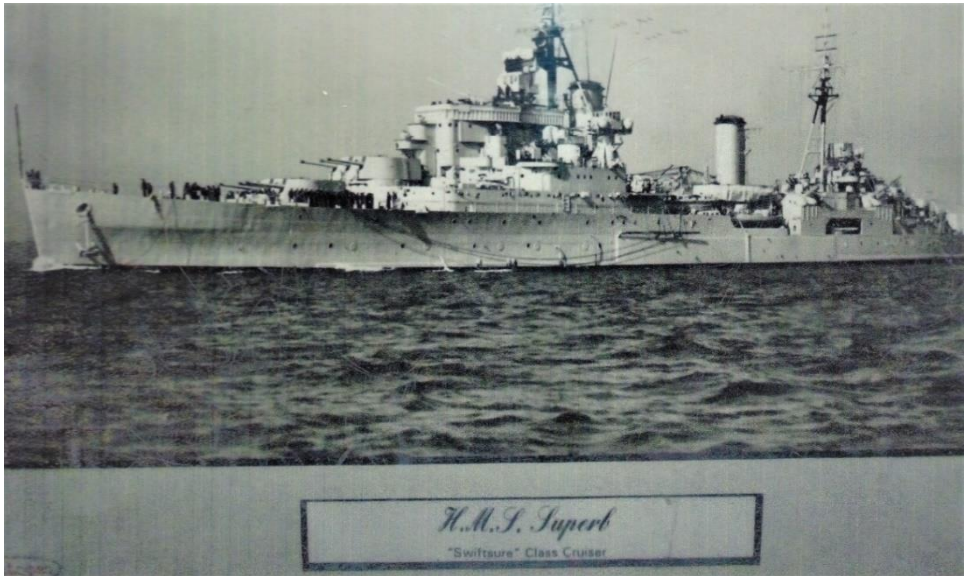
Martin saw a lot of the world during this time, visiting Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Persian Gulf, Aden, Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon), Seychelles, East Africa and South Africa to name a few. During this time, he was a seaman, a general hand helping to keep the ship clean, over the side painting and on his knees scrubbing the quarter deck. He was also a Steward in the Chief Petty Officer's mess, which meant serving dinners and keeping the mess tidy. Martin suffered with dermatitis and whilst on HMS

Superb he had a flare up on his hands which meant he could not work and spent time in the Navy hospital in Ceylon. He was sent “up country”, which was cooler, in order to recuperate. During this time there was a visit from Lord and Lady Mountbatten, and he was unable to shake their hands as his hands were bandaged up!

One-time Martin was in a hurry on deck after collecting the post and he ran into something heavy hitting his forehead. This left a scar that he still has today. Martin used this scar to tell Wendy a tall tale when he returned home to England. Part of Martins duties sometimes meant being on Shore Patrol to help keep an eye on the sailors who may have misbehaved. He would have to carry a loaded firearm and told the story when he got back to the UK that he had been shot at and had a war wound!

Another of Martins memories from his naval days is playing cricket. Throughout his life, cricket has always been an important hobby. He was able to play whilst in the navy, which he enjoyed. Also, he remembers one time his mother saw HMS Superb and asked him which was his bedroom window! Although Martin did not make any lifelong friends from these days, he remembers them with fondness and feels that they helped shape him as a man. Prior to joining he had been young and introverted living at home with his family. Joining the navy, he met a wide

variety of people from many walks of life and it was a real learning curve for him. However, he did not have a girl in every port!



HMS Superb

## Wendy and Martin's Courting Days

Wendy and Martin met when Wendy was 13 and Martin 15 years of age. At the time Martin was going out with Wendy's cousin. They had gone to her birthday party where Martin did not know many of the people. Martin arrived in his mother's car, Wendy thought this was very posh. They were playing a game called Tippet, which involves two teams, one of whom passes a sixpence around in their hands and it is up to the other team to identify who has it. Apparently, Wendy and Martin's hands touched, and a romance began! Luckily the birthday girl soon found someone else!

For the next few years they courted on and off. Both completed their formal schooling. Then Martin left for two years to go and do his National Service. During this time Martin and Wendy did correspond with each other but they did have their own lives and met other people.

On his return in 1957 they were soon courting again. However, Wendy soon started her two-year Teacher Training Course and Martin after a short break started his training to become a Chartered Accountant. When Wendy and Martin were courting Wendy's house had a little porch with a second door. One night to get in out of the cold, they were sitting in this porch saying goodnight. They heard Wendy's

dad say: “I will just put the milk bottles out” and he opened the inner door and pretending not to notice them just put the milk bottles under their feet, not saying a word!

Another time Martin had taken Wendy home very late and she and her mother had words which ended with Wendy storming out of the house after Martin who was long gone on his bike. Wendy ended up at a public phone box three miles from home reversing charges to call Martin, who then phoned Wendy’s parents and said they would collect Wendy and take her back home. Martin and his parents (in night clothes) collected Wendy who by that time had a friendly policeman with her and took her home. Apparently, she had told him she was waiting to be “picked up”. She was grounded for two long weeks!

One-time Wendy and Martin had been invited along to watch one of the ground zero tests at Chalgrove. The pilot doing the test was Doddy Hay. The Ministry of Defence was also there. The pilot seat was out in the open, set up just as if it was in the cockpit. When the pilot went to eject nothing happened, so Martin’s dad went to check and made some alterations. This could have been very dangerous as the charge could have ignited at any time. The pilot tried again and this time it did work but as the pilot separated from the seat and parachuted to land the seat started to come down amongst the spectators. Everyone

scattered for safety, but Martin's dad said" don't worry, we will be all right here" and they were! Wendy remembers being excited by it all, as it was very different from everyday life.

