





Dave and Lynda Clark

By Lynda Clark, Birmingham, 2024



I was born in Birmingham in Loveday Street, back in 1950. I've got a twin brother called Ronald and I'm ten minutes older than him. I've got three other sisters. Two are still alive, Brenda and Thelma. And then I lost my younger sister. Margaret was in her 60s and she died of lung cancer. My second sister, Thelma, suffered from a massive stroke, but she's still alive. It took all her right arm and, at first, her speech. She was only cleaning her teeth at the bathroom sink, and she just had this massive stroke.

My father and my mother died about 30 years ago, about the time when I met Dave. They were good parents, but they weren't loving parents. We never shared any love, and all my sisters have said the same. You couldn't go up to them and have a kiss and a cuddle, because they were old school, old-fashioned.

I grew up in Sutton Coalfield. We first lived in Four Oaks, and we left there when I was four when we moved to Sutton Coalfield. It was Warwickshire then. I went to Fairfax High School in Sutton Coalfield and I left there when I was 15.

I have had quite a few jobs all through my life. The first one was a little Saturday job, which was at a haberdashery store. Then when I got older I worked for British Home Stores in Sutton Coalfield, and I used to do the window dressing there. Because I've always been creative and I love creativity. I love putting colours together.

I love animals. I moved to a pet shop in Sutton Coalfield called Wellworth Kennels, and I worked there for about six years. It was at that time selling pedigree dogs, and then they stopped doing it. You had Green Shield Stamps in those days. I've got a picture of me holding a boxer with a full page of Green Shield Stamps.

I wanted to further myself so I moved to Birmingham, and I worked for a shoe shop. I worked at a shop called Barbara Dee. And I remember serving Robert Plant, so that's my claim to fame. I moved from there to Oliver Shoes, and I became a fitting specialist for children's shoes for Clarks. So that's when I started to improve my career.





And then from there, I went back to British Home Stores for a bit, because I had Paul then. He is my first son, so this was in 1977. And I worked there for about two years and then I had Andrew. Andrew was born in 1980. At that time I lived in Kings Norton with my first husband. We got our first house in Vista Green, Kings Norton.

Andrew was seven months old when I found out my husband was having an affair with his brother's wife, and that's what killed the marriage. When I had Andrew at Selly Oak Hospital, my husband came in. He wanted a girl but Andrew was a boy. So he says, "I can't have him, I don't like him, I can't take to him at all."

Andrew's 44 now. He's really been there for me. Paul's the oldest. And Andrew's the middle one. And my third son, Dean, he's the younger one.

So I kicked him out. And I remember sitting on the back wall in the garden, and thinking, "I've got to be a father and a mother now, because I've got a two and a half year old, and I've got a seven months old." And do you know what, I did it. I did it for my sons. I was that strong. There was an inner strength that came out of me. I really brought them up. Even the parents at school said to me, "Lynda, them kids are a credit to you. An absolute credit to you." I thought, "I can do this on my own. I don't need a bloke. I don't need a man, I can do it on my own." So all my careers and everything from then on, it was all was down to me.

And then I met Dean's dad. Dean is now 40, so he was born in 1984. But I didn't get on well with Dean's dad towards the end, he couldn't accept my two elder sons, because they weren't his. He never accepted them at all. And he put Andrew through so much that, in the end, I had to take him to what was called the Charles Burns Clinic in Moseley for psychological problems.



I met Dave in 1993. It was a blind date. I was really good friends with Maxine across the road. Dave's first wife Angela was Maxine's husband's sister. So Maxine got me and Dave together and we met, our first date was at The Hopwood pub on the 15th May 1993. It just took off from there really. He made me laugh. He was funny. There was a different kind of aspect to him. He wasn't just about 'that'. He made me feel that I was worth something. That I was loved and I was needed, not just for that. And the kids just took to him straight away. He was more like a father to my three sons and that is all I needed.

We had so much fun. We never had a holiday in six years and when I met Dave, he took us all to Newquay. He had an RS Turbo with a sunroof and I can remember Andrew sticking his head through the sunroof as we were going down the motorway. There were lots of fun things like that. And at Christmas, you used to open the presents and all the paper would cover this living room. And Dave would just dive in the Christmas present paper and Paul, Andrew and Dean would just dive on top of him. They just loved it. Dean was about nine, so Andrew must have been about 13. And Paul was about 16. And that's when I looked at him and I thought, "There's a different guy here. I can build a life here for my sons." Because they were my world.