By this time Martin had started his accountancy training in Holborn, London. It had been decided by his parents that he should do this, and he raised no objections. He enjoyed the training although not the commute into London. Whilst he was training, they got engaged. They remember sitting on Gold Hill Common on a particularly frosty evening and that decided them, they should get married, so they went and asked Wendy's parents and about 18 months later, on the 15 August 1959 they became Mr and Mrs Stevens. They were married in the Baptist Church in Goldhill and had their reception in the hall at the back of the Chapel. They soon decamped to Wendy's parents' house as no drink was allowed in the chapel! They were sent off on their honeymoon in an old van that had been decorated by their family and friends along with an old fish tied to the engine! They spent the night in Sonning before moving onto Lyndhurst in the New Forest and then travelling west to Cornwall.

They were able to buy their first house which was called Anchorage and was in Chalfont St Peter. It cost them £2400, and was a two up, two down with an outside toilet and a back garden part of which

had been originally used as a coal yard. As Wendy's dad was a builder, they were able to renovate and extend it before they moved in, so this became a three-bedroom house, with a larger kitchen and an upstairs bathroom.

Martin's salary increased to £11 a week when they got married. He took seven years to qualify. It should have been five years but being married and a homeowner there were other things to think about. He then worked for two years as an Accountant for a firm in Slough who made venetian blinds.

## **Married Life**

They lived in their first home, Anchorage, from 1959 until 1967, and for the first five years they did what young couples do – learned to live together while still trying to fit in studying and cricket for Martin and drama for Wendy both at the Youth Club and local drama groups.

Then David was born in 1964 at a Nursing Home in Beaconsfield. (Martin was playing badminton at the time) and they became a family.

Dear Wendy  
Thank you  
for those kind words. It  
was lovely to have them.  
I had a card for you  
but made a mistake in the  
words, and couldn't send  
it. However the words were  
almost your own. May this  
baby be to you, as great  
a joy as you have been  
to us.

We know your own nature  
was the reason you  
had a happy childhood  
and a wonderful 21 yrs.  
So please God your  
Boy will have a sunny  
temperament, and you will  
help him to laugh  
rather than cry.  
All our love  
Mum & Dad.

**This was a letter from Wendy's mother on the birth  
of David**

This house had a large garden and so with the practical help from Wendy's dad and financial help from Martin's family they were able to build a house in this garden. They were then able to use the money from the sale of this new house to buy a bigger house for themselves in Chalfont St Giles, which they did in 1967. This was called Rosebank and was a

“good house” with a child friendly garden, four bedrooms and old enough for Wendy’s dad to enlarge and improve. During this time they were given a Alsatian puppy which they named Brett and continued to enjoy the breed with Bruno then Bracken for a further 26 years.

They kept their original house Anchorage and would rent this out in future. However, one of the tenants who had fallen on difficult times disappeared overnight owing a lot of rent and leaving all his possessions. Wendy and Martin had to go to Court to get ownership of the possessions so they could sell them to pay his debt. It was a bit of a disaster. Wendy was later given a house by her parents that they also let out mainly to teachers from the school. At one time the PE teachers living there practised their rock climbing by hammering pitons in the wall which was not discovered until they had moved out and away. Again, a disaster!! By this time, they realised they were not good at being landlords and as the boys were leaving home passed the houses on to David and Kerry.

Wendy had started teaching first in Ickenham at a girl’s school in 1959 and then moved to Chalfont St Peter Secondary School in 1961 and enjoyed the ethos of a mixed school. The school was affectionately known as “Old Jobs”. Wendy

continued to work when she had David, she was lucky as her mum and sister lived nearby and they together with other helpers helped with childcare. At this time Wendy decided help was needed with the housework and still is. All those who helped have become firm family friends. However, when Wendy became pregnant with Kerry, they decided to have an au-pair to give extra help in the home. Kerry was born in The Stone just 100 yards from Rosebank in 1969. In 1971 Wendy started to work with children with special needs and at the age of 37 she became Deputy Head at the school. Wendy loved teaching, she enjoyed working with the children and felt that she understood them and could relate well to them.

Wendy was instrumental in setting up a school surgery run by the police for the benefit of young people who were experiencing problems. This resulted in a decrease in crime and damage caused by minors.

She also led teams that won awards for the school that included:

- Kodac 'local hero's photographic competition'
- National award for the 'Schools curriculum award for community involvement'
- Natwest Bank Project Respond Scheme

- First prize in the 'Young Persons Railcard / Young People Now Idea of the Year' to provide a meeting place for the young, elderly and disabled.

Part of the community in the school's catchment area were Travellers who lived either on permanent sites or in houses. She took time to visit the sites, understand and appreciate their particular culture and way of life and by doing so established relationships with the parents and children which resulted in a high attendance of the children to the school.

Martin by this time had left Slough and was now working for the Epilepsy Centre in Chalfont St Peter. Martin loved his job at the Epilepsy Centre where he stayed for 30 years finally retiring when he was 62 years of age. Martin felt that work here was not just a job, but a way of life and he became involved in many aspects of its work not just its accounts. He still visits the centre and still has friends who are residents there. Wendy also became very involved at the centre. As part of her work at the local Youth Club she used to produce plays and she would arrange for these to be performed for the residents and staff at the Epilepsy Centre.

## Club idea could be a winner

A GROUP of youngsters from The Chalfonts School have fought their way into the last ten in the Young Idea of the Year awards.

The pupils won through to the final stages of the competition, organised by British Rail, with their idea for a club for the elderly, babies and handicapped.

Around 50 children from the Chalfont St Peter school have helped set up the club, and have recently found a derelict hut behind the Chalfont Leisure Centre, as a base.

School deputy head Wendy Stevens, who has helped the youngsters organise the club, is hoping they can win the £1,000 first prize and help pay the cost of refurbishing the hut.

The winner of the competition will be announced at a special ceremony in London on November 22.

Some Newspaper Articles recording some of Wendy's work

EXAMINER 5

## Deputy head teacher wins photographic competition

BIG hearted deputy head teacher Wendy Stevens has been nominated as South East England's local hero in a photographic competition.

Miss Stevens, 51, was named the regional winner in the schools and youth groups category of the Find Your Local Heroes competition.

She was nominated for her voluntary work by her headmaster, Peter Baker, and children from the Chalfonts School, Narcot Lane, Chalfont St. Peter.

The competition, sponsored by Kodak Express, aimed to show that community spirit still exists in the 1980's.

Entrants had to nominate their local hero by taking a photograph of them in action and explaining in words their heroic activity.

Mr Baker and the children wrote of Mrs Stevens, of Dean Way, Chalfont St Giles: "Wendy is an inspiration. As well as being deputy head in a local school and a foster mother, she organises a sports club for the physically handicapped; runs a creche for mothers and babies and organises parties for the elderly."

The Chalfonts School has won £200 in recognition of the children's efforts.

Mrs Stevens told the Examiner she was very pleased to receive the award.



● ABOVE: Pop star Sinitta presents the pupils from Chalfonts School - (left to right) Kate Elderfield, Nicola Canning and Dean Robson - with their £1,000 first prize. ● BELOW: Chalfonts School won the Idea of the Year Award for its plan to provide a decent meeting place for members of a community project for elderly and disabled people.

Martin was Finance Director at the Epilepsy Society from 1967 to 1997. As the Queen was the Patron, she visited on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society (1993/4), she came to open a new building. When Martin started work there were 500 residents at the centre, when he left in 1997 this number had reduced to about 250, today it has about 100 residents. as the emphasis is now on research and not residential care. The Queen Mother, Princess Diana and the Duchess of Kent have all visited the Epilepsy centre at some point.

Wendy and Martin have been to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. As the Queen is patron of the Epilepsy Society people from the centre are invited and one year, they were lucky enough to go.



The Queen visiting the Epilepsy Centre in 1985

Martin remembers wearing a Morning suit and Wendy had to wear a hat. It was a lovely sunny day and Wendy was “most impressed by the toilets” and strawberries and cream! Martin also went to the palace when his father was awarded the OBE. It was a very formal event and he thinks it was the Queen who was there on the day.

Wendy and Martin still visit the centre, as their local baker in Chalfont St Giles donates all the left-over bread and cakes to the centre on a Saturday, so Wendy and Martin will drop this off on a Saturday afternoon.

Cricket featured a lot in their married life. Martin played for Chalfont St Peter's Cricket club where he is still an honorary member. Martin was captain of the team for several years. They would sometimes have special matches where international players would attend. One of these was on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1967 and included Ray Illingworth, Captain of Yorkshire and England and later a cricket selector and other English and Australian Internationals. Roy Castle also played, and later played a few games for the club first team and entertained them all.



A photograph of some of the players for the  
Chalfont St Peter International Stars XI ON 4 June  
1967

A memorable match was with a Dutch touring team. Two or three of these players needed accommodation and stayed with Wendy and Martin at Rosebank. But by this time Ursula the first au-pair and Kate were also staying and to save any hanky panky in the night the girls had Bret the Alsatian in the room with them with the door firmly shut.

Wendy would often go and watch the cricket, but she was not a great one for making the teas! Although she was quite happy to help with the washing up!

Throughout their lives together Wendy and Martin have invited many people into their home, some of these came to help look after the children and then returned as friends, some came as foster children and some came as strangers who were given a bed for the night and a friendly welcome. The number of visitors has been numerous, and they have helped shape their families lives over the years. Some of them are included here in their story.

**Visitors to the Stevens Household included several people from abroad, some of whom are still friends today. Wendy and Martin wanted to include them in their story.**

1. Francoise, was a French girl who was coming to Chalfont St Peter on an English learning placement, but at the very last minute her accommodation fell through. Wendy and Martin stepped in and housed Francoise. This was in 1963/4 when Francoise was 13 or 14 years old. Wendy and Martin did not have a lot of money in those days, they had to borrow some money in order to put a carpet down in the bedroom that Francoise was to stay in. She came for 2- 3 weeks and has remained a lifelong friend.

The following year Francoise visited with her father, Pierre and a school friend Marie-Do. Francoise family lived in Morocco at this time and Wendy and Martin were invited back to Morocco for a holiday. That year, 1967, they had won £100 in a lottery run by the Cricket Club and so they were able to afford the flights to Morocco. Pierre had a bungalow within the Royal Palace walls in Rabat and Wendy and Martin stayed there for 2 weeks. David was three years old at this time, but they left him with each of their parents each

for a week! They had a lovely time and have been back numerous times since.

During this 2-week holiday in 1967 the family moved house from Anchorage to Rosebank, but without the help of Wendy and Martin! It was all done by their families! They are still not sure how they managed that!