And then he moved in with me. But it was rented accommodation in Burnley Grove. Because I was on my own I wasn't able to get a mortgage. He was able to get a mortgage and buy the property at Burnley Grove. I think it was only about seven grand, he managed to get a mortgage for it and we paid that off. We sold that and then we moved to our very first house.





Dave, he was a fun guy. Everything was a joke. Everything, every minute of the day was just a joke. He'd be hilarious. I mean I can remember going on holiday with him with the lads. And we went to St. Michael's Mount. And there was an open canoe at the bottom of the waterway. And he'd run down, he'd skip down and he'd say, "I bagsy sitting by the window." There's no window obviously, it's a flaming canoe at the end of the day! And then I'd find him, not in a queer way, but I'd go upstairs and he'd got some of my clothes on. And I found it hilarious. And then there were other times when we'd be painting together upstairs. And then he'd just flick all the paint over me. We'd paint one another's faces. He was like a clown. You couldn't have a conversation with him unless a joke came into it, and that it what I needed.

But we never really spoke properly. We could never really sit and have a conversation. I think Dave always felt as if he had to be the jokiest one in the group. He wasn't really a conversationist. He was a lovely guy. He was funny. He was hilarious. But it was on his terms.

He was born in Birmingham on 4th January 1959. He's got three sisters. He never had a brother, which he had always wanted. He would have loved a brother. Jennifer's the oldest sister, who lives in Redditch. She's the one who's helped me a lot. Then there is Catherine, who's in Florida. And then you've got Susan, the younger one. She lives in Longbridge.



Dave worked at a box-folding company and then he moved on to have his own shop. This was a long time before I met him, when he was married to his first wife. It was his own fruit and veg shop over Longbridge way. He gave it up because I don't think it made a profit. Dave wasn't really a pusher, and it was his mum and dad who suggested for him to open up the fruit and veg shop. Dave was never able to go and get a job himself. Other people have had to do it for him. And that's what he did, all through our life. He would never do anything on his own bat. He would never make a decision about anything. Everything was a joke. So I had to take the burden of being the front-runner of the relationship.

I like the companionship we had. It was knowing that I'd got a bloke or a husband that I felt safe with. He made me feel safe. I knew that he would never hit me. He'd never be nasty. Well, there were points when he was nasty to me verbally, but he would never be nasty to me physically. I think I got into a rut of being with him. Because it wasn't all good. It was a see-saw relationship. Because there was many a time when he could be really nasty. And he'd never ever ask me what kind of day I'd had. Like, "What sort of day have you had today, love?" If I'd had a bad day, he wouldn't want to talk about it. It was all about him. All about what kind of day he'd had.



He got a job at Selwood Pumps then and he stayed there most of his working life throughout our relationship. That's a borehole company. He was with them for over 30 years. He used to spray all the big borehole pumps. The company built them for prisons and hospitals and they'd go underground. And he used to fit them, he used to have to go what they call 'on-site'. He got out of a lot of it because he was what they call a 'main driver'. And I think he liked that because he used to drive all around the country delivering these pumps. I remember one day he had to go to Holland on the ferry. And he stayed there a couple of nights.



I miss him now because of the loneliness. Because I knew he was always there. I knew he was always coming home. And I knew I'd always cook a dinner for him. These are the things I miss. Caring for someone. Some days towards the end, he could be quite nasty. But I think that was his bitterness coming out. Because he knew he'd got terminal cancer. And he was dying and he was quite nasty. And I used to think, "Why? What have I ever done to you?" Because all I ever did was to look after him. I've always said, I've even said to his sisters, that I loved him more than he loved me.

Sometimes I think Dave only wanted me because I was older than him and he needed somebody to look after him. Because sometimes he was like a mummy's boy. Because he was the only boy in his family. And I think that's what's happened all through his life. He's been spoilt too much. In some ways I was a mother figure. That's what I was to him. He'd never tell me that he loved me. Never.

We've had a lot holidays. I've never had so many holidays really since I met Dave. These are my happy memories. The first big holiday I had was quite amazing. His sister Catherine lived in Los Angeles. I'd never been on a plane in my life until that point. I was 45. He asked me to go to America with him. So I went to America, to Los Angeles for two weeks. And we had a great time. I've never known anything like it. Catherine and Bob, that's her husband, took us everywhere.

And then afterwards we went to Lanzarote. That was another good holiday. Just getting sun, Dave absolutely worshipped the sun. That's all he'd do, sit in the sun.