When Francoise's parents were transferred back to France, Wendy and Martin and their sons spent holidays with Marie Do's parents at their beach house between Rabat and Casablanca. It was during one of these holidays that David learned to swim with a tennis ball in his trunks. Marie Do's father was a lawyer and advised the Royal Palace as well as Bedouin tribesmen in the desert, Martin and Wendy were honoured guests at a lunch (men only except for Marie Do, her mother and Wendy) with some of his client's way out in the desert. Sheep's eyes were the delicacy and Martin was unable to show his appreciation by burping until he was given a Coca Cola to drink !! And in more recent years they have spent holidays in Morocco, Spain, Italy, Croatia and of course France with both Francoise and Marie Do's families.

Francoise's sister Lydie also became a firm friend. She married Jacques, who later became blind, they went to their wedding in

Paris. Martin is Godfather to their eldest daughter, Marie, and Martin and Wendy went to her wedding in the Dordogne and celebration in Israel, visiting Damascus, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jacques is now a professor in a Paris university and has been awarded the Legion D'Honneur. Martin and Wendy now help at the local club for the visually impaired in Chalfont St Giles. More recently Wendy and Martin were invited to Marie Do's wedding in the mountains near Perpignan and spent a memorable (it was freezing) few days meeting old friends.

2. Marie-Do's boyfriend's brother came to stay also at one point with a Portuguese friend of his. They stayed in Martin and Wendy's small caravan parked at the side of the house at Rosebank (all other bedrooms were occupied). It was only years later that their son David told them that he used to see smoke coming from the windows of the caravan and that they could have been smoking pot!
3. As Wendy was working full time it was decided to employ an au pair to help with childcare. Ursula was Swiss and soon became a member of the family. She used to

go on holidays with them and took them back to Switzerland on numerous occasions. On one holiday to the New Forest with some friends, Ursula went too and took her boyfriend. Wendy and Martin had a VW Campervan and so they slept in that with the children and the dog. Their friends had a large tent where Ursula slept with the other family. Her boyfriend slept in a smaller tent. During the night there was a thunderstorm and it rained heavily and their friend, Eric snored badly, which resulted in everyone decamping and moving into the campervan. By morning Ursula's boyfriend had obviously had enough as he had done a runner!

One day Ursula decided that she no longer wanted to be an au pair and got a job as an Events organiser. She later met and married an English man and lived in Dunsmore and then Chalfont St Peter. Their wedding was at New Year in Little Missenden church and although her family came over from Switzerland it was Martin who gave her away. They remember their small son Kerry walking up the aisle after Ursula and interrupting the ceremony. The reception was at Chalfont St. Peter Cricket Club, snow on the ground and cold. Unfortunately, just as they were finishing

the meal the electricity supply could not take the load and the mains fuse blew. Everyone ended up at Rosebank where it was a lot warmer.

4. Annie-Mas was a friend of Marie-Do's family and she also worked as an au pair for Wendy and Martin for a short time. She did go on holiday with them to Ireland, but they are no longer in touch. Annie-Mas was followed by a Turkish boy who was studying in Paris. He stayed a few months and was very good with the children. He was also good up a ladder helping Wendy's dad paint the outside of Rosebank. He joined them camping in a tent and the campervan in Scotland with Ursula and two other French girls. They all watched the first man on the Moon through the window of a nearby pub. One of Marie-Do's cousins' children was a boy called Olivier, but was affectionately known as Frogget as he was French. Wendy and Martin were very friendly with his family and were invited to go on holiday to stay at their Beach House near Nice in the South of France. They did lose touch but in later years Frogget invited Wendy and Martin to his wedding which they attended.

5. In the early 1970's Laurence, who was French from Paris came to be their au pair. She was a very practical person and spoke some English. Both Wendy and Martin spoke some French, so they were able to get by. Once they took her to Paris to see her family as they were going to visit Francoise's family who had now returned to Paris from Morocco. Through Laurence they were introduced to her friend Joelle who also stayed as an au-pair with them for a couple of months. Joelle's boyfriend was a professional magician and they have photos of him levitating her. Their sons were very entertained by him.
6. They got to know Nelli, an Italian girl via Francoise. The girls had been at university together at the Sorbonne. Nelli's cousin Stella also came to stay with them and brought along two of her friends, who stayed elsewhere. From this invite Stella's parents, Gino and Gabriella came over with two of their friends and stayed with Wendy and Martin in Rosebank. They lived outside Rome in Cassa Palocco. They were a lovely couple and Wendy and Martin went and stayed with them a few times. One time they went with some friends and were lent a flat to stay in by one of the girl's friends. One day they managed to lock themselves out of the flat, luckily, they had left a window open. So, Martin

and his friend managed to climb down to the window from the roof on the outside of the building to the balcony and get in.

On the same visit they had taken their car to the beach and had left a camera on display on the car seat. When they returned the car window was smashed and the camera gone. So the next day they went to a garage to get the window fixed after spending ages reporting the loss to the police. However, when they were parked outside the garage someone on a moped drove past, put their hand in the open window and stole Martin's "man bag", which contained all their passports and money etc. Luckily, they were able to borrow cash from their English and Italian friends.

Wendy went into the garage crying trying to explain in broken Italian what had happened. She ended up talking to another customer there who by coincidence was familiar with "Martin Bakers Factory" and had even been there. It took another day at the British Consulate to get emergency passports for them to be able to travel home, this was made harder as they had John, foster child, with them and of course did not know all his past details for a new passport. Eventually everything worked out but not before the children had managed to set off an alarm in the lift as they got bored waiting!

Stella got married but sadly the new husband died in a car crash and Stella a few years later. For Gino and Gabriella this was a very difficult time and they moved to China where Gino had taken a new job with Italian Telecom. Gino has since died but later Martin and Wendy spent a weekend in London reminiscing with Gabriella.

Gino and Gabriella introduced Martin and Wendy to Cecilia, who also came to stay with them. Martin and Wendy were invited back to Italy and stayed in their family holiday homes, one in the mountains and the other near Naples from where they visited Pompeii and Vesuvius. The area around the prison in Naples was quite frightening.

**Wendy and Martin also had people to stay from more local places and these included people who were friends and people that they befriended:**

1. Ian, this was someone Martin met through the Cricket Club at Chalfont St Peter's. Ian lived in the Harrow area and worked on a farm in Coleshill travelling to and from by motorbike on which Wendy loved being an occasional pillion passenger. Following a few drinks after cricket he would stay overnight

with them. This became a regular thing and later Ian was married to a French girl. Ian and his wife often used to visit and on one occasion he was at Rosebank with their young son on his knee and Ian had a fit caused by meningitis. Visiting him in hospital it was unnerving to see the “horns” each side of his forehead where vents had been drilled to relieve the pressure in his brain. He recovered and remained a good friend until his death well into his 70s. They remain good friends with Denise who sadly also lost their son within days of Ian’s death.

2. Wendy was doing drama at the Youth Club and needed a policeman’s hat for a costume. She went to the local Police station and the sergeant said she could borrow one but in return could she house a young policeman called John who had recently moved to the area. They agreed so John came to stay and lived with them in Anchorage and in Rosebank.

A fond memory of John is one day he and his mate popped in for a cup of tea whilst on duty and offered to collect David, who was about 10, from school. So, they turned up in their patrol car and when they saw David walking out of the school gates, they went up to him grabbed his arm and said:” David

you're coming with me"! And proceeded to put him in the car and drive off with the blue light flashing! There was a lot of talk at school the next day! John remains a good friend to this day.

3. At one time a couple, who was a friend of Wendy's and their three children stayed with them, they remember that the man only had one arm. They needed somewhere to stay between moving houses and so stayed with Wendy and Martin for about a month. One of their children used to swallow objects and required surgery to remove them sometimes. They moved on and kept in touch until the wife remarried and eventually died.
4. Whilst David was at Junior School he came across one of his teachers and a friend sitting on a bench on the Green, apparently they had nowhere to stay, so aware that his parents would be OK about it, he invited them both home. They stayed for about a week until they got themselves sorted. Apparently, the friend worked for Denis Waterman.
5. Sometimes they had children stay with them via Wendy's school, children who were having difficulties. One of these, Jane, came as her

parents were splitting up. After a while Martin realised that her dad was still receiving child allowance for her but had not offered any money to Wendy and Martin for her upkeep, so Martin asked him for the allowance, was called a cheeky young man, but was successful in getting the allowance. Jane was a bit of a handful and would sometimes tease David, who was a few years younger than her. Once she and a girlfriend dressed up in clothes from the loft, top hat, tails, evening dress etc. and went up to London parading up and down Bayswater Rd. They were detained by the police and Martin and Wendy collected them from Paddington Green Police Station. Another time there was a suggestion that Jane and a boyfriend were involved with something that was said to have gone missing from Milton's Cottage, nothing came of it although the police searched the house and garden.

Eventually she returned home moved away and got married, had two children, and Wendy and Martin were their God parents. Later Jane survived a bad horse-riding accident and completed her training as an aerobics teacher and had her own studio. The last time they heard from her was when she asked Wendy about having an au pair.

6. A friend of Wendy's brother a probation officer asked them to look after a girl in her late teens called Kate. She stayed with them for less than a year but it was not always easy, as she would sometimes thumb lifts from lorry drivers and they never knew if she got to work or not! Eventually she married and moved on, she did return with a husband and a baby, but they no longer keep in touch. This was in the 1970s.
7. Although they can't remember his name a young man came and stayed for one or two weeks. He was studying in Paris and was from Haiti. He told them all about the 'Papa Doc' regime and what was happening in that country. The boys enjoyed best tales about voodoo.

As well as housing over 70 people throughout the years Wendy and Martin also officially fostered two children, both boys. They had come from troubled backgrounds and needed a place to stay when their Care Homes were closed.

The first boy was called John, and he was at The ARK in Jordans. He was 14 when he stayed with Wendy and Martin. It was a novelty for him to have his own bedroom which he apparently shared with a squirrel who chewed a hole in the bedroom carpet

which John had to cut out!! They thought he had been smoking!! His father lived in London but worked in Aylesbury and although he passed their door each day he only came and saw John once on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. John had always wanted to be a soldier and so at 16 Wendy and Martin took him to start his training as a cadet. He spent some years in the Army, although not all of them happy years. However, amongst other things the Army gave him a good training in communications which when demobbed helped him when he started a career in computers. He did marry a German girl following a tour of Germany, but this did not last. He is now remarried and lives back in Jordans. His recent wedding was attended by all of Wendy and Martin's family and they had the reception, which involved fancy dress, at Kerry's house.

The second lad was a West Indian called David and to differentiate him from their own son he is happy to be called Black David. He also came to them when he was 14 years old from a Care Home in Gerrards Cross which had closed. Wendy and Martin's own sons refer to him as their brother. In 1989 by which time both David and Kerry had left home but still lived close by, Wendy and Martin moved from Rosebank to their current house, Dean Cottage, and Black David came with them. However, by then he was 17/18 years of age and Kerry said that Black David should live with him as he felt it would be better for

him. He got work as a carpenter and ended up marrying an English girl who came from Australia. They got married in Perth and Wendy and Martin went to the wedding with Kerry who was best man. They now have a child of their own and although they live in Australia, they keep in touch. Black David came back in 2019 for Kerry's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Black David could be a bit feisty and there were times when he had brushes with the law, all of which luckily did not lead to anything serious.