In 2009 I was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma which is like a form of blood cancer. Dave was there for me, but he never came with me to have my chemo. It was always my son from London who came over and sat with me on Fridays to have my chemo. I don't know whether it was because Dave was scared, because I think men don't take it as well as women do.

We got into that kind of 'set life' for the last 15 years, 20 years. It's just a set life. He'd come home from work, his dinner was on the table. I just did it all. As I said, I loved him more than he ever loved me. He didn't know how to love.

But there was one person in his life who he really did love, and that was his best friend, Melvin. He was the same age as Dave. Dave always blamed himself for going out on this particular day. They were 18 years old and they went out with his mates up Lickey Hills. They were in a games room with the pinball things. And this day Dave called back to Melvin. "come on, we're going out now." As Melvin ran out after him, a motorbike ran straight into him. It killed him instantly. He was 18. Dave blamed himself every single day, and said that it was his fault that he lost his best mate. And I know from when I met Dave in 1993 up to when Dave died, for every birthday, July 11th and every Christmas, Dave would put a wreath on Melvin's grave. So he's done that for over 50, 60 years. And I know he loved him like a brother. And he's carried that guilt with him all his life.

We got married on May the 15th, 1996. It was a beautiful day. We got married at the registry office in town. I think it was about 2 o'clock. Quite a few people came. Catherine had come from America, which was nice. My eldest son Paul gave me away. I've got a picture of the actual wedding morning with our arms around one another.



He's never told me I look beautiful, even on our wedding. He never told me, back in my younger days when I met him, that I looked nice in whatever I put on. I used to say to him, "Do I look all right?" And he just used to say, "Yeah."

I had some good times with him, because I was with him for 30 years. But I can't talk now about the good, good, good years because I don't really remember. Because there weren't many of them. The only good thing was that we went on holiday together. But he was a decent guy. He was a good guy. He looked after me. He always paid for the holidays. I had a roof over my head. He made sure the bills were paid. He made sure that I was looked after. That's his way of showing his love. But he couldn't tell me verbally which is what I needed. I needed that because I've never had it in my life.

Then Dave got ill in late 2021. I put it down to the COVID jabs. He had the first COVID jab, and he was fine, everything was fine. He had the second COVID jab back in June and then a week or two later, he'd come out in this lump on his arm and it was the size of a rugby ball. It was massive. It was colossal. I said, "You must have had a reaction to the COVID jab." So he went to the doctors and they didn't really do anything about it. They just give him some cream for it. He wasn't in pain with it, but it was just the fact that this massive lump had come in his arm after the COVID jab. And I said, "Well, you need to go and sort it out because that's not right." So he phoned up 111 and he was explaining it to them. And we had different doctors phoning us back asking what it was, what was he suffering from, how big it was and so on. As if you can tell over the phone and describe it! it wasn't until November, December, that they decided to do a biopsy.



So this was June. Then he started being in pain with it about August, September time. He was in a lot of pain with it and one morning he got up at five o'clock and he went to A&E himself. He left me a note, because for the last 10, 15 years we never slept together. We had separate beds.

So he went to A&E by himself as he was in that much pain with it. They x-rayed it and they found this massive lump but they couldn't make head or tail of what it was. So they didn't do anything about it. In October he went back to his doctor and he said he was in a lot of pain with it. So this time they sent him to the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and they did a biopsy and they found that it was soft tissue sarcoma, which is a very rare form of cancer. This tumour had pressed onto his muscles and because it had been left for that long it had grown. He went into the Royal Orthopaedic in December and had the operation. They removed all the lump, but they had to cut as thinly as they could around the muscles because it was attached.

He then went and had a scan. He'd got quite a few tumours all on his lungs and elsewhere. So they started him on a chemo. When he started the chemo, they were 16mm in size. He got through that. He went and had another CT scan. They had stabilised. So they changed him to a different chemo. So he went and had this other chemo. They then grew to 21cm with this other chemo. So he saw his oncologist and Dave said, "I think I'll have a break because I'm a bit tired with it all." He couldn't handle the chemo.

He had a month off. Then they were going to try him on a completely different chemo. But in the meantime, they wanted to send him to the big hospital in London where they do a lot of tests. He decided not to go there because he would have had to have gone there on his own. So he had that month off the treatment. He had to go and have a CT scan. He was in hospital then because his platelets were low and he was feeling sick and tired. And they did a scan and they found out that his tumours had grown to 69cm. So from 21 to 69. By that time, he'd got hundreds and hundreds of them all over his body, everywhere. It was too late.