Black David has an elder sister, Carnetta, who always looked out for him when they were both in care and Wendy and Martin are still friends with her as well, she now lives in Manchester. John, David and Carnetta all went to Wendy's school so she was able to keep an eye on them. In later years after she had finished university Carnetta returned to the school to give the 'keynote address' at the annual prize giving to children, teachers and parents. A proud moment.

Another ex-pupil with a troubled past often came to stay for short periods but this became difficult when following complaints from the public, he was seen on view sunbathing naked on a shed roof, and when asked by the police said 'it is Ok I am staying with Wendy' The police brought him to Wendy fully clothed. Finally, when he was found in bed at Dean Cottage fully clothed with his dirty shoes on, they put

a stop to him staying with them. However, he still travels down from Aberdeen generally about once a year and stays in a nearby hotel and enjoys a few days hospitality with them.

## Neighbours

Wendy and Martin wanted to mention some very understanding neighbours they had whilst living at Rosebank. Originally, there was a Cesspit at Rosebank and “Cesspit Sid” used to come regularly to empty it. They wanted to connect up to the main drains which were on the other side of the main road but this was very expensive. Their neighbours suggested that as they were having an extension done they should take the opportunity to connect to the mains via their own drains. But this was not without some messy problems, but successful in the end.

## ChadSport

In the late 1970s, early 1980s Wendy and Martin got “conned” into helping with Chad Sport and eventually were left with running it.

ChadSport was held at Chalfont St Peter leisure centre every 2 weeks on a Sunday afternoon from 6 – 8pm and was for adults who had physical and learning disabilities. There was a lifeguard on hand to

help in the swimming pool, but otherwise it was volunteers who helped with different sporting activities. People attended from as far afield as Burnham, where Ursula (their previous au-pair) managed a Day Centre, Beaconsfield and Stoke Poges. Also, people came from the Epilepsy Centre via Martin.

Wendy was able to help with providing volunteers from her school, they would have been about 15/16 years old and really helped, Wendy thought it was good for them to do this. Kerry also helped and so did some of his friends as well as Martins brother and sister in law.



A photo  
from  
ChadSport

They had to pay for the hire of Chalfont St Peter leisure centre, which they did through subs from the attendees, donations and grants from Chiltern District Council.

Martin would borrow a bus from the Epilepsy centre to transport people to the Leisure centre.

One Sunday Ann, Martin's sister in law, was helping a member in the swimming pool, him with arm bands on, both on their backs and him being supported by

Ann in the water with his head on her chest and a huge smile on his face. They always thought he could swim anyway!!

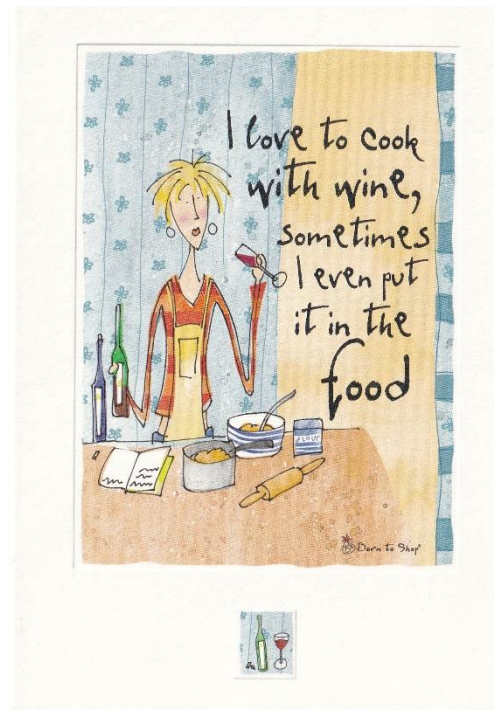
They ran this for about 15 years, handing over in about 1996 when Wendy retired. The other organisers found it difficult to continue without the helpers from the school and ChadSport gradually wound up as a result.

Wendy and Martin were given an award for the work that they did with ChadSport from Chiltern District Council. They enjoyed doing this and made a lot of friends. It did take a lot of their time, but it was something that they thought was very worthwhile.

## Wendy's Cooking

Martin wanted their story to include a mention about Wendy's cooking, or to be more honest, the lack of it!

Some quotes which have often been associated with Wendy and her cooking abilities are: "She's never been a good cook!" and "I've always been good at getting other people to do things for me!"



This was a card given to Wendy regarding her cooking!

Wendy did not like cooking and still does not cook. The family will say that the staple diet was baked beans on burnt toast. They were always thankful for the help and supplies from friends and the older children from school. One grandmother supplied pasties and sausage rolls, her garden backed onto the school field which was very useful as she often phoned Wendy and reported any of the children misbehaving!

There were a few incidents with Wendy's attempts at cooking:

1. At Anchorage, Wendy was trying to cook chips when the pan set on fire, she opened the window, but this only made the flames higher. It was OK in the end although they did have to redecorate.
2. At Rosebank, Wendy was Deputy Head and was organising an after-school meeting, so she went home at lunchtime to cook sausages for that night's meal. She had a phone call to ask her to return to school and forgot about the sausages in the oven. Martin was contacted at work to tell him to come home as there was a fire and the Fire Brigade were in attendance. Luckily it was contained to the kitchen, the oven door had blown out and the kitchen was a write off. The dog was not happy! The kitchen had to be replaced.

3. Following a disastrous Christmas dinner when Wendy forgot to put the oven on, Clare, their daughter in law wrote to “Can’t Cook, Won’t Cook”, the TV programme. They were interviewed to go on and got accepted and were paired up with Ainsley Harriot but on the day they were due to go on, Ainsley was sick and it was never rescheduled.

Martin cooks now, although he does have a problem with his timings! And still things get burnt!

Wendy and Martin's family



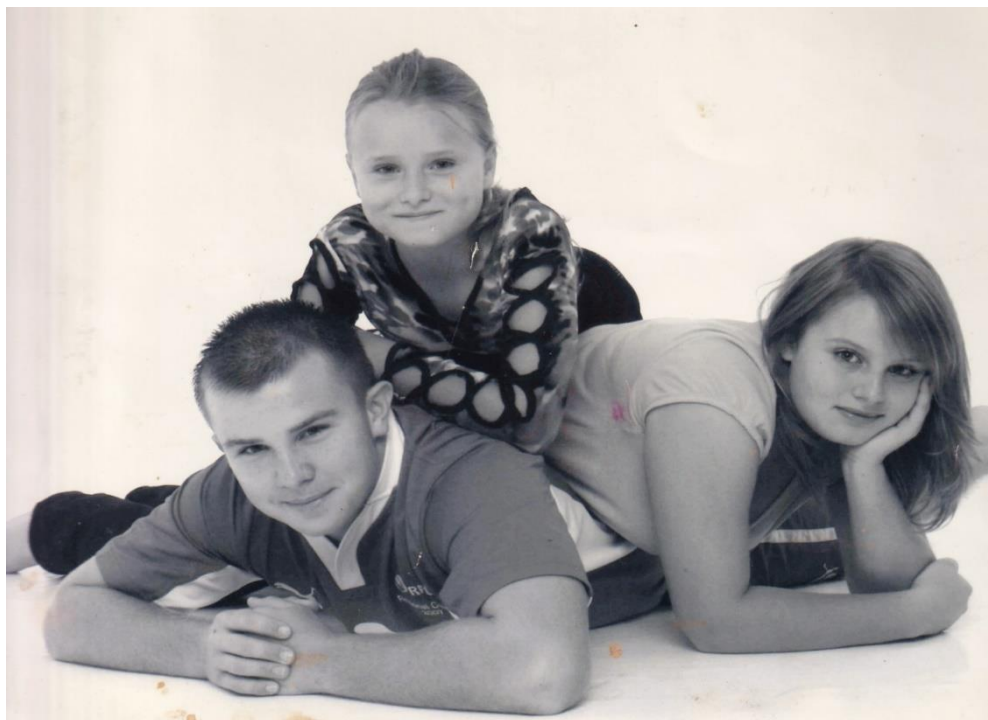
Black David, Louise, Clare, David with George and  
Kerry

As mentioned, Wendy and Martin have two sons, born in 1964 and 1969, David and Kerry.

David qualified as a Quantity Surveyor but hated being in the office. After a few jobs he retrained as a plumber. Today he does a lot of work for Housing Associations for disabled and disadvantaged people. He married Clare and they have three children. George born in 1991 and married to Megan and lives in Peterborough. As a young teenager he represented Great Britain and England in their judo team, he was a black belt. He also played rugby with the current English Rugby Union captain. Victoria was born in 1994 and is a published author of teenage fiction. She is training to be a teacher and lives near Kettering. Lily born in 1997, did music at university and is studying to be a psychologist. She lives in Southampton. All three grandchildren are gainfully employed and live with their partners in their own houses.

Kerry is married to Louise. He is a Social worker in Ealing and heads up the Adult Care unit for the borough.

Both children are good with people and this may have something to do with growing up in an environment where caring for others was very important. Wendy and Martin are proud of their children and grandchildren.

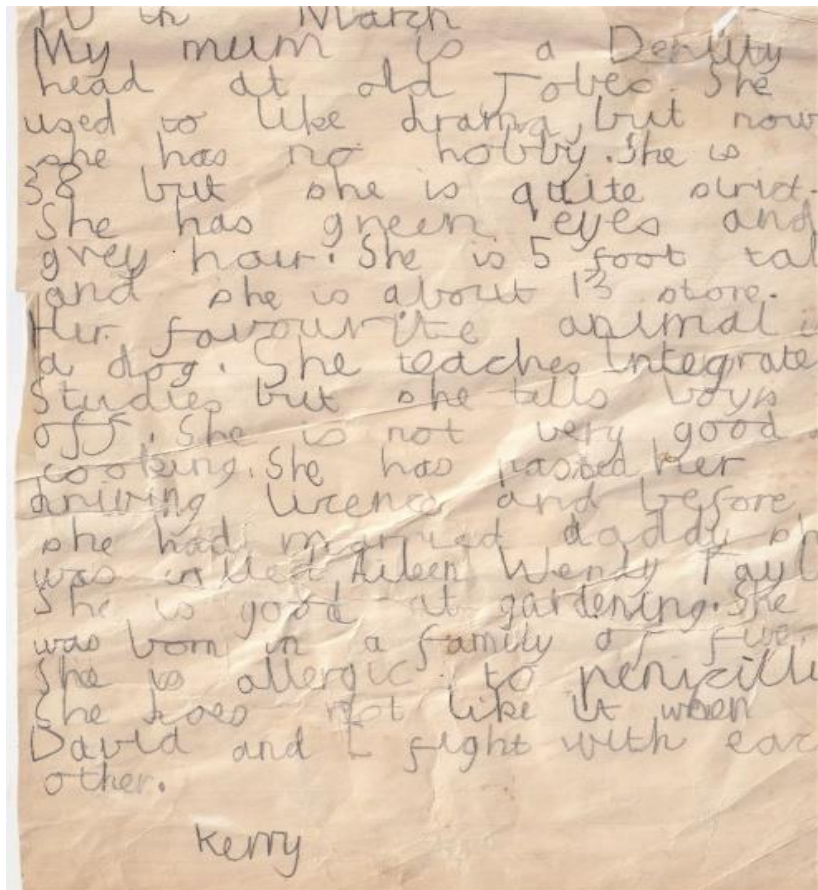


George, Lilly and Victoria

Both boys were very easy as children. They sometimes got in with the wrong crowd but always came good in the end. They knew right from wrong. Sometimes Wendy and Martin found out things after the event! At one time Wendy had a 2CV and whilst they were away the boys had driven it up to London.