Well, I just broke down in the hospital. Me and Jennifer went in because she was the only one near at the time. They suggested that Dave can go for another chemo if he wants. But if he doesn't, he would have roughly six to eight weeks to live. And I just broke down. I remember putting my hand out to Dave and he sat there. I'll tell you now, he sat there and I put my hand out and I said, "Don't leave me Dave, please don't leave me."

He did choose to come home to die. I had no help whatsoever from the hospice nurses. Not a daily visit, because they knew he was dying. And he came home for the week, and we had two actual hospice nurses on the Tuesday. I couldn't get a response from him. But when they sat there he cheered up because they were two young girls. He was all for having a laugh and a joke with the younger generation.

They said, "Have you decided what you want to do? Do you want to come into the hospice where we can care for you? Or would you like to stay at home where your wife can care for you?" And he looked over at me, and he said, "I'll stay here if she'll let me." I got up and I went into the bedroom, and I just broke down. And I said, "How can he say that?" His sister came in with me.

After all these years I've looked after him, nursed him. I can remember on the Thursday, 2nd February 2023, I took my hand, and put my hand on his heart and I said, "I love you Dave, and I'll always be here for you." Because I knew it was near to the end of his life.



I'm glad he got his wish to die at home. But I just wished I wasn't the one who found him. And that's where now I regret that we didn't sleep together. Because I would have been with him at the time when he passed away. He would have passed away in my arms, which is what I wanted so much. But I wasn't there holding his hand and that is my guilt that he died alone.

He was scared of dying. That's why he wouldn't sleep at night time. He always used to sit on the edge of the bed. And I always tried to make sure that he was resting, laid down, before I went to bed. And I can remember the one night he came into the room and he sat on the edge of my bed. It must have been about 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock. Because I mean, I've got to find my inner strength to look after him. He was worse off than me, but I've got breast cancer. So I needed my strength to look after him for the next day. He only used to get a couple of hours sleep. And then the following night he came into the bedroom exactly the same. He sat on the edge of the bed. He wouldn't lie down. He was frightened to lie down in case he did die. I think he fought that off so much.

I went in the bedroom, he was sitting on the edge of the bed. And I said, "Come on, David, you need to lie down." And he did. He lay down on this side with his face facing the door. And I left the door slightly open, ajar. On Friday 3rd February, 2023 I didn't get up until about 8 o'clock the next morning. And I just walked in here, not thinking. Put the kettle on, which I've always done. Cup of tea for us. I went into the bedroom. He was lying on this side with his head in his hands. And I said, "Come on, David, lovely, I've got a nice cup of tea for you." Nothing. But he was still warm, so I think he probably only gone within the hour.



My son Andrew came from London as soon as I told that him Dave had passed. He comes home and he saw Dave and he says, "Mum, I've never seen anybody so at peace in all my life." He stayed with me and comforted me all day and all night.

He died on February the 3rd, last year. But we had to wait till the 23rd of March for the funeral. So it was seven or eight weeks wait. And a lot of my grieving had been done then. So when the actual funeral came, I didn't cry. Dave had already organised the funeral. He chose all his hymns, everything. At the funeral, everybody - blokes and women - had to wear a football shirt of the team they support. We were Blue Noses. There was Manchester United, Villa, Wolves, and The Albion. Everybody wore different shirts. That was the fun part. That was nice. He got his last wish and he had the last word.

I still grieve the little things. Like when our record comes on. When we got married, we danced to 'All For One'

*And I swear by the moon and the stars in the sky*

*I'll be there*

*I swear like the shadow that's by your side*

*I'll be there*

*For better or worse, 'til death do us part*

*I'll love you with every beat of my heart*

*And I swear*



Even when that comes on now, I'll go in the kitchen and I'll just dance to myself with his picture in my hand. Because that's what we danced to. And I'll cry. So my memories are of me being there for him, but a sadness in my life because he never told me he loved me.

I'd like to see Dave again, but I don't know whether I believe in life after. I'd like to think that there was. He was a joker right up until the very end, but I think underneath he was deeply afraid. I think to make a joke of everything was to hide his fear.

We had a fun life, a happy life, but we didn't have a loving life. That's what we never ever had. I've never known what love is from a man. But I've known ever since I met Dave, I've had a happy life. It's two different things. He was more of a companion than a husband. He was a real good companion. And because of the fact that he looked after my kids, he brought them up as his own.

I was happy with him. I wished it would have been more of a 'love-happy', but I miss being his wife. I also have another memory of Dave who is with me all the time, and that's his beloved dog Olly. He's part of Dave so I look after him, and Olly gives me unconditional love.