It was only years later when Black David let the information slip that they found out!

Wendy and Martin are in regular touch with all the family and see their boys on a weekly basis.



Kerry's description of Wendy, written for a junior school project

## Holidays

Wendy and Martin have had several holidays abroad. Through all the people they have known over the years they have had many opportunities to visit their friends and travel widely. And although they have enjoyed the travel they both say that it is the people they remember most and for them this is the most important thing.

Martin's dad died in the early 1980s and they inherited some money from him. As they had so many connections to France, they decided to buy a property there. This ended up being "The Goat Shed", which was in the large garden where Francoise lived in the Dordogne. It was small, and they had converted it into a two down, one up property. They put in electricity, water and a toilet and shower and had many happy holidays there over the next few years. By the late 1980s they had outgrown The Goat Shed and found another place to convert. This was "The Old Mairie" in Limeyrat, again in the Dordogne. It had originally been the school then the village hall and so they converted it into a four-bedroom holiday property. The conversion of this was done with Black David's and all the families help. When clearing the large loft they found old school registers going back to the early 1900s. The walls in the children's rooms were decorated by them and all visitors are encouraged to add drawings

and complete the house diary daily. For the next 20 years they had many happy times there with family and friends, sometimes as often as three or four times a year.



Renovating the house in France





This was a mural done by Carnetta and her daughter in the house in France



Everyone was encouraged to decorate the walls

Some cousins of Wendy's emigrated to Pincher Creek, near Calgary in Canada. And every 5 years they invite anyone who can visit for a family reunion. Wendy and Martin have been able to make this journey twice, the last time five years ago. They made the most of their trip and toured from Vancouver through the Rockies before visiting their relatives. They loved Canada but were not so keen on the USA. They have also spent holidays in Thailand, New Zealand and Australia as they have family there too.

One holiday in Ireland with Wendy's Mum, Dad, sister and husband nearly ended in disaster. They travelled in her Dad's van, the same one used by them for their honeymoon, Martin driving but with NO seats in the back for the other four passengers who were in the back on deck chairs – not much health and safety in those days!! Cooking was done on a primus stove which somehow blew paraffin over brother in law and set him on fire! Thankfully they managed to roll him in the grass and no harm was done.

## Boats

Martin wanted to mention the fact that they have had much enjoyment with boats over the years. Martin and his brother Peter got interested in boats after they spent a holiday with their wives and another couple on the Great Union Canal and then in Ireland. They were taking a motorboat from Limerick up the River Shannon, when they came across some rough weather in one of the big lakes. The women were a bit nervous, Wendy was pregnant at the time, and the man from the other couple started to sing Onward Christian Soldiers! However, they made it back to the port and following this trip the brothers convinced their father to buy a boat!

The boat was moored at Maidenhead and Martin's dad had loads of fun tinkering with the engine, whilst his mum would enjoy looking after all the catering needs of visitors. The brothers enjoyed taking the boat out on the Thames, so an enjoyable pursuit for all the family. Martin's dad and the two boys together with another family who had a motor boat had planned to cross the Channel to France – all without much navigation knowledge .The Stevens boat got as far as Herne Bay in the Thames Estuary before common sense and sea sickness encouraged them to turn round !!

When Martins mum passed away, his father remarried. His new wife, Lilian, wanted something more upmarket and so they found a new boat and a new mooring in Marlow. After Martin's dad died Lilian gave the boat to the brothers. They continued to use the boat regularly, often enjoying it for a social downtime on a Friday evening. Eventually it became too expensive to run and was sold in 2005. Peter had already passed away in 2001 from lung cancer.



Wendy, David, Martin and Peter (Martin's brother)  
on the boat

## Today

Wendy and Martin now in their 80's have been retired from work for many years, yet they did not just sit still and become people of leisure. Wendy worked part time back at the school with Special Needs children. And when she finally completely retired, she continued to help children from the village and school on a voluntary basis with academic work and with social skills. This was done with the permission of the parents. Martin also got involved with several charities as a trustee looking after their financial affairs. These included Epilepsy Research UK in London and The League of Friends at Chalfont Hospital as well as being Trustees for a number of family Trusts.

Both Wendy and Martin were brought up in the area and were able to settle down as a family and work in the Chalfonts. They have been part of the community, both in their work and in their social life and continue to be so today. They have just celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and they enjoyed a celebration with family and friends at The Bull in Gerrard's Cross.

Throughout their lives Wendy and Martin have welcomed others into their home. This they believe has helped shape them into the people that they are today, this includes their sons and their families.

David and Kerry welcomed all these people, it was their normal family life, they accepted it and helped make everyone feel welcome and part of their family. All of the people have been important to Wendy and Martin but it is their sons and their families who will always remain the most treasured people in their lives.

## A message from the Queen on their Diamond Wedding Anniversary



I am so pleased to know that you  
are celebrating your Diamond Wedding  
anniversary on 15th August, 2019. I send  
my congratulations and best wishes to  
you on such a special occasion.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Elizabeth II", with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Stevens

